

Thankfulness for God's mercies is in many ways a habit to be cultivated and an art to be developed in our lives. As we look back on our lives over all the years we have lived we can surely see the numerous instances where God out of his abundant mercy has heard our prayer or protected us from sure disaster because of our wayward ways. Someone once said mercy is not getting what we deserve – that is the punishment that we deserve because of sin, and grace is getting what we do not deserve – that is when we have deliberately strayed away from him and God still reaches out to us in love. Thankfulness is something that we forget ever so often. Many a time people have done good things for us or have given us things and we fail to appreciate that and say thank you. Saying thank you to God is an important part of prayer and if we look at the book of Psalms there are numerous thanksgiving psalms recounting God's goodness, mercy and grace.

In the Gospel reading for today from Luke we notice that Jesus was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee. As he entered a village, ten lepers approached him. Keeping their distance, they called out, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" When he saw them, he said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were made clean.

Jesus was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee. Jesus is ministering in the Galilean – Samaritan border. Jesus enters a village which is not named and as he enters ten people affected with leprosy approach him. In ancient times people affected with leprosy were asked to live outside the city limits. The book of Leviticus gives us a glimpse of what their condition was like: "The leprous person who has the disease shall wear torn clothes and let the hair of his head hang loose, and he shall cover his upper lip and cry out, 'Unclean, unclean.' He shall remain unclean as long as he has the disease. He is unclean. He shall live alone. His dwelling shall be outside the camp. Lev 13:45-46

A person affected with leprosy was considered to be ritually unclean and any Jew who touched him would also be defiled. Because of this we see they keep a distance and shout to Jesus saying, 'Jesus, Master, have mercy on us'. The appeal was corporate – they called out together and they asked that they be shown mercy – 'have mercy on us'. It is interesting to see the bonding of these people in their affliction. A tremendous sense of unity of purpose is displayed. They have obviously discussed this together, that the one thing that they need in their lives was the mercy of God which would restore them back into society and back to normal life. No individualism here but only that all of them would taste of God's mercy.

Jesus hears their pleas and tells them, 'Go and show yourselves to the priests'. This was required by the law as seen in Leviticus when a person was cured of any skin disease. It is also interesting to notice the faith of those who were affected with leprosy. They were indeed marching off to see the Priest as they had been told and on their way they were healed. They took Jesus at his word. They were willing to trust him. Their trust in Jesus healed them.

Only one of the ten patients who were affected with leprosy expresses gratitude to Jesus for his healing and that man was a Samaritan an outcaste. When he sees that healing has occurred, he turns back and comes to Jesus. He praised God with a loud voice. He prostrated himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him. The Samaritan has correctly connected Jesus with God's work. Three times in the Bible we have the Samaritan as the outsider who comes to Christ – the Samaritan woman, the Good Samaritan, and the Thankful Samaritan patient of leprosy. Who were the ones who were responding to Jesus? Not those whom we would have expected. It is not stated but implied that the nine are Jewish.

Was none of them found to return except this foreigner? Jesus expected a response of gratitude from the others who were healed, but did not find it coming. The Samaritan had more spiritual sensitivity than the others who were probably Jewish but failed to see the hand of God at work through Jesus. Jesus tells the Samaritan to get up and go on his way. In the Greek it reads your faith has saved you – though translations state that your faith has made you well. It was his faith that delivered him. The allusion seems to be to the full saving faith of the Samaritan, since his healing had already taken place and that healing was something which he shared with the other nine. What he receives here the others do not. God's gracious acts extends to all people but only some respond and others do not, and miss out on the blessing. The Samaritan alone benefits from Jesus' act of mercy and gained a relationship with God.

We cry out so often for God's mercy in times of need. God answers our prayers through his son Jesus - But are we grateful for it? Do we show gratitude? Or do we take things for granted? Is there an attitude of gratitude in our lives? Do we turn back to God when he answers our prayers or do we continue with our own wicked ways?

Outsiders are more responsive to the mercies of God- more spiritually sensitive. They return to God when their prayers are answered. God's grace extends to all but only some receive the gift of salvation. May we respond with gratitude for what God has done for us in and through his son Jesus Christ.