

It is surprising how many decisions I've had to make over the last few months even though I've spent about 23 hours of each day in the manse. I'm sure you'll be the same. I don't just mean which Tunnocks product to eat next, but big decisions like what to take with you when you go shopping? You see I only take a small shopping bag with me when I go off to shop. It's my way of ensuring I don't make expensive impulse buys. But this week as I unloaded all the essential extra parcels and packets from the back seat of the car after one shopping trip, I started to wonder. What's happened? What was different? What has caused this change in shopping habits. Bags overflowing are not my usual lifestyle choice. Then yesterday when I came back with no extra parcels on the back seat, I thought yes I'd cracked it?

But how?

I mused. Nothing seemed to have changed. Then I remembered something had changed—the weather.

Not long after we started lockdown, there was a chill in the air and I always wore my scarf and coat. Then the sun came out and we had some beautiful warm weather and I stopped wearing my coat and put my scarf in my shopping bag to use, if needed, as a face covering. That simple action reduced the capacity of my shopping bag by half.

Then maybe you noticed that the weather changed again this week. Rain and downright cold so, all of a sudden, my coat and scarf were both back round my shoulders and my shopping jostled happily in the shopping bag once more.

It turns out that these strange isolating conditions were leading to some odd changes in my lifestyle. Nothing like the horrible effects the virus is having on grieving families, but in its own way making me rethink some of the ways I live. Opening debates in my mind and changing my behaviour.

It has been evident in a much larger scale in the community with all the people who have been showing their thanks for how key workers have kept so many services going.

Thank you's are given freely which is what Sarah's was reminding us to do in her talk this morning in the story of the 10 people who, maintaining social distancing, call out to Jesus asking for help. We often think of it as a healing story but it's

much more than that. It's a bit like my shopping bag antics, it's a story that sets us up to ask questions. And one question is,

is this a healing story at all? And if it is what kind of healing is this all about?

They ask for help and as expected Jesus helps them – all 10 are healed on the way to the priests. At this point, the best course is to remind yourself of how Luke starts the story. For a gospel writer known for his attention to detail, at first glance he gets his geography wrong too or does he. He says rather ambiguously that Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem in the region between Samaria and Galilee. He seems to be setting up in the story a mixture of concerns that are important to both areas. Luke tells us a healing story and as we well know illness does not stop at borders and so neither need healing.

Immediately we are to wonder just what kind of a healing story is this.

He helps all 10, but only one returns to Jesus and ignoring social distancing thanks him.

But the punch line of the story is still to come. The one who praises Jesus is a Samaritan. We are so used to saying that Jesus helps everyone that maybe we lose the impact. Sarah reminded us that the Samaritan had a different theology from the other nine, so this behaviour of the Samaritan was a big thing. The main difference between religion as followed by the Samaritans and the that followed by Jesus and his disciples was that, the Samaritans knew only the Torah as scripture not the prophets or writings and that they did not believe that Jerusalem was the correct place for the temple. Pretty big differences. The books of Moses yes, the prophets no, but as Luke hints at the start, Jesus seems to have an accepting foot in both camps. He was journeying in the region between Samaria and Galilee. And we think Samaritan praising God, oh yes Luke has already told us about the practical way the good Samaritan helped his neighbour. The practical approval of Jesus for the outsider is now seen in the theological acceptance of the outsider.

Were not 10 healed said Jesus, but only the outsider comes back to say thank you?

The difference being a Samaritan made could have been a stumbling block for Jesus, but he brushes it aside and according to many translations says go on your

way your faith has healed you. And in one sentence he challenges us to think about how we see people in our lives.

It's clearer though if you refrain from seeing this as focusing on healing an illness. The Greek word used by Luke is *sozos* which really means saved. The better translation is go on your way your faith has saved you.

Jesus help goes way deeper than removing illness. This isn't so much a healing story as one about salvation- bringing us nearer to God.

And we wonder at the end. Yes, faith has brought him nearer to God, but Jesus says go on your way. Not the way. Not join my disciples and we'll all go to Jerusalem together.

There seems still to be something to think this over.

Go on your own way, go on take some time to think this through. Your faith has saved you.

And as we start to leave lockdown

As we emerge back into the world slowly, we all need to work out how we go on our way back to being people in the world again. However we do it, we know that we do it with God. He is with us; all of us. He embraces the outsider, the one who simply holds a different view from us, and asks us to do the same as we build the church of the future.

We know that many people have been watching our face book and website pages over the last few weeks, not just the east church. So that immediately makes us think, well how do we proceed as a church in the coming months. How do we include all who are listening to Jesus?

What do you think?

Peace be with you.

Amen