

Thought for the day: 13 May 2020

Numbers 12 (whole chapter) and Luke 5 (verses 12 to 26)

Most churches have probably experienced some internal strife. Maybe the church warden muttering about the organist, or the welcomers complaining about the vicar. But we don't often hear of God's immediate and physical presence as an arbitrator! That's what seems to have happened in our reading from Numbers, however - Aaron and Miriam's talk against Moses resulted in a summons from God and then Miriam being cast out of the camp following an attack of leprosy. I could imagine a lot of unanimous church council decisions, if that was the alternative!

And in our passage from Luke, we read of another two dramatic situations. They're both healings - firstly, a leper who comes individually to Jesus and asks for cleansing. After being healed, he's told to go quietly to the temple. And then a paralysed man who's dramatically lowered in through the roof. After Jesus has pronounced his sins to be forgiven, he's invited to go home, whilst all the people worshipped God.

There are loads of questions and ideas that come from these two readings.

We could think about the reference to Moses marrying a Cushite or Ethiopian at the start of Numbers 12. It only gets about ten words at the beginning of the passage, and it can get lost in what happens next. But there's lots in that simple statement - and the rest of the chapter.

Or we could think about Jesus saying "your sins are forgiven" rather than "get up and walk" in the second healing from Luke. Was it just to provoke the Pharisees? And why, in verse 24, does he speak openly about the Son of Man, when earlier in the chapter he instructed the leper to keep quiet about his miraculous healing?

Trying to think through even just two short passages of scripture can sometimes feel overwhelming! There's rarely a shortage of points to reflect on and pray about. And of course the context is important too, so there's always the temptation for a history lesson as well. But perhaps this is one of those times when we just need to focus on the simple?

When the leper asked Jesus if he would cleanse him, Jesus replied "I am willing".

He didn't check on the man's history. He didn't impose any conditions; the instructions for what to do next only came after the leper is healed. There was no hint of hesitation - no weariness, wariness or reluctance.

He just said "I am willing".

We're in a time of complexity; of uncertainty; of information overload. So perhaps we sometimes need to keep it simple? To ask for our own cleansing and healing, and not to obsess over exactly what how everything fits together.

Because Jesus says "I am willing".