

## **THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**

(Luke 17: 11-19)

(*Poem* Vol. 4, pp. 441-4 and 436; *Gospel* Vol. 7, pp. 419-22, 413-4;  
*Notebooks* 1943, p. 373)

***(Jesus and His apostles are walking in rugged mountain country near the Samaritan village of Ephraim. A cry is heard, coming from a nearby hill...)***

'Jesus! Rabbi Jesus! Son of David and our Lord, have mercy on us.'

The apostles say: 'They're lepers! Let us go, Master, otherwise the whole village will rush here, and detain us in their houses.'

But the lepers have the advantage of being ahead of them, high up on the road, at least five hundred metres from the village. They come down, limping, and rush towards Jesus, repeating their cries.

'Let's go into the village, Master. They can't go in there' say some of the apostles. But others remark: 'Some women have already come out and are looking. If we go in, we will avoid the lepers, but we will not avoid being recognised...'

And while they are uncertain as to what they should do, the lepers come closer to Jesus, Who, heedless of His disciples' ifs and buts, has continued on His way. The apostles resign themselves to following Him, while some women - with children hanging on to their skirts - and a few old men from the village, come to watch. They remain at a prudent distance from the lepers, who stop only a few metres from Jesus, and implore once again: 'Jesus, have mercy on us!'

Jesus looks at them for a moment. Then, without approaching the sorrowful group, He asks: 'Are you from this village?'

'No, Master. We come from different places. But the other side of the mountain - where we stay - faces the road to Jericho, and it is a good spot for us...'

And Jesus says: 'Go then to the village nearest to your mountain, and show yourselves to the priests.'

Jesus resumes walking, moving to the roadside so that He may not touch the lepers. They look at Him as He draws closer, with their poor diseased eyes expressing nothing but hope. And when Jesus reaches them, He raises His hand to bless them.

The people of the village are disappointed, and go back to their houses... The lepers clamber up the mountain again, going to their grottoes or towards the Jericho road.

One of the apostles says: 'You did the right thing in not curing them. The people in the village wouldn't have let us go away...'

'Yes' says another, 'and now we ought to arrive at Ephraim before night-time.'

Jesus continues to walk, and is silent. The village is now hidden by the bends of the winding road...

But a voice reaches them: 'Praise to the Most High God and to His true Messiah. All power, wisdom and mercy is in Him! Praise to the Most High God, Who has granted us peace through Him. Praise Him, O men of the towns in Judaea, Samaria, Galilee and beyond the Jordan...'

Here, here is the word of Elijah, who loved us. Listen to it, peoples of Palestine, and understand it. One must no longer limp on two sides, but one must choose by the light of the spirit. And if the spirit is righteous, one will choose correctly. This is the Lord, follow Him!... Open your eyes - men whose souls are blind - and see.'

One of the lepers follows them on the main road, drawing closer and closer, where he points Jesus out to some pilgrims. The apostles, annoyed, turn round two or three times. They tell the leper, by now completely cured, to be silent. And eventually, they almost threaten him.

The man stops shouting for a moment, and in order to speak to everybody, he replies: 'Do you expect me not to glorify the great things which God has done to me? Do you want me not to bless Him?'

'Bless Him in your heart and be quiet' they reply, angrily.

'No, I cannot be quiet. God puts the words on my lips', and he resumes in a louder voice: 'People of the two border towns, and you who happen to pass here, stop and worship Him,

Who will reign in the name of the Lord... Here comes the day when the jealousy of Ephraim will end, because there is no longer Israel and Judah, but one Kingdom only: the Kingdom of the Christ of the Lord. Well, I sing the praises of the Lord Who saved me and consoled me. Now, I say: praise Him, and come to drink salvation at the fountain of the Saviour. Hosanna! Hosanna to the great things He works! Hosanna to the Most High Who put His Spirit among men and clothed Him with flesh, that He might become the Redeemer!

He is inexhaustible. The crowds increase in number, they throng and obstruct the road. Those who were behind rush forward, those who were ahead come back. The people of a little village, which is now close at hand, join the passers-by.

'Please make him keep quiet, Lord' say the angry apostles. 'He is a Samaritan. That is what the people say. Since You do not even allow even us to go ahead preaching about You, he must not speak of You!'

And Jesus says: 'My dear friends, I will repeat to you the words which Moses spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, when he complained because Eldad and Medad were prophesying in the camp: "Are you jealous on my account? Oh! if only the whole people of Yahweh were prophets, and Yahweh gave His Spirit to them all!". However I will stop, and dismiss him, to make you happy.'

And He stops, turns around, and calls the cured leper, who runs towards Jesus and prostrates himself before Him, kissing the ground.

'Stand up. And where are the others? Were you not ten in all? Did the other nine not feel it was necessary to thank the Lord? Out of ten lepers - among whom one only was a Samaritan - did not one, except this foreigner, feel it was his duty to come back and give glory to God, before going back to life and to his family? And they say that he is a "Samaritan". So are the Samaritans no longer intoxicated, not seeing double, and coming to the way of Salvation without staggering? Does the Word speak a foreign language - if foreigners understand Him, and His own countrymen do not?'

He turns His wonderful eyes on the crowds who are from every place in Palestine. Those flashing eyes are unsustainable... Many lower their heads and spur their mounts, or walk away...

Jesus lowers His eyes on the Samaritan, kneeling at His feet, and looks at him most kindly. He raises His hand... to bless him, and says: 'Stand up and go away. Your faith has saved, in you, something which is more than your flesh. Go in the Light of God...'

The man kisses the ground again, and before standing up he asks: 'Give me a name, Lord. A new name, because everything is new in me, for ever.'

'In which part of the country are we now?'

'In Ephraim.'

'And from now onwards Ephrem is your name, because Life has given you life twice. Go.'

The man stands up and goes away...

(A footnote at the end of this chapter says that "Ephrem" means "Double Fruit".)

-----

***(Maria Valtorta comments on a distinctive feature, and the ease of manner, of the Samaritans...)***

'...Without being sinners - as the Judaeans and Galileans considered them - they are open and frank, without bigotry, and without the silly complications of other people. And they are hospitable. This remark makes me think that, in the parable of the good Samaritan: there is not only the intention of pointing out that there is good and evil everywhere and among all races, and that also among heretics there may be righteous people; but there is also a real description of Samaritan behaviour towards those who are in need. They may have stopped at the Pentateuch [the first five books of the Christian Bible] - I hear them speak of this, and of nothing else - but they practise it, at least towards their neighbours. And they do so with more correctness than the others, with their six hundred and thirteen precepts and so on...'

-----

***(Jesus speaks to Maria Valtorta - of souls who run after human interests, and “become blinded by too many mirages of human science”...)***

‘...The evening of their lives arrives, and they find themselves so far from Me! Weary, nauseated, and corroded, they no longer have the strength to approach the Lord. It is indeed a great deal, if there remains - in them - a residue of heavenly longings and memories of Faith, which makes them hurl the cry of the lepers of old: “Jesus, have mercy on me”.

It is the saving cry, because my Name is never called out to no avail. I - who keep watch, waiting to be called - hasten to anyone invoking Me. And for the sake of my Name - before whose sound the Heavens tremble with joy and the abysses with terror - I work the miracle...’