

Twenty First Sunday after Pentecost 9 October 2016

[Jeremiah 29:1, 4-7; Psalm 66:1-12 ;2 Kings 5:1-3, 7-15c;2 Timothy 2:8-15 Luke 17:11-19](#) from Vanderbilt

[Proper 23C / Ordinary 28C / Pentecost +21 Oct 9, 2016](#) from Textweek

Thank you for having me here today to celebrate our eucharist, our thanksgiving, as your priest.

This is an unusual eucharist for me because early Friday morning my niece Anna phoned to tell me that her mother, my sister Mimi, had died. She, my younger sister, was a farmer near Deloraine in Tasmania, wife of Neil, mother of Anna and Michael, artist, creator of stained glass windows and pottery and musician who in her seventies found a new career playing violin in a group which plays Scot and Irish jigs.

So for me today's eucharist is a special thanksgiving for her life.

I invite each of you to join me in giving thanks for some person or persons who have graced our lives.

Luke has long been my favourite author in the bible [although when I was at a graduate theological school, a fellow student said that should have been Nehemiah, pronounced knee high Meyer, the shortest biblical author. A bad joke.

My father, a physician, had a novel, titled, I think "Dear and Glorious Physician" and like lots of doctors Dad was a member of The Guild of Saint Luke.

In the story of ten lepers Luke uses a couple of medical terms. "hiatha" for being healed and "katharise" for having impurities removed. We still use similar terms and medicine has a long established language.

Luke is highly skilled in language and I note that the start to his gospel and the start to the Acts of the apostles are in classical Greek such as a highly educated doctor would have used. The rest of his gospel and the Acts are in the more simple language which was common use in the Roman empire.

I think the story about the ten lepers appealed especially to doctor Luke. His is the only Gospel which tells it.

And the key point of the story is not that the Lepers were healed but that one of them came back to say "thank you".

It is interesting that Luke says the returning leper was "eucharistos", that is, "thankful". By the time he wrote, Christians were beginning to the word eucharist to describe their celebration with bread and wine.

I wonder if Luke, an expert in language, intended a double meaning here. Probably not.

Although there are many mentions of lepers in the bible, we are not certain that all of them had Hansen's Disease as we call leprosy now. We can treat it with drugs and the lepers hospital and settlement in the Kimberley was closed in 1986.

Some bible based teaching is that we are all sick, just as Saul (Paul) was "sick" when he persecuted Christians and had to be healed. Saint Augustine taught that all people were sick with Original Sin. Hence all had to be healed or made better by Jesus Christ.

I think it is more creative today for us to recognise that we the worshipping people are called to be "the tenth leper".

We are gathered here because we are the people who have turned back to say thank you.

In some ways we are called to be a sign pointing the way to God.

And in our giving thanks we proclaim God's love for us and others. We pray for and on behalf of God's world.

Of course there are other ways of giving thanks and we could keep on saying thank you often, as we teach children to do.

We should give thanks for the richness of today's earlier readings.

We know amazing details about the letter Jeremiah sent to exiles in Babylon in 597 BC. We even know that he entrusted it to the equivalent of a diplomatic pouch. His advice to the exiles is like that he gave to them when they were still in Jerusalem – settle down, build houses, work for the common good and prosperity. Peter preached on that earlier advice a couple of weeks ago and today's psalm gives witness that the people in exile eventually got back to Jerusalem.

The second letter to Timothy is about Paul chained in a dungeon, imprisoned under Nero and knowing that the end of his life is near. He was executed soon after.

Back to thanksgiving.

May we pray "A thanksgiving for Australia", prayer 3 on page 218 of our Prayerbook. As far as I know, it is the only direct contribution to the prayerbook by an indigenous person.

"God of holy dreaming, Great Creator Spirit,
From the dawn of creation you have given your children the good things of Mother Earth.
You spoke and the gum tree grew.
In the vast desert and dense forest, and in cities at the water's edge, creation sings your praise.
Your presence endures as the rock at the heart of our land.
When Jesus hung on the tree you heard the cries of all your people and became one with your wounded ones:

The convicts, the hunted and the dispossessed.

The sunrise of your Son coloured the earth anew, and bathed it in glorious hope.

In Jesus we have been reconciled to you, to each other and to your whole creation.

Lead us on, Great Spirit, as we gather from the four corners of the earth; enable us to walk together in trust

From the hurt and shame of the past into the full day which has dawned in Jesus Christ. Amen”.

Three final notes of thanksgiving:

1. For our garden. As we came out of church last Sunday, someone said “Stop. Look at the garden. It is beautiful.”
2. For our concert and specially for Belinda, Sarah and David.
3. For all our Sunday musicians.

Gerry Costigan