

## The man was a Samaritan.

This short sentence which sits in the midst of today's gospel may or may not mean anything to us today, but to a Jew of 1<sup>st</sup> century Palestine it certainly had resonance. It was a resonance which spoke of enmity, hatred and discrimination – issues which in our times, we are sadly still all too familiar with; *plus ça change....?* If we want to take the Gospel seriously, then there can be no place for such sentiments in our hearts. Honesty and faithfulness must underpin and be the bedrock of our belief in and understanding of what Jesus means to our world. Honesty and faithfulness to the values of the Gospel, when directed inwardly towards our own relationships, temper our behaviour, and present us with an image of ourselves that seeks to mirror that of Jesus in our dealings with the world. If we are honest to and faithful in our belief that in the person of Jesus Christ, the fullness of God has been revealed to the world, then what he says and does matter enormously, and not just to us as believers, but to the world at large. Consequently we should notice something very important in the story of the ten lepers: Jesus makes no distinction between them. All ten are told to show themselves to the priests and all ten are cured. The fact that one returns and that Jesus refers to him as a 'foreigner' exemplifies that God's salvation is for all.

God loves us equally and uniquely, and he sent his Son to live out that love amongst us. This is something that our post modern society finds hard to accept. The discrimination which still exists between the rich and the poor, the enmity which persists between the haves and the have-nots, and the hatred that continues to distort relationships between people of different races, simply portrays, it says, that the Christian message has had its day and has been found wanting. On the contrary; I think that the Christian message has not yet been properly listened to, and we who believe it have to explore its teachings more deeply, in order to explain its relevance, so that the issues cited above which so blight our society, can be seen in a context that shows them up as distortions of the human condition, and as situations in need of healing.

So, can we apply the lessons of today's gospel episode to the reality of our own lives, and thereby relate what is revealed through it, to discover and present to our world new ways of living? Where does it take us if we can? *Jesus! Master! Take pity on us.* So many people today are searching for help, looking for healing and consolation. So many are seeking remedy for their ailments. Jesus goes in search of them along the borders, at the margins, but do we? Are we prepared to walk that same path among the lonely? *Go and show yourselves to the priests.* So many people have abandoned the spiritual dimension of their lives and have chosen to forget the God who loves them. They have decided to set aside the faith which taught them how to live out God's love. Yet Jesus continues to offer them his healing. Can we nurture them back through our own generosity of spirit? Are we prepared to open for them the door back to faith? *The man was a Samaritan.* Is the resonance of that phrase still lurking somewhere in the background of our lives, preventing God's love from working properly through us?

If we look at our lives through the prism of the gospel, we will see how the beauty and glory of the gospel shines in, allowing the full spectrum of God's love to penetrate us at every level to the extent that we can affirm: *Stand up and go on your way. Your faith has saved you.*