AAW 12th October 2025

Talk: "Thank You… More Than Manners"

WT: I want to start with a story about a man named Cyprian. He was a powerful Roman lawyer who became a Christian about 200 years after Jesus. He wrote to his friend, saying: "It is a bad world… But I have discovered… a company **of quiet and holy people** who have learned a great secret. They have found a joy which is a **thousand times better than any of the pleasures of our sinful life**. These people are the Christians—and I am one of them."

That sounds amazing! But if I'm honest, sometimes I look around—and I look at myself—and I wonder, do we express that kind of overwhelming joy? If I were the thankful man/ woman in our Gospel, would I have come back, "praising God in a loud voice" and throwing myself at Jesus' feet? Probably not! We're often more reserved. We might give a quiet, polite nod—like this (demonstrate)—or a simple thanks like this (demonstrate clapping). We say, "Thank you, that was very kind." But Cyprian is talking about something bigger. A joy that makes you want to shout and fall to your knees.

When we receive a gift, our "Thank you" is often automatic. It's good manners. But is there a difference between saying "thank you" out of habit and truly meaning it from the heart? That's our theme: **"Thank You… More Than Manners."**

I want you to imagine a really bad itch, right in the middle of your back, where you just can't reach. You have to ask for help. It can feel embarrassing, but the relief is amazing!

BB: Our Bible readings are about people with a much bigger problem: leprosy.

This wasn't just a sickness; it meant they were forced to live outside the community. They were **marginalised**, pushed to the edges, seen as unclean and untouchable. They were lonely and desperate.

To understand, think about a child needing medicine. It might taste horrible, but the parent knows this simple step is needed to get better. A simple instruction, and obeying it, leads to a great outcome.

Our readings show people who had to trust simple, sometimes humiliating, instructions.

First, Naaman. A top general, a powerful man, right up there with the King of Syria- they had invaded Israel and taken captives as their slaves. But he had leprosy!

One of his captives, an Israelite girl (not even a man), despite how we might have expected her to feel about invaders into her family's land & being made a slave, no longer free, had enough love and compassion that she wanted Naaman to be healed, and knew that an Israelite prophet, a devout Jew and follower of God, could help. Naaman was not a Jew. He believed in different Gods and had little care for the Israelites and their Jewish beliefs. So when the prophet Elisha told him to wash seven times in the Jordan River, not even in one of his own country's two fine rivers, Naaman was furious!

He was hugely important. And He was being asked to humble himself. But when he obeyed, he was healed! The reward was more than healthy skin—he found the one true God, converting to Judaism!!

WT: Then, we meet ten lepers. They were a group of **outcasts, bound together by their shared exclusion.** They see Jesus and shout, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us!" All ten are healed as they go to see the priest, a ritual necessary to cleanse them, which Jesus tells them to do. They get their lives back! Their health, their families, their place in the community!

But here's the key moment. Nine run off to enjoy their gift. But one stops. This man was a Samaritan—a **double outsider**, looked down upon for his race as well as his disease. He was the one you'd least expect to come back. But he does. He runs to Jesus, praising God loudly and **throwing himself at Jesus' feet to say thank you.**

Jesus says: "Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine?" Then He tells the grateful man: "Rise and go; your faith has made you well."

All ten were healed. But only this one—**the ultimate outsider—was made truly well by Christ's personal blessing.** The nine received the gift but forgot the Giver. The one's thankfulness showed his faith. In his moment of profound gratitude, he wasn't

just included; he was made whole. He found the "secret joy," and Jesus held him up as the example for everyone to follow.

And what of Jesus Himself in this miracle? He was making for Jerusalem, where He knew He would be in the worst trouble imaginable, but at this point He was in a region between

boundaries (between Samaria and Galilee), a dangerous place to travel. But this isn't unusual for Jesus- He hangs out in boundary spaces. And He's about to cross a social boundary (as He will continue to do) by associating and being moved to the most loving action for outcast and unclean people.

This story might feel ancient, but that feeling of being an outcast isn't. We've all felt it, haven't we? Maybe because of how we speak, where we live, who we're friends with, the "popular people" who don't seem to want us in their friendship group, or simply because we feel too young or too old, or too lacking in confidence for whatever reasons, to be heard.

But the challenge in our readings today is this: getting into God's healing zone often means getting out of our comfort zone. Just like Naaman had to dip in a muddy river and the lepers had to go show themselves, we are called to step out from what we know. Why? So that we can learn more, know new things, and we can only truly love what we know. When we step out, we meet God in new ways, and we meet each other with new understanding.

BB: So, what does this mean for us?

1. We All Need God's Help. Just like Naaman and the lepers, we all need help. We need to remember that everything good comes from Him, and He has given us these gifts freely, not

   because we have earnt them as a reward for hard work or because we belong to the right group!

2. Thankfulness Requires Humility. Naaman had to swallow his pride big time. The leper had to show himself and come close to Jesus, when he'd learnt not to do that, and to bow

down in the deep thanks he needed to express. A true "thank you" to God means admitting we need Him.

3. God's Love is Radically Inclusive. Jesus didn't just heal the 'important' lepers. He healed all ten. And the one who 'got it,' the one whose faith shone brightest, was the one society had thrown so far away. God's grace is for everyone, especially those on the margins.

This is where it gets personal for us. The whole All Age Worship team wants to say how we have felt God's love and support through all of you this past year. You've shown us what it means to be the church—not a perfect club, but an inclusive family. Your support and prayers have been the practical way God has helped us. A couple of us came in as willing helpers, but in the humble knowledge that we have much less scriptural, spiritual and theological experience than many of you, who so kindly turn up on AAW Sundays and so generously listen, join in meditations, drama, signing and all sorts- we know that not all of you love all we try to do, but your encouragement and love, anyway, has given us the confidence to take some risks, keep learning, and to keep going. So, thank you so, so much.

This experience has brought to life what Paul told Timothy: that our worth comes from God's approval, shown through the love of His people. Your kindness has reminded us that God is with us.

So today, let's strive to be like the Samaritan leper, who comes back to Christ to fully tell out his enormous gratitude.

Let's continue to be a church known for its grateful, inclusive joy, one family which doesn't set boundaries and keep within the comfort zones of borders, but recognises all Your people and all Your creation.

When Jesus, further on this same journey and finally nearing Jerusalem and at His last meal with his disciples, gave His Father thanks for the bread and wine that they shared, the word he used is that which we have taken our word “Eucharist “from, meaning “**gracious thanksgiving**”.

Let's make our "thank you" more than manners.

Amen.