When he saw him he fell at his feet.

Jeremy Clarkson was recently interviewed by Farmers’ Weekly. Clarkson bought a farm in 2008 which was managed by a local farmer. When the farmer retired Clarkson asked himself a typical Top Gear question – “How hard can it be?” So he decided to run the farm himself.

The consequences are revealed in a series running on Amazon and needless to say Clarkson makes a mess of things. He buys himself a tractor – a Lamborghini with 270 horse power. It is far too big, it won’t fit into his barns and demolishes all the gate posts. No surprises there then.

But there is another side to Clarkson’s farming. If you look at his fields he leave 20 to 30 feet of wild flowers around the edges, he creates a wetland area to encourage wildlife, he keeps bees, he ploughs paths through his crops to enable insects to spread across the fields. If you watch his tractor pulling a cultivator it is followed by flocks of birds. The soil is clearly rich with worms and bugs.

When I was a lad I can remember tractors were always followed by flocks of birds. Not any more. The earth has paid a price.

As a result of his experiences Farmer’s Weekly interviewed Clarkson. How hard can it be? Well as it turns out, very hard. Clarkson admits farming is virtually impossible. One of things he cannot understand is how his farm can grow produce in their own soil, pick it with their own hands, sell it in their own farm shop, and still find that supermarkets can do it cheaper. How can that be right?

Behind the TV bluster and stunts there’s a serious question. What price are we paying? What price for food if the earth is worked to destruction? What price for cheap milk, carrots, wheat, when farmers cannot make ends meet? What price for a way of living which takes and takes but never asks if this is sustainable?

Which brings me to our gospel for today. It’s a typical supermarket bargain. Two for the price of one. Two healings in one story. And there’s a price.

Or rather there are several prices. I’ll tell you three of them.

Consider the leader of the synagogue whose daughter is ill. We are told she is twelve. In Jewish tradition a girl becomes a woman when she is twelve years and one day old. This girl is on the brink of womanhood. She has her whole life ahead of her. But she is ill, desperately ill.

The leader of the synagogue was an important person. He bore serious responsibilities, he was a significant person within the community, people looked up to him, he would be respected and honoured.

Yet he goes to Jesus for help. A man regarded as a troublemaker and a rebel. A man who stirred up trouble and upset respectable people. A man who kept bad company and caused offence. There is a price to pay if you got to someone like that for help.

And more than that, this leader of the community throws himself at Jesus’ feet. He was throwing everything away for the sake of his daughter. Love has a price.

And then there is the woman in the crowd. We are not told her name. She is never heard of again. Yet in this brief moment her story is exposed to history. Her illness would have made her an outcast. An issue of blood made her unclean. She would have been excluded from society, forbidden to be with others. Her illness did not just cause physical suffering, it also condemned her to a life of loneliness and rejection. We would recognise today the emotional, psychological and spiritual trauma she endured.

She paid a price, not even daring to ask Jesus for help. No Jewish man would converse with an unknown woman, certainly not one marked by an issue of blood. She cannot come to him, she cannot speak to him, she cannot throw herself at Jesus’ feet. All she can do is to reach out in desperation and touch his clothes.

Which is all God needs. Her faith was costly. And it is all God needs.

But there’s another price as well. This isn’t a something for nothing event. God doesn’t do things for cheap. Jesus pays a price. The moment she touches him he knows the cost has been paid, her faith costs him. It is a price he is willing to pay.

Whatever happens next in our community will involve a price, more than one, the cost of what comes next won’t come cheap. This is something we know. We know that things that matter don’t come cheap. We know that building relationships costs. We know that sustaining commitment costs. We know that nurturing a community, a society, that treats people decently has a price.

Jeremy Clarkson is right, and I never thought I’d be saying that from a pulpit. It isn’t easy growing things. The something for nothing society can’t last. It empties people and it puts nothing back. We can’t keep having more and more for less and less.

This story is about people looking for things to be different. And they can be. But there is a price. There is always a price. Usually it is paid by someone else, the unseen farmer, the unseen seafarer, the unseen factory worker, the unseen person who loses their job.

Change for the better can only happen when we recognise the price, and are willing to pay our fair share of it.