

Commentary on the Gospel for Wed, Nov 14th 2018

Today's Gospel reading is basically clear, although there are at least two "problems" with it. For one, Jesus is passing along the border between the Jews of Galilee and the Samaritans, and it is clear that the one who returns to give thanks is a Samaritan. Given the enmity between the two groups, why does Jesus send the man to show himself to a Jewish priest? Or does He?

And why does Jesus complain about the others not coming back to give thanks? They were obeying Him... Although Jesus Himself indicates that "it is mercy I desire and not sacrifice" in Matthew 9:13 and 12:7, I Samuel 15:22 says that it is "obedience and not sacrifice" that God desires and a text in Hosea speaks of "love, not sacrifice" (6:6).

I guess that looking specifically at this passage, though, brings out the Samaritan's very personal reaction as primary: he was indeed obeying Jesus and saw his healing, but the urge to give thanks and praise overcame all other imperatives for him. Note that the text says he returned "praising God" and yet, after falling to his face at Jesus' feet, it is Jesus whom he praises.

Jesus heals all the lepers, not making them into angels but allowing them to be renewed and refreshed, ready to live normal lives, to seek and serve God once again. When Jesus heals us, do we return to give thanks and praise even though we have not yet seen the end of our healing? Do we appreciate and use that new life with as much fidelity as we can?

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