

## **Sermon on Wednesday 10 November 2021 by Maria Henriksson-Bell, Lay Leader of Worship**

In today's reading, from Luke 17, only one of those healed praises God, and Jesus replies: "Go, your faith has made you well." Jesus does not say, "God fixed you." He says, "Your faith has made you well."

A few weeks ago, I rather rashly promised I would return to the topic of an all-powerful, all-knowing God and whether God does intervene in our lives. This topic quickly gets big and very messy, so forgive me if I go off-piste.

According to our human morality, a God that sees something go wrong and does not fix it is a bad God. And yet, one of the Biblical names of God is Jehovah-Rapha, "The God Who Heals", and in Exodus 15:26, God is specifically referring to physical healing.

However, our present day understanding of God must always go via the incarnation, Emmanuel, God among us, in human form as Jesus. Jesus did not heal everyone and that is shocking! It might even frighten us.

But that is when we look at it from our small, human perspective. Jesus saw the big picture. Yes, he healed those in front of him and those he was made aware of, but with his teaching, his attitude, and leading by example by engaging with those society deemed unclean, he challenged the prejudices of those around

them. Jesus engaged with and lifted up, as examples to follow, those who were outcasts, when those outcasts in desperation turned to him for help.

It stands to reason that those of us who wish to follow the example of Christ must also challenge the prejudices of our own society and our own prejudices. It goes without saying that we are called to love our neighbours.

Do we accept that those crossing the English Channel in rickety boats are our neighbours? Do we accept that those who challenge our understandings of gender or sexuality, in the way they dress or behave, are our neighbours? Do we recognise those without fixed abodes or with difficult behaviours as our neighbours? Do we love the difficult family member or tricky colleague as ourselves?

It isn't easy, but we have to keep choosing love, kindness and generosity. Just like Jesus experienced, people often won't thank us. They very often won't thank God.

So, what about God then? Does God intervene in our lives? I think so; through people, through nature and nurture, the Holy Spirit that sings and dances in our lives, if we listen and look.

Could it also be that God is, and has always, invited US to be involved in the solutions; us as miracle workers and angels, not just as individuals but as part of bigger collective?

For better and worse we live in a globalised world

where the choices we make resonate around the world.

Humanity's free will has led men to start wars, but we have it in our hearts to be peacemakers.

Humanity's free will has led to the cruelty of sweat shops and child labour in foreign lands, but we have the power to push for change by not buying the fruits of this labour.

Our free will has led us to exploit nature in ways that have led to natural disasters, but we have the power to both change our ways as individuals, by choosing organic and fair trade products, as well as ask for political change.

We can be part of the solution and we are called to be part of the solution, never forgetting that when we go about God's business of seeking peace and justice and good stewardship of the Earth, God is with us.

Emmanuel.

Amen

