

St Michael and All Angels

Ōtautahi / Christchurch

12 October 2025 / 28th Sunday Ordinary Time

Homily

Luke 17:11-19 / NRSVUE / NET

- 11 On the way to Jerusalem, Jesus was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee.
- 12 As he entered a village, ten men with a skin disease 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 or ‘healed.’
- 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’s feet and thanked him. And he was a Samaritan.
- 17 Then Jesus asked, “Were not ten made clean? So where are the other nine?”
- 18 Did none of them return to give glory to God except this foreigner?”
- 19 Then he said to him, “Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well, or ‘has delivered you,’ or ‘has saved you.’”

From Healing to Wholeness

Have you ever experienced a moment of kindness, charity, or generosity where, although you felt deeply grateful, you didn't immediately express your gratitude? Perhaps you were caught off guard, or the situation didn't allow for a simple thank you at the time. However, later, at home, you started to write a text message, an email, or maybe a card to convey your appreciation to the person, yet something distracted you. Time passed the emotional momentum faded, and you never sent your message of thanks. Days turned into weeks, then months, or even years, and at times, when you reflect on that act of kindness, you find yourself regretting that you hadn't expressed your gratitude.

In our Gospel, we read that ten people suffering from a serious illness came to Jesus to be healed. Jesus healed them, yet only one person returned to thank Jesus and express their gratitude. Noticing this, even Jesus himself says, "Were not ten healed? So where are the other nine?"

Today, we are very familiar with the concept of gratitude. Popular culture suggests that we could keep a gratitude journal, start each day by listing things we are thankful for, or simply to keep an 'attitude of gratitude.' And although these practices may benefit our emotional well-being, the biblical understanding of gratitude differs from the worldly notion. Primarily because gratitude is not merely a social courtesy or a sign of emotional health, but because gratitude is the core of faith and worship.

As such, healing, being made whole, and salvation come from God alone, and only those who respond with thankful recognition fully enter into the life of grace. Gratitude, therefore, is both a theological necessity and a sign of living into God's kingdom.

In our Gospel, only one person returns to ‘give thanks’ and is therefore ‘made well’ or, in other translations, ‘saved,’ emphasising that healing is not just about a release from affliction, important as that is, but also about an invitation to enter into a relationship with the healer, namely God.

Our Gospel notes, “Then one of them when he saw that he was healed turned back, praising God. He lay at Christ’s feet and thanked him. Jesus then said to him, “Get up and go on your way; your faith has delivered you your faith has saved you.”

At this point, it is helpful to recognise that when Jesus healed someone in the gospels, it did not simply mean that physical issues were resolved. In the New Testament, healing always signifies that a person is being restored from humanity’s fallen state of sin and exile; they are being rescued and made secure. They are renewed and made whole by beginning to find ‘their new life in the life of Christ.’¹ Therefore, all ten characters in our Gospel are physically healed, but only the individual who shows gratitude hears Jesus say, “Your faith has made you well” or “Your faith has saved you.”

Christ’s words indicate a more profound spiritual renewal that extends beyond physical healing. In simple terms, gratitude towards God moves us from healing to wholeness.

¹ Fr John Behr / Will God Save the Cosmos? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2IQok4BjKoY>

Gratitude — A Relationship with the Giver

At the beginning of our Gospel, we see that the ten characters initially showed trust and faith by doing what Jesus told them to do, namely, “showing themselves to the priests.” However, only one of the ten, the Samaritan, completes their journey of faith by returning to Jesus to give thanks. Here, gratitude becomes an expression of a deeper sense of trust, as the man’s praise recognises Jesus as the giver of life, salvation, and wholeness, not just as a miracle-worker.

Again, and in this context, gratitude is not a polite gesture; it is a theologically charged act of worship that acknowledges Jesus as the true giver of life. Furthermore, we notice that the absence of the other nine people who were also healed receives a sharp rebuke from Jesus, as failing to show gratitude is a failure to acknowledge God’s love and mercy and ultimately what God would like to do for them, that is, to take them from ‘life’ to ‘new life’ in Christ.

Luke’s Gospel demonstrates Christ’s concern that a person can receive divine blessings and healings, but through a lack of gratitude, may not enter into a relationship with the giver of those blessings. Luke emphasises that blessings and healings are not solely about receiving physical benefits, but about establishing a proper relationship with God, one expressed through thankfulness, as gratitude is the natural expression of a heart touched by God’s grace. Therefore, someone lacking a thankful heart may still experience blessings and healings, as shown in today’s Gospel, but they will miss out on the deeper relationship with God, the Giver of Life. Thus, we could say that healing is not complete without thanksgiving because gratitude towards God moves us from being healed to becoming whole.

And finally, in our story, Gratitude, is not merely a human response at a key moment but rather ‘thanks giving’ is something that foreshadows humanity’s final state of praise before God and his eternal kingdom. Accordingly, Revelation reminds us when it writes, “Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb. Praise, glory, thanks, honour, power and strength be to our God forever and ever.” And so the praise and gratitude we demonstrate in our lives now reflect the ongoing praise of heaven before God.

Closing Prayer

Gracious and loving God, we thank you for the blessings you pour into our lives. Lord Jesus, recalling the one person who returned to give you thanks. Teach us to turn back to you in every moment of joy and need. Holy Spirit, move within us to transform our healing into wholeness, our thanksgiving into worship, and our worship into faithful witness. May our lives proclaim your goodness so that all people may come to know the saving power of Christ. We ask this in your holy name.

Amen.