

2022 9TH OCTOBER WORSHIP AT HOME

Dear friends,

Today we read two passages which remind us never to be too arrogant to listen to whatever it is that God is saying to us – and not to forget that it is God to whom we owe our thanks, and to make sure that we do thank him. Whatever is happening to us in our lives we know that God is with us and caring for us and we need to be thankful for his love.

Every blessing to you, *Margaret*.

Call to worship:

We are among the ‘works of the Lord’. As Psalm 111 says: ‘Great are the works of the Lord, studied by all who delight in them; full of honour and majesty is his work, and.....his praise endures for ever.’

Let us praise the Lord!

Lord, we are here to celebrate your great works. Throughout history you have shown your grace and mercy, and have lifted up the outcast and the lowly to show them how special they are to you.

Lift us now, we pray, that we may always remember your love for us and be open to sharing it with others, whatever their situation.

God who remembers us in mercy and in love, we are here to remember you and all that you have done for us.

We draw close to you, Father, Son, and Spirit, our God forever – and we proclaim the greatness of your name.

We pray these prayers in the name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Our Father who art in heaven hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come and thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil for thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory for ever and ever. **Amen.**

The words to ‘Let us with a gladsome mind’ written by John Milton [1608-1674] and based on Psalm 136. Hymns and Psalms 27. [there is a refrain sung at the end of each short verse which is: For his mercies aye endure, ever faithful, ever sure.]

1 Let us with a gladsome mind, praise the Lord for he is kind.

2 Let us blaze his name abroad, for of gods he is the God.

3 He, with all-commanding might, filled the new-made world with light.

4 He, the golden-tressed sun caused all day his course to run.

5 And the silver moon by night, ‘mid her spangled sisters bright.

6 He his chosen race did bless in the wasteful wilderness.

7 All things living he doth feed, his full hand supplies their need.

8 Let us then with gladsome mind praise the Lord, for he is kind.

2 Kings 5: 1-3 and 7-15 [NIV]:

Now Naaman was commander of the army of King Aram. He was a great man in the sight of his master and highly regarded because through him the Lord had given victory to Aram. He was a valiant soldier, but he had leprosy.

Now bands of raiders from Aram had gone out and had taken captive a young girl from Israel, and she served Naaman’s wife. She said to her mistress, ‘If only my master would see the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy.’

[Aram sent Naaman to the king of Israel with a letter]

As soon as the king of Israel read the letter he tore his robes and said: 'Am I God? can I kill and bring back to life? Why does this fellow send someone to me to be cured of his leprosy? See how he is trying to pick a quarrel with me!'

When Elisha, the man of God, heard that the king of Israel had torn his robes, he sent him this message: 'Why have you torn your robes? Have the man come to me and he will know that there is a prophet in Israel.' So Naaman went with his horses and chariots and stopped at the door of Elisha's house. Elisha sent a messenger to say to him: "Go, wash yourself seven times in the Jordan, and your flesh will be restored and you will be cleansed."

But Naaman went away angry and said: "I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, wave his hand over the spot and cure me of my leprosy. Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Couldn't I wash in them and be cleansed?" So he turned and went off in a rage.

Naaman's servants went to him and said: "My father, if the prophet had told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much more, then, when he tells you, 'Wash, and be cleansed!'

So he went down and dipped himself in the Jordan seven times, as the man of God had told him, and his flesh was restored and became clean like that of a young boy.

Comment: This passage tells a great story, one that is rich in human detail. There is Naaman, a powerful warrior, but he has leprosy. There is Elisha, the great prophet. There is the unnamed girl in Naaman's household. It is a story of faithful obedience. Naaman the leader has to listen to a servant girl, to a foreign prophet, to servants, and then to do something quite extraordinary, with no magic or ritual. Sometimes doing the right thing, obedience, and faith can be tough – especially if we think it doesn't make sense or is just too ordinary.

Then again, the fact that God comes to us in the ordinary is, in itself, extraordinary!

Luke 17: 11-19: [The Message]:

It happened that as Jesus made his way toward Jerusalem, he crossed over the border between Samaria and Galilee. As he entered a village, ten men, all lepers, met him. They kept their distance but raised their voices, calling out: "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us."

Taking a good look at them, he said: "Go, show yourselves to the priests."

They went, and while still on their way, became clean. One of them, when he realised that he was healed, turned around and came back, shouting his gratitude, glorifying God. He knelt at Jesus' feet, so grateful. He couldn't thank him enough – and he was a Samaritan.

Jesus said: "Were not ten healed? Where are the nine? Can none be found to come back and give glory to God except this outsider?" Then he said to him: "Get up. On your way. Your faith has healed and saved you."

Comment:

Leprosy was one of the most feared diseases. If you caught leprosy you had to leave your home, your community, and had to live out in a desert place. It was probable that you would never see your loved ones again. Having leprosy was like a death sentence. It was believed that leprosy was infectious and, as a safety measure, lepers were asked to keep their distance and to 'live outside the camp.' [Leviticus 13:45, 46.]

Jesus was in a remote area between Samaria and Galilee. Here in this barren land lived a group of lepers brought together by their illness. Even here the lepers had heard of Jesus and his power. As required they kept their distance but called out asking for mercy.

Jesus simply tells them to go and show themselves to the priest – and as they go, they are healed.

However, only one of them returns to Jesus. All the men had done what Jesus asked them to do – but just

this one returned and prostrated himself at Jesus' feet, praising God with a loud voice. Apparently, leprosy often affects the vocal cords so the loud voice was a sign that the man was cured. And he could come close to Jesus – another sign that he was cured.

Yes, all the lepers did what Jesus asked – but keeping rules is not enough. The Samaritan did more than just do as he was told – he came back to Jesus in love and gratitude, appreciating what has been done for him and praising God for his well-being. Such thanksgiving is a sign of joy – very hard to be sad and grateful at the same time.

Today many people demand their rights by law – but it gives them no joy. It is thanksgiving and appreciation which fill us with joy – and that is a sign of greater healing than just that of the body. Perhaps this is the time we should promise that we will never take our friends, our lives, our God for granted.

Meditation of Matthew. [from a Most Amazing Man C by Nick Fawcett].

They were healed – all ten of them – their skin made clean, their lives transformed – and you would have thought, wouldn't you, they would all have rushed back immediately, desperate to thank the man who made them well.

But they didn't., most instead dashing off as fast as their legs would carry them, without even a backward glance. They were excited, I suppose, impatient to return to their loved ones and share the news – and, heaven knows, I can understand that, for they had been through misery such as you can scarcely imagine. It seemed rude, nonetheless, for they owed Jesus so much, yet they couldn't be bothered to acknowledge the debt.

All, that is, except one. He stopped, incredulous, the moment he realised what had happened.....then he turned back and hurried back, glorifying and praising God, throwing himself at the Master's feet with tears of joy – thankful beyond words.

And do you know what? He was a *Samaritan!*

That's right – the last person you'd expect according to popular opinion: an outsider, foreigner, heretic. It reinforced what we knew already – that Jesus has time for those the world doesn't.

But it brought home also the flipside of the coin – that those we least expect to have time for *him*, gladly responding when others don't.

I shouldn't have needed reminding, of course, for it's true amongst his closest followers – me included! Yet how often do we write people off, failing to see who they really are?

Don't make that mistake, putting restrictions on God's love and purpose. Don't let prejudice close your mind. Learn to look, as Jesus does, beyond the label to the person underneath.

What you find may surprise you.

Prayer:

When we are tempted to write people off, Lord, unable to see past their faults – when prejudice and preconceptions dictate our attitudes, closing our minds to those around us; remind us that you refuse to write anyone off, determined instead to seek until you find.

Open our hearts to the potential of others – to the worth you see in all – lest in rejecting *them*, we reject *you*. **Amen.**

Maker, redeemer, life-giving God, we thank you for all that you have done for us.

We acknowledge the myriad ways in which you have impacted our lives – the times you have helped us, healed us, drawn near to us.

We recognise that there will be times you have helped us, but we did not see – we thank you for those too!

Help us to perceive your working in our lives and renew in us a spirit of gratitude.

Thank you, Lord, for all that you have done for us. **Amen.**

Lord, we pray for those struggling to be restored to their communities:

those who have come out of prison;

those who have been away serving in the armed forces;

those who have spent many months in hospital;

those who have come back after a breakdown of a relationship.

Help us to welcome them – to encourage them – to support them – and to respect them, in Jesus' name.

Amen.

Words to 'In an age of twisted values' written by Martin Leckebusch [b. 1962] Singing the Faith 703

1 In an age of twisted values we have lost the truth we need;

in sophisticated language we have justified our greed;

by our struggle for possessions we have robbed the poor and weak –

hear our cry and heal our nations: your forgiveness, Lord, we seek.

2 We have built discrimination on our prejudice and fear;

hatred swiftly turns to cruelty if we hold resentments dear.

For communities divided by the walls of class and race

hear our cry and heal our nations; show us, Lord, your love and grace.

3 When our families are broken; when our homes are full of strife;

when our children are bewildered, when they lose their way in life;

when we fail to give the aged all the care we know we should –

hear our cry and heal our nations with your tender fatherhood.

4 We who hear your word so often choose so rarely to obey;

turn us from our wilful blindness, give us truth to light our way.

In the power of your Spirit come to cleanse us, make us new;

hear our cry and heal our nations till our nations honour you.

Closing Prayer and Blessing:

We bring to you, Lord, our memories of our life so far,

however long or short, thanking you for all we have learnt.

Help us to see ourselves as you see us.

Help us to see other people as you see them.

Thank you for all the different friends we have.

We ask you to show us what really matters.

Help us to remember how much you love us and everybody, for all are precious in your sight – may they be precious in ours.

Amen.

We go into the week ahead with the word of God on our lips

the truth of Christ in our hearts

and the love of the Spirit to empower our lives.

We go, for Christ goes with us now and always. **Amen**