



The Parish Churches of S Philip and S Augustine and S Matthew with S Mary the Virgin Newcastle

Homily for the Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time (12th October) 2025

The Gospel reading this morning can be construed as a simple instance of ingratitude - even, perhaps, a sense of entitlement as only the Samaritan returns to thank Jesus for his cure, suggesting that the others simply considered their healing almost as a right. However, the narrative is not quite as simple as we might suppose.

Jesus had told the ten to present themselves to the priests at the Temple, because it was the priests who would confirm the healing and until that had happened, they would not have been considered as cured. Presumably, this would have been followed by some sort of thank offering in the Temple: in other words, the ten would have been expected to thank God for the restitution of their health. When Jesus asks where the other nine are, we might fairly answer that they are on their way to the Temple as He had instructed them.

In thanking Jesus for the cure, the Samaritan rather pre-empted the place of gratitude, because, according to the rules, he had not yet been, as were, certified as healed. Maybe, he was just overcome with joy at the healing; but we should remember that the Samaritan would have been somewhat reticent about the Temple in Jerusalem and its priestly staff. The history of the Samaritans and their relationship to the Jews focused on Mount Zion is complicated and uncertain for us; but as we hear elsewhere in the Gospels, they had their own religious centre on Mount Gerezim.

The Samaritan's action might, therefore, have reflected an aversion to participating in the worship in Jerusalem, choosing, instead to thank the agent of his healing. Jesus seems to have co-operated with this decision, declaring the Samaritan healed and sending him on his way. In other words, the Samaritan never went to submit himself to the authority of the Jerusalem Temple.

In this small scene, we see pre-figured the moment when the role and functions of the Temple and its priestly staff will be transferred to the person of Christ as He both authenticates the healing of the Samaritan and receives his thanks.

We might also see illustrated one of the key principles of this Renewed Covenant. In the spontaneous gratitude of the Samaritan, which so overwhelms him, that he breaks ranks with the other nine and returns to say, "Thank you." This reflects the priority of the disposition of the heart and mind over the rituals, which were supposed to manifest them, but which, often, were seen by some as a formalised response, with which there was no engagement at a deeper level.

This latter point is, of course, also made in the *Parable of the Good Samaritan*, wherein the conduct of the eponymous hero of the story is contrasted with the neglect of the priest and the Levite. Although the conduct of the two Temple officials is rather more complex than people often infer, the point is still the same: that followers of Christ cannot see the ritual expressions of their Faith as more important than the ethical principles they are supposed to express.

It is interesting that Samaritans feature as protagonists in several of the narratives where the character of the coming Renewed Covenant is revealed. Of course, the parable is just a story, but today's Gospel and the story of the *Woman at the Well* are presented as events. It must be doubtful that the Samaritan people understood the import of their encounters with Jesus. Rather, the significance is grasped by the Church in retrospect.

Why Samaritans were chosen for these moments can only be a matter of speculation. Maybe, it was their outsider status, which enabled them to respond in a way that Jerusalem focused Jews could or would not. If so, perhaps an implication for us is that we should never be deaf to the way in which people who are outsiders to us respond to our life of Faith.