

The healing of the ten lepers [Luke 17:11-19](#)

As suggested at the end of last week's reflections, I rate this passage as one of the most profound in the whole of scripture. We hear about John 3:16 as the Gospel in a nutshell, but this story goes beyond the rhetoric and the theory, to give us a real-life version of the Gospel in action.

At face value, this **parable** would appear to be another routine healing miracle, with the interesting little twist at the end of the Samaritan coming back to say thanks. Yes indeed, another **parable**! This is a critical point. I want to introduce the concept of an ACTED PARABLE and suggest that the healing of the ten lepers is much more than a routine miracle. Jesus used this healing as an opportunity to 'act out' through a real-life event, a scenario that contains two key Gospel teaching points.

The clue to the deeper hidden message lies in the bottom line (literally). Jesus declares to the Samaritan leper - *"your faith has made you well"*. Unfortunately, the NIV translation and many similar modern versions mask what is really happening here. A far better translation and probably closer to the original text would be *"your faith has saved you."*

This small variation of translation makes a power of difference. This is much more than a physical healing. It is also a spiritual healing. Jesus declares to the Samaritan that he has been saved! How can that be? In the eyes of the Jews (and this is precisely the audience that Jesus fires this at), Samaritans have no chance of being saved. They were regarded as scum, who could not possibly take their place in heaven. This is teaching point number one: Jesus is trying to get through to the thick-headed, stubborn religious authorities, that the kingdom is not just for them ... Jesus again declares here that the kingdom is for everyone including Samaritans!

But the thing that makes this passage so deeply profound and brings out the simplicity, power and radical nature of the Gospel is this key question:

What is it here in this story that prompts Jesus to declare that the Samaritan is saved?

What does the Samaritan do to deserve this treatment? Initially we might say that he does precisely and unquestionably absolutely zero. Now that's true to a point ... but let's consider the significance of verse 13 ... **"Jesus, Master have pity on us."** Here lies the key to the profound nature of this passage ... the Samaritan has acknowledged Jesus for who He is. In effect he (along with the other 9 lepers by the way) has acknowledged Jesus as Lord! In response to that confession, Jesus pronounces salvation! Here also lies the connecting link to the thread that I left dangling at the end of last week's reflections. The Samaritan's simple confession of Jesus as Master (Messiah), was clearly sufficient for Jesus to say: *"your faith has saved you!"*

Now this is classic Luther; the Gospel in a nutshell; the Samaritan is **saved by grace** and teaching point number two: Jesus is modelling to the Jews the new pathway to salvation that is emerging before their eyes (out with the law - in with the Gospel!)

There are numerous other dimensions to this passage including the cultural context of the lepers and Samaritans, the nine not returning, the faith of the ten in setting off, the worship response of the Samaritan, the question: *Were the other nine saved?* ... a wonderful passage that merits extended study.

There is a bottom line for us in Lutheran schools today too - another reminder to not lose sight of the very simple nature of the Gospel message. The good news is available to every single living person ever created! Jesus through his **once for all**, finished work on the cross has set free anyone who acknowledges Jesus as Lord! There is also a subtle reminder that the doors of our schools are open to all, as places where we show people Jesus.

Nev.

PS If you need a second opinion on this, coming up in a few weeks is another acted parable with a similar theme - the story of Zacchaeus (stay tuned!)