

Luke 17: 11 – 19

'The thankful leper'

Introduction ...

If you were given the task of deciding a heading for that Gospel passage we just heard – what would you come up with?

(We were given time to talk and discuss and various answers were forthcoming)

The Inclusive/Risky Jesus ...

This story, an illustration of God's inclusive nature, takes place on the way to Jerusalem. However, to arrive at the region between Samaria and Galilee as Luke describes, Jesus must have turned off his route. And, as he often did, he went towards the outcast, the unclean. Those whom others would avoid.

The Nine who rushed off ...

We could be critical – all that mattered to them was that, once the priest had certified them as clean – they could return home to family and friends. No thought of thankfulness. They had, however, all shown faith! They had called Jesus "Master"; and all 10 with leprosy set off towards the priest to prove their healing before it had happened! The text says: **'As they went they were made clean.'**

The one who said Thank you ...

That was a recurrent theme in the titles we came up with

And that does seem to be what Luke – the writer of the Gospel – is emphasising.

But there is danger here ... we could be turning this into a lesson about manners – and that is not the case.

Think of Poppy, baptised here this morning ... I am sure that Nick and Laura – and others of us who are around her – will be encouraging her to say "Thank you" and that such encouragement will continue for many years. That's manners ... and we gradually learn to say "Thank you" even when we're not that keen on what we've been given!

That's a very far cry from this one Samaritan leper:

He turned back, praising God with a loud voice. He prostrated himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him.

Think again of Poppy when she's been given something that she loves – she expresses praise and delight. She shows it off to anyone who will take notice. She's vocal about it ... she'll interrupt what's going on ... *restrained* good manners are nowhere to be seen! This is more like we read in today's Gospel. **PTO**

And the last words of Jesus to this Samaritan are worth noting:

“Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well.”

This man had returned to Jesus and in his exuberant thankfulness, he’d created a relationship with Jesus. The kind of relationship that is open to all of us. And so Jesus says: **“Get up”**. That might not seem much to us ... but the word used in the original language has a strong and wonderful association with “resurrection” ... and the word for **“made well”** indicates a wholeness, a salvation. This man will be able to recover from the effects of being a leper in body, mind and spirit. He enters the abundant life that Jesus offers.

As we move on from the time of year of harvest thanksgiving celebrations – there is a continuing lesson here about a rhythm of God’s grace, our faith and our gratitude. It’s more than good manners. It’s a rhythm for all year round of living with Jesus – in times of need and in times of joy. A rhythm that I hope and pray each one of us (and especially Poppy) will inhabit in our daily lives.

Adapted from [Explore and respond \(rootsontheweb.com\)](http://rootsontheweb.com)