Thought for the Day, 4 July 2020 Revd Tony Whatmough

Luke 17:11-19

This is one of the Bible passages that reveals things if we read it backwards!

Verse 16: And he was a Samaritan.

We all know of course, that the Jews and the Samaritans didn't get on. They had a long history of opposition.

But just think for a moment. These ten lepers had been ostracised by their communities, and on the face of it, for good reason. There was no known cure for leprosy until 1982.

Imagine waking up one morning, swinging your feet out of bed, and noticing discoloured patches on your feet, realising that your hands had lost sensation and that you have become a leper. We sometimes still use that word today to describe someone who is shunned; a pariah.

But these lepers had found a certain kind of solidarity. They really were all shunned by society. The only people they could relate to were each other.

I wonder what kind of gratitude the Samaritan had. Certainly thankfulness for being healed, but I also think it might have been certain thankfulness for being accepted amongst his fellow lepers?

So when he returned to give thanks to Jesus, maybe it was that twofold thankfulness. Or maybe it was the same. Healing can be physical healing, but acceptance can be healing as well.

The sad thing about this story is that it was only the Samaritan who saw the importance of thanksgiving. Perhaps it was only he who truly realised the depth of his healing: that sense of community that he had experienced, as well as the physical healing of his body. Perhaps when Jesus asked where the other nine were, he was sad that they hadn't been completely healed in body, mind and spirit, the truest healing of all.

You might want to check out the webpage of the Leprosy mission for more information:

https://www.leprosymission.org.uk/about/about-leprosy/