

A Shared Experience

Intro. Have you ever been on your way somewhere and see someone waiting to talk with you? I have. I remember a few times when *my mother* was the one waiting for me. I knew I could not get past her without some question as to where I had been or why I was late. As the Lord approached a village, he saw people waiting for him. He knew he could not pass by without hearing what they wanted.

I. Traveling between the regions of Samaria and Galilee was the usual way travelers went from the northern part of Israel to Jerusalem. This group of people knew the Lord would pass there. They were purposely waiting for him. They respectfully kept their distance and called out asking for pity. Their lives *were* pitiful; denied any contact with family, friends, worship or job. They were destined for the

rest of their lives to wander in a desert, bereft of the human contact most of us need. Until Hope appeared at the village. It is incredible that in this group of people suffering marginalization because of leprosy, a *Samaritan was living with Israelites*. Sharing so terrible a disease broke down the barriers between two groups that historically hated each other. That too was a miracle. Imagine that happening today; so-called “respectable” people living with “marginalized” people. The Lord did not question who they were, where they were from or if they were believers. He did not have pity for them. He *did have* empathy, compassion and immediately told them to go and be declared clean. That’s it? No healing prayer? Naaman had that reaction to the prophet Elisha who said, “Go wash in the river seven times.” Only the words, “Go show yourselves.”

They took him at his words and went. For his faith in the Lord's Word and returning thanks, one received more: salvation. The other nine didn't.

Concl. One of the comments I read about the hurricane destruction was that no matter the type of home, - small or large, worth millions of dollars or several thousand - they suffered the same fate: damaged or destroyed. People who may never have associated with each other except standing in the check-out line at the grocery store, now share a common and terrible experience: their lives have been turned upside down. They are *all* in need of help, some maybe for the first time in their lives. Along with their homes, the barriers between poor and rich are destroyed. Now they are standing together in line for water and food. Would that all barriers between us be destroyed! I wonder if the

group of people who shared a horrible life of leprosy ever saw each other again. Did they have reunions, introducing their families to each other? Perhaps they never wanted to see each other again or be reminded of their shared misery. Did they pass on the street and silently nod their heads to each other in recognition? Some experiences we never want to have again or see the people from those times. For me, several people even from my difficult times have made a bond that forever shapes my life today.

We all share a common experience: we are all offered salvation. The Samaritan returned to give thanks and received salvation. Do we have the courage to do the same?

Fr. Michael Pendergraft

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