

## **Dorset South and West Circuit**

Service for Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> October 2020 by David Ninnim, Local Preacher

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### **A CALL TO WORSHIP**

Sit quietly with your hands on your lap with palms facing upwards and imagine you are sitting at the foot of the cross in the assurance of Christ's love. Ask God to gather in your wandering thoughts that you may concentrate fully on him so that your worship and praise may be worthy of his love.

### **HYMN**

We continue those thoughts in our opening hymn:

With gladness we worship, rejoice as we sing,  
Free hearts and free voices, how blessed to bring:  
The old, thankful story shall seek thine abode,  
Thou King of all glory, most bountiful God!

Thy right would we give thee - true homage thy due,  
And honour eternal, the universe through,  
With all thy creation, earth, heaven and sea,  
In one acclamation we celebrate thee.

Renewed by thy Spirit, redeemed by thy Son,  
Thy children revere thee for all thou hast done.  
O Father! Returning to love and to light,  
Thy children are yearning to praise thee aright.

We join with the angels, and so there is given  
From earth Alleluia, in answer to heaven.  
Amen! Be Thou glorious below and above,  
Redeeming, victorious, and infinite Love!

*George Rawson (1807-89)*

### **A PRAYER OF PRAISE, CONFESSION AND THANKSGIVING**

Father, we praise you that whoever we are, and wherever we go, you are there. We cannot hide and we cannot run. You are always ahead of us preparing the way. Lord, you are ever near, ever approachable. In the midst of our anxiety and fear you are always understanding; coming into our turmoil; our doubts; our weakness and despair; and you come with peace. You stand guard over our hearts and minds so that we dare to speak your name and serve your kingdom. Great and wonderful God, always loving, we praise and honour you. We praise you now and we will praise you for ever.

We confess that, despite your deep love for us, we allow our neighbours' needs to be sacrificed on the altar of our convenience. We permit the hungry to go away empty-handed at the cost of our possessiveness. We turn our backs on the lonely and the broken, the empty and the lost; and those far from you. The price of our time, and

energies in helping others, is a cost we are often not willing to pay. Father, forgive us, touch our hearts and change us; cleanse our minds and make us new. And Father, we praise you for the joy of knowing that whatever we have done, or failed to do, we can experience the joy of forgiveness and the joy of beginning again. We thank you for every person whose offer of forgiveness has set us free to begin again and has been a sign to us of your love. Amen

#### **BIBLE READING**     Luke 17: 11-19 (NRSV)

*11 On the way to Jerusalem Jesus was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee. 12 As he entered a village, ten lepers approached him. Keeping their distance, 13 they called out, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" 14 When he saw them, he said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were made clean. 15 Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice. 16 He prostrated himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him. And he was a Samaritan. 17 Then Jesus asked, "Were not ten made clean? But the other nine, where are they? 18 Was none of them found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" 19 Then he said to him, "Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well."*

#### **REFLECTION**

I thought this morning that I would share one of my favourite Bible stories with you. It is a lovely little story which begins with Jesus walking along the border between Galilee and Samaria where one could expect to encounter bandits and those excluded from their community because they were carrying some kind of disease.

It was a group such as this, ten men with leprosy, who approached Jesus but it is not clear that they were actually looking for healing. They were outcasts, shunned by nearly everyone and they stood alone (an early example of social distancing!). Standing some way off they had to raise their voices so that Jesus could hear them. They shouted "*Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!*" so it may be they just wanted Jesus to be aware of their problem. We are not told that Jesus shouted back so it seems he may well have walked towards them. His words "*Go and show yourselves to the priests.*" must have given them confidence that that they were to be healed and would soon be returning home.

At first, this seems a strange thing for Jesus to say but it was the procedure to be followed after a healing. Under Old Testament Law it was only the priest who could certify that the person was clean and fit and be allowed once again to re-enter society. Leviticus chapter 14 says: "*The Lord gave Moses the following regulations about the ritual purification of a person cured of a dreaded skin disease. On the day he is to be pronounced clean, he shall be brought to the priest and the priest shall take him outside the camp and examine him. If the disease is healed, the priest shall ....*" Then the next twenty-odd verses go on to list things which need to be done before purification is complete.

The lepers set off to the priests and as they made their way they were made clean. This was a very important moment for each of them of course but apparently they were so excited that they forgot to go back and express their thanks. In a perfect world we could expect all ten men to run back to Jesus and thank him for the new start in life he had given them but Luke doesn't tell us what happened to nine of them. However, before we

judge them too harshly, I wonder how each of us would have behaved?" How many times do we take our blessings for granted and fail to thank the Lord?

However, the tenth man was not so ungrateful. Seeing what had happened to him, he was filled with praise for God and was deeply moved by the love Jesus had shown towards him. Not only had he been outwardly healed, it had also changed his heart and he wanted people to know what God had done for him. Jesus was clearly touched by the Samaritan's reaction to being healed. We can sense Jesus' disappointment at seeing only one man when he asked: *"Were not ten made clean? But the other nine, where are they? Was none of them found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?"* Note that Jesus wasn't asking for personal thanks; he was hoping that all these men would at least understand that they had been made whole through God's love. Yet it was only one, a despised Samaritan, who bothered to come back to offer thanks. He is a lesson to all of us who too often take God's love for granted.

There must be many people living within the geographical area covered by D&SW Circuit who feel they don't belong to their community or feel isolated for one reason or another. As Christians we are called upon to embrace all those who feel they are outsiders and give them the confidence and encouragement needed to be accepted and become active members of the community. Like the Samaritan, such people are often looking for understanding and acceptance. Christ's love is available for everyone and in the same way we should make our love available to those who feel they don't belong. It is worth bearing in mind that they may be more worthy of receiving our love than we are of receiving the love of God.

So here we have another fascinating Bible story. Yes, to start with it is a story of healing but as we have seen, there is a lot more to it than that. There is the example Jesus has given us in accepting and loving those who are excluded and we must also look at the gratitude shown by that one Samaritan. Happily, we can always express our gratitude to a God who, in love, continually accepts us and blesses us in so many ways. Amen

### **PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

On a morning when we have been thinking about healing, we pray for all who are ill and for those overwhelmed by the task of caring for a sick or elderly relative. We pray for those seeking healing of the body and for those in need of healing of the mind.

We pray for our society where young people receive little discipline or guidance and where the old are ignored or neglected. We pray for our permissive society which wants freedom to do what it pleases and pays the price in broken lives, broken homes and broken promises. We pray for all those who can't cope with lack of direction in their lives and the empty existence that is the natural consequence of living life without Christ

We pray for those people around the world who have nowhere to feel safe and secure. For all those who have been driven out of their homeland by war, ethnic cleansing or regime change. We pray for those whose lives will never be the same again because of the horrors they have witnessed. We pray for all those who seek a new beginning for themselves and those they love in a land far from home

We pray for all the churches in our circuit where clergy and lay people are working in strange and difficult circumstances to find new ways of serving you. We thank you for our fellowship and pray that the Holy Spirit may lead us into deeper ways of sharing and witnessing together.

And finally we pray for ourselves. In a few moments of silence we bring to God all those things that are troubling us this morning and the decisions we know we have to face in the coming days. May the light of Christ find its way into even the darkest corners of our lives.

We bring all our prayers in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen

## **The Lord's Prayer**

### **HYMN**

Amazing grace (how sweet the sound)  
That saved a wretch like me!  
I once was lost, but now am found  
Was blind, but now I see.

Through many dangers, toils and snares  
I have already come;  
God's grace has brought me safe thus far;  
And he will lead me home.

The Lord has promised good to me,  
His word my hope secures;  
He will my shield and portion be  
As long as life endures.

And, when this heart and flesh shall fail  
And mortal life shall cease,  
I shall possess within the veil  
A life of joy and peace.

*John Newton 1725-1807*

### **CLOSING PRAYER**

The love of the Father enfold us, the wisdom of the Son enlighten us, the fire of the Spirit enflame us: and the blessing of God, the Three in One, be upon us and abide with us now and forever. Amen

*(Our prayers have been based on '500 Prayers for All Occasions' (2003) written by Rev David Clowes and published by David C. Cook)*