**Sermon – Sunday 24th August 2025 – Trinity 10**

**May I speak in the name of the living God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.**

Names are important.

They help to identify us to our family and friends.

Sometimes they get amended or twisted into a nickname or a name that everyone knows that person by.

We may like our name, or we may not.

We may use a middle name rather than our first name or abbreviate a name to another variation e.g. Beth for Elizabeth, Ted for Edward.

Sometimes actors are only known by the name of a favourite character e.g. David Jason is probably referred to as Del Boy whenever he appears on TV and people may not actually know his real name.

Names are used to mark significant milestones in our lives – baptism, weddings and funerals.

At funerals, after giving the full name of the deceased I will often say “known as…” so people who may only have known the person in one context know they are at the right funeral.

And we can all feel aggrieved if someone gets our name wrong or mispronounces or mis-spells it – using the “Dave” reference from Only Fools and Horses.

We feel that the person doesn’t care enough to get it right.

In the Gospels we know or are told the name of many of the people that Jesus interacted with – the disciples and in some cases their families – “sons of Zeberdee”, Zaccaeus, the long genealogy at the start of Matthew’s Gospel.

In contrast, sometimes we are not told the name of the person and today’s Gospel is a case in point in respect of the woman who Jesus heals.

She is not named by Jesus directly and the Gospel writer does not add her name in as a post-script after the event so that people would know who the lady was.

She is anonymous, although people at the time would have known who she was as she was probably a familiar sight around the synagogue, and remember in those days she may have had to beg to survive – not clear if she had a family and there was no welfare state.

Jesus, as we heard, took pity on her and healed her. She did not seek out Jesus – he sought her.

And the woman immediately started praising God and giving thanks.

Then we hear no more about her.

I wonder what happened to her?

We don’t know how old she was – did she marry and have a family?

Did she set out on a career and became successful?

Did she join the women who were travelling with Jesus?

We don’t know and the Gospel writers have not said.

What we do know is that her healing was not just physical – restoring her physically to health after years bent over with the damage that this would have done to her internal organs – but it was also a healing of the whole person.

Jesus calls her a “daughter of Abraham” – an heir to the promise made to Abraham that a great people would come through him.

She is an heir to this blessing and is now free to be a blessing to others.

She has been restored through her encounter with Jesus.

Someone who has probably been written off by her local community has been restored and she can begin a new life.

I wonder when we look around, we “write people off” and think that they cannot amount to anything or achieve anything with their life?

It can be very easy to apply labels to people and put everyone into the same category or box and dismiss them.

Maybe its that they went to a particular school, came from the “wrong side of the tracks” or have a particular sexuality or creed.

Sometimes this is fed by ignorance and a lack of understanding.

Sometimes it is fed by fear.

What if they do change or start to engage with the Christian faith?

But surely this is the crux of the Christian faith.

People are invited to change, to be transformed, to have a new life in Christ.

As Christians we are called to reach out to the marginalised, the ignored, the oppressed, the misunderstood, so that they, too, can have life in all its fulness as John writes.

Why would we wish to deny this to someone?

As we read in the Gospel, the leaders of the day got in a state because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath and Jesus called out their hypocrisy.

But was it about healing on the Sabbath or upsetting the status-quo with miracles – showing the power of God in action to bring healing and restoration?

The Gospel is challenging and unsettling.

It challenges to think about our attitudes – our attitude to God and to others.

The healing is one of rebuilding the whole person – physically, emotionally and spiritually.

In our reading from Isaiah, the prophet is speaking of the physical rebuilding of the city walls and the Temple in Jerusalem after the return from exile.

Everything had to be rebuilt stone by stone, brick by brick.

It was tough but the people were spurred on by the belief that God was with them in all that they did.

Just as the woman who was healed had to rebuild her life, so we, too, may have to rebuild our life after, for example, the death of a loved one, an accident, a messy divorce or relationship breakdown, the loss of a job.

This too is slow and painful and needs to be taken step by step.

As Christians we know that God is alongside us as we take the small steps towards rebuilding and that we can be restored.

And as a Church it is our duty to help with the rebuilding.

By doing so we are helping with the rebuilding and restructuring of a broken world.

Helping to restore a world to how God wants it to be.

We can do this by prayer, by our worship, by celebrating the sacraments and by walking alongside each other as we journey through life.

All of us will require or have required rebuilding at some point in our lives and we need to be reminded of those who have been there alongside us at those times and thank God for them.

For all of are called to be those people and to be willing to accept the help rebuilding our lives when it is needed.

**Amen.**