**#55 9 October 2022 SG Trinity 17**

**2 Timothy 2:8-15**

**8**Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, a descendant of David—that is my gospel, **9**for which I suffer hardship, even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But the word of God is not chained. **10**Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, so that they may also obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory. **11**The saying is sure:

If we have died with him, we will also live with him;
**12**if we endure, we will also reign with him;
if we deny him, he will also deny us;
**13**if we are faithless, he remains faithful—
for he cannot deny himself.

**A Worker Approved by God**

**14**Remind them of this, and warn them before God[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Timothy%202%3A8-15&version=NRSVA#fen-NRSVA-29825a)] that they are to avoid wrangling over words, which does no good but only ruins those who are listening. **15**Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved by him, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly explaining the word of truth.

**Luke 17: 11-19**

### Jesus Cleanses Ten Lepers

**11**On the way to Jerusalem Jesus[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+17%3A+11-19&version=NRSVA#fen-NRSVA-25655a)] was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee. **12**As he entered a village, ten lepers[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+17%3A+11-19&version=NRSVA#fen-NRSVA-25656b)] approached him. Keeping their distance, **13**they called out, saying, ‘Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!’ **14**When he saw them, he said to them, ‘Go and show yourselves to the priests.’ And as they went, they were made clean. **15**Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice. **16**He prostrated himself at Jesus’[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+17%3A+11-19&version=NRSVA#fen-NRSVA-25660c)] feet and thanked him. And he was a Samaritan. **17**Then Jesus asked, ‘Were not ten made clean? But the other nine, where are they? **18**Was none of them found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?’ **19**Then he said to him, ‘Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well.’

We have lost two good and faithful servants in the last little while, and we grieve together. We reach out to our God, we fall back on our faith, we pray as well as we can, we try to find the words, we wonder about life and its mysteries and we realise, because we forget sometimes, just how much we love people.

It is a delicate and strange time, the grieving time, and one which many of us have experienced. We said goodbye to Pat, of course, last Monday, and now have lost Julian, both of whom many of you knew better than me, but whom I knew a little, and I too feel diminished by their loss. Please light a candle for them while you are here today, or pray over one someone has already lit.

Coping with loss is both a private and a public thing; many of us know what it feels like to return home after a funeral for a loved one. It’s a feeling of emptiness and dislocation. And every time we say goodbye to someone in our community, those feelings of loss that we had on those intensely personal days have a habit of coming back. So we need to be kind to each other, but also kind to ourselves too, at this time.

People tell us that grief comes in waves, and they are right – and when my dad died, I felt that whatever I did to remember him when that tide was out, the waves always came crashing in again, just when I didn’t expect it, and washed away my resilience. Gradually, I’m wondering if it might just be that the waves, in part, start to wash away the tears too, as the Lamb who sits on the throne promises us in Revelation. Who knows – how that experience of grieving works is different for all of us, which is why coming together to support each other in our different ways is such a wonderful thing to be able to do. It is a very important part of our shared experience.

Another thing we hold dear is our companionship. We are servants, *together*. We might not call it that – many of us just see a need somewhere, a pastoral or a social problem, or something a seemingly simple as changing the hymn numbers, and get on with doing something about it, and don’t complicate things with titles, like discipleship or servanthood. But as Christians, that is one way of *naming* what we’re doing, and giving us a hint as to why we’re doing it. Servants serve in a disciplined way; we serve and are disciples of Christ Jesus.

And we’re very bad a recognising our own efforts too. Right at this moment, we mourn our love and friendship and companionship with Pat and Julian, and we celebrate what we can, now, see as their *whole lives* of serving others, and their *whole lives* as disciples in Christ. I just wonder if we might sometimes afford ourselves that same privilege too, - being kind to ourselves, as I say – and be kind to ourselves in the moment, and not wait until someone else does it for us, much later on, in memorial. As Paul says in Timothy today, we should glory in being able to ‘present yourself to God as one approved by him, who has no need to be ashamed.’

Our service to God, which has taken place alongside Pat’s and Julian’s, points us all out, too, as good and faithful servants. We share a common life, a common God, and a common grief; and so we are all deserving of our common kindness. As we say in the Baptism Service, we are *all* Christ’s pilgrim people, together. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine, says John.

I’ve long thought that kindness and holiness are closely linked. I wonder what it was that made the one leper in our Gospel turn back to Jesus to thank him, and not the other nine? I’d like to think that it was a combination of his kindness and holiness, combining together to make him take the action that he did. Here the leper has made a choice about how he lives and how he treats other people; he chooses kindness, and that kindness is recognised, returned and confirmed by Jesus’s holy blessing.

This is a kind and a holy church; a loving and a loved community; and when we lose friends, we come together, carrying on being kind to each other, looking out for each other, being kind to ourselves and, as our Collect said, we trust God to pour love into our hearts. We hold Pat and Julian in God’s love; love is in the grace that we have been given.

Let’s rejoice in their lives, and our part in those lives, and their part in ours, shared together and lived together, in that gift of love.

Amen