

Luke 17:11 - 19 Ten Cleansed One Saved

Ten Lepers Cleansed

11 And it came about while He was on the way to Jerusalem, that He was passing between Samaria and Galilee. 12 And as He entered a certain village, ten leprous men who stood at a distance met Him; 13 and they raised their voices, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" 14 And when He saw them, He said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And it came about that as they were going, they were cleansed. 15 Now one of them, when he saw that he had been healed, turned back, glorifying God with a loud voice, 16 and he fell on his face at His feet, giving thanks to Him. And he was a Samaritan. 17 And Jesus answered and said, "Were there not ten cleansed? But the nine—where are they? 18 "Was no one found who turned back to give glory to God, except this foreigner?" 19 And He said to him, "Rise, and go your way; your faith has made you well."

If Luke is anything, he's purposeful in how he arranges these stories in a particular order and fashion in order to build his case that Jesus is indeed, Messiah, Son of the living God.

Luke draws from thousands of stories, thousands of miracles, thousands of things Jesus did, more than all the books in the world could hold according to John the apostle, and Luke selects the colors to create the mosaic of Jesus life for us that will accomplish his purpose.

Jesus has been using the conflict with the pharisees who mocked Jesus, open public shaming disbelief as the counterpoint to teach His own disciples about how to approach their Father in heaven and what an acceptable relationship with that Father looks like.

We don't do anything to cause other people to stumble and dis-believe. The mocking pharisees were spiritual leaders in that land, and when they did that, they caused little ones to follow them . . . into hell. And that term includes but is not limited to children, little ones can be anyone who is simple in their faith, seeking truth from those who should be leaders.

We are careful not to cause other simple folk to stumble. Our lives should be such that seekers wanting to know how to know God should be helped, and not hindered.

There is a sense, perfectly illustrated by small children, little ones, that the precious quantity they have that God loves and that God is stirred to wrath when they are hindered in their seeking Him, that quantity is a lack of pride. Little ones are the humble. The powerless.

The proud pharisees who hindered the simple non proud truth seekers, caused some of those seekers to join them in their pride. And pride tops the list of what God hates. Proud mockers. Haughty eyes. Hell was prepared for those folks.

The next thing Jesus teaches about His Father that is opposite from the pharisees is forgiveness. Forgiveness. The pharisees were a closed club. A walled and gated community. They looked down on common sinners from their lofty position. They were better than the riff raff. Unforgiving. Unaccepting.

They thought God was pleased with their laws keeping. All of their ceremonial washings. All of their ridiculous added torments on the Sabbath day. They kept a social distance from the sinners. The ordinary riff raff who they considered not just lost, but cursed. Cursed by God. Lowlife's.

But when God showed up and lived amongst them He hung out with the riff raff, not the self righteous. Again, it's the sin of pride. Pride in their accomplishment of righteousness on their own. Distance from ordinary sinners. No forgiveness.

And Jesus tells His disciples, to be pleasing to God, you don't live like the pharisees, you don't cause little ones to stumble, and you forgive your brothers, again and again, like God forgives us. If the same guy sins against you 7 times and repents 7 times, you forgive him seven times.

That's when the disciples said "You need to increase our faith" and Jesus answers, no you need to increase your humility. Your relationship with your Father in heaven is not one that's in a position to make demands, it's one where you are slaves and He is owner.

Each time, it's the same pride thing that gets dealt with and adjusted over and over. We aren't proud. We are careful not to cause little ones to stumble. We forgive, continuously, over and over. We are lowly slaves. We lead from a low position, not an elevated proud one. We are humble slaves of our Master.

And Luke is going to tie all of those ideas together in this story about the lepers, and give us 2 more important stepping stones in our relationship with our heavenly Father. Thanks, and worship. Thanks and worship. Again, as opposed to pride. Thankfulness is the anti-thesis of pride. Worship is the exact opposite of pride.

11 And it came about while He was on the way to Jerusalem, that He was passing between Samaria and Galilee.

Here we are in chapter 17 and we are still on this same journey that we began in Luke 9:51. *As the day of His ascension approached, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem.* He is marching to His crucifixion. Resolutely so. One author says He set His face like flint. He cannot be deterred. His time approaches and He is on His way to Jerusalem. For 8 chapters we've been on this final journey.

And here we find ourselves inland, between the coast and the Jordan river valley, the inland road to Jerusalem which the Jews avoided because it went via Samaria. A despised place. It was the easier, shorter route, but Samaria was a bad neighborhood to the Jews. You avoid Samaria.

Samaria had been the capitol of the northern kingdom when the 12 tribes split, 10 north and 2 south. The northern tribes had gone deeply into idolatry, and when God judged them and removed them by Assyria, the remnant who

remained inter-married with the foreigners that the Assyrians put in that land, and you had a mish-mash of people who were sort of related to jews but intermarried and non pure.

The Jews hated the Samaritans and the feeling was reciprocated. They mixed about as well as the jews and palestinians do today. If you were a jew who traveled through that area, you would ceremoniously shake the Samaritan dust off your feet when you left that land.

But here we're on the northern borders of Samaria where it touches the Galilee. Somewhere near Nain, perhaps, where Jesus resurrected the widow's son from the dead.

Really, the purpose of Luke giving us a locale is to remind us, this really happened in space and time, and it happened at a given place. This isn't urban legend. This is history with a real time and a real place. We mustn't lose sight of that fact. These aren't fairy tail legends. These are real events in space and time.

If Luke had Google Earth, he could fly us in and tell us, it happened right here, on the road going through Samaria, after we left Galilee, on our way to Jerusalem. There are longitude and latitude coordinates for this exact spot. It really happened.

In 1971 I was riding in a tour bus, on that road, with a man named Charles Feinberg. You can look him up on Wikipedia. He was a renowned jewish scholar and teacher of the old testament who was a christian, and later in life he found himself teaching at Talbot Seminary in Southern California.

And even though we had a tour guide who was a nationalist jewish person riding along pointing out different places on that ride, it was when Dr. Feinberg spoke that all ears became attentive, including the jewish tour guide. Real places in real time.

But the account we're about to read seems surreal. It's hard to pinch yourself

and say, these events actually happened that day, as simply and exactly and non-dramatically as Luke records them.

So Luke gives us our bearings in this first verse about this incident. It was on the trip to Jerusalem, between Galilee and Samaria, a little insignificant village, and on the outskirts of that village, something incredible happened. Except Luke never says incredible. He always just presents the bald facts with very very little embellishment. There is no fanfare here.

This wouldn't sell well in the christian book stores. No one died and went to heaven or hell and came back and the skies opened up and they saw bright lights at the end of tunnels and all that la-de-dah baloney. Luke just says we were going down the road and . . . this happened. He probably does it that way because if you were going down the road with Jesus, it happened a LOT.

12 And as He entered a certain village, ten leprous men who stood at a distance met Him;

It's important that Luke adds the words *who stood at a distance*. Because the word can mean other skin conditions besides Hansen's disease. This is leprosy as identified by all of the old testament commands to isolate the sick from the well in order to not spread the disease. That's why they stood at a distance.

Leviticus 13 talks about skin diseases and what the people were to do in order to isolate the infectious illness. Quarantine was a biblical command for those who were infectious with this particular disease.

45 A diseased person must wear torn clothes and let his hair hang loose, and he must cover his mouth and cry out, 'Unclean, unclean!' 46 As long as he has the infection, he remains unclean. He must live alone in a place outside the camp.

The Biblical approach is sensible. In our world we're all instructed to act this way. Torn clothes and mouth coverings. This sounds like my trips to the Post Office.

Ten leprous men approach Jesus but they stay at a prescribed distance and shout out to Him. The reason there are 10 is because the quarantine only isolates the sick from the well. It was OK for those who were infected to be in each others company. So this is like a small colony of lepers.

13 and they raised their voices, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!"

Jesus, Master . . . This is a Luke word. Master is used 7 times and always by Luke. It means chief, commander, owner, the person of highest rank who is in charge.

Kurios and despotes are the usual words translated Lord. This word is epistates. From histemi which is owner, ruler, and epi which intensifies the root word. Super ruler. Super owner. Master. Jesus, Master.

The church needs to remember what these ten lepers knew. Jesus is the owner of everything. Everything created belongs to Him and is under His authority. Did these men actually understand that? Hard to say. They didn't have much to lose, that's for sure. And Jesus reputation preceded Him everywhere He went.

Did someone who knew of them run to tell them, Jesus is coming this way. Jesus the healer is approaching our village. That might account for the 10 who are outside the camp, waiting for Him to be in shouting distance. They acknowledge Him as Master and they cry out for mercy.

A few weeks ago I mused upon pictures that God gives us of ourselves. Did God create sheep so we could see how helpless and stupid we are. A living illustration for us. Pictures from physical life that show us our spiritual condition.

Certainly leprosy is the perfect picture, a living illustration of the defilement of sin. At that time in history, there was no cure for leprosy. It was a death sentence that separated you from everything and everyone that you loved.

You were isolated, unclean, quarantined, separated. But that wasn't all. The disease made your extremities numb. No feeling in your hands and feet. And it was discovered in the 1800's that the reason that lepers became disfigured partly, was because the warning system of pain that causes you to retract, is gone.

You drop something of value into a fire and you stick your hand in to get it. No pain, but it takes a toll on hands and feet and other things. Disfigurement because of no sense of feel, no warning system of pain.

It is the perfect picture of sin. It separates us from God. We are unclean, removed, isolated, quarantined away from God, because of our sin. And as we progress in sin, our warning system, our conscience becomes seared. We become spiritually remote, disfigured, unclean, alone. Leprosy was our picture story to show physically what sin was doing to us spiritually.

In a sense, these ten lepers are the human race, standing aloof from God, except most people are so far gone they aren't shouting for the Master to shed mercy upon them and their condition. *Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.* It's the right thing for these lepers to shout, and it's the right thing for all who have the leprosy of sin, spiritual leprosy to shout to this same, Jesus, Master.

14 And when He saw them, He said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests."

Ever notice with Jesus, the approach is never the same. Sometimes he stops and has a conversation. He draws with a stick in the dirt. He makes mud out of spittle and puts it on eyes. He usually stops and has a conversation. With another leper He takes the time to touch the leper. But here, it's like He's on a mission and He doesn't even stop. *And when He saw them, He said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests."*

It's like He didn't even stop moving on His journey. He just shouts this command as He moves along the road on the way to His death. Is He testing

whether He's really the Master, like they said. You called me Master, here's my orders. Go show yourselves to the priests.

It was prescribed in their law that if you had this kind of skin disease and it turned out not to be leprosy, you got well, you had to go undo the unclean thing with the priest. He had to inspect and declare you sound before you could re-join society and culture. The priests were the local health inspectors.

There's a little faith step here. Go show yourselves to the priest. Not a good idea, not even a possibility if you're a leper. So there is a leap here. He says go present yourselves to the priests but when they start out in that direction they're just as leprous as they were before.

So there is an obedience of faith here required. He's just told them to do something impossible in their state. Lepers don't go anywhere near the priests . . . if they're still lepers. They called Jesus "Master", He gave a command, and they go.

And it came about that as they were going, they were cleansed.

Let's talk about this for a minute. Ten lepers. This disease isn't just a topical skin disease. It's more like cancer in that it can travel throughout the body. Not as deadly as cancer, you can live a long time with leprosy, but it can affect inner organs as well as the exterior skin problems.

It can attack eye nerves and cause blindness. It often affects the voicebox, so when these men shout, it's a raspy pitiful scratchy sound. Hollywood effects. It can affect bones and tissue. A horrible life sentence that can manifest itself all over the place in many many degrading ways.

People say that science causes dis-belief. Actually, science makes dis-believers *more* guilty. Because of modern science we can talk about all of the different cellular degenerations because of the attack of the ba·cil·lus. We can understand a little bit about what's going on under the surface that's causing all of the different degenerations as the disease progresses. We understand a lot

more, because we know a lot more.

This really happened. This miracle is reported by many witnesses who could corroborate it. Luke describes for us what happened on that road. Jesus gave an order and these men start in the direction that He indicated. Wherever the local priests would be in that region. Ultimately, they might need to go all the way to Jerusalem to the temple.

But as they go, millions of damaged cells, billions of individual cells that have been ruined and damaged by the disease are made new. Made perfect. The disease is gone. They are completely restored as if they had never had that disease in the first place.

Fingers and hands and toes and feet that had been damaged and even missing, are restored. Perfect. Fingers that were gone, are suddenly there. And they are the same age as the person, they have the persons DNA, they have the same finger print that they had before the disease. Multiply that times everything else that was sick inside and multiply that times ten. Science has made the miracles even more astonishing. More marvelous.

It's almost like a slap at the false religion of Israel. Go present yourselves to the priests. The priests who don't believe that Jesus is the Messiah. 10 lepers show up with skin as soft and perfect as babies. What do you do with that?? Say Satan did it? Really?? Satan is the original leper that started the spread of the disease of sin, not the cure. Not ever.

In Luke 5 where Jesus heals one leper with His touch, He tells him don't tell anyone. Go show yourself to the priest and obey the law's requirements but don't tell anyone. Jesus doesn't need the pressure from that 3 years earlier. Now He's headed to Jerusalem to die. And He says, go show the priests, who would know they were lepers, go show them that you're cleansed.

The miracle should be more astonishing to us because we have the science to understand what would be required inside and outside the body to erase all of the damage of ten lepers and make them whole. Undamaged. As if they never

had the bacteria at all. Quite literally, billions of cells . . . changed. Same dna, same everything, this isn't a hand transplant, or a whatever transplant, it's their hands, their feet, their bodies, with all of the damage reversed. Jesus created billions of new, perfect cells to replace the damaged ones. Spectacular miracle. Understated, as always.

It's God. This is how He rolls. He spoke the worlds into being. Healing some lepers isn't a big deal. To Him. But to us . . . never before and never since . . . has anything ever occurred to equal just this single incidence. If this was the only miracle He ever did, I'm all in! I believe! This is obviously God. No one else can do this. Restore ten lepers. Astonishing.

15 Now one of them, when he saw that he had been healed, turned back, glorifying God with a loud voice,

Five minutes ago he couldn't do that. He didn't have a loud voice five minutes ago. He had a raspy nasty sounding sick voice. Now he can sing like Jubilant Sykes. Well, maybe not Jubilant Sykes. But he can sure sing like he could on his best day before the leprosy took over his voice. Ten men are healed. One man worships.

16 and he fell on his face at His feet, giving thanks to Him.

This is the posture of worship. This is where if you're not God, you say what the angel said in Revelation 19; *But he told me, "Do not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers who rely on the testimony of Jesus. Worship God!* Or like Peter with Cornelius in Acts 10: 25 *As Peter was about to enter, Cornelius met him and fell at his feet to worship him. 26 But Peter helped him up. "Stand up, he said, "I am only a man myself.*

Jesus doesn't say that. This is the correct posture to take when you happen to meet God on the road and He restores billions of sick and missing cells to perfect health. He creates hands and fingers and toes and voice where it was shriveled and sick and even missing. Worship is the correct response for the 10, and worship is the correct response for us 2000 years later.

And then Luke adds; *And he was a Samaritan.*

Why is that important information? This would be politically incorrect in our culture. This would be a form of race discrimination. Just the fact that Luke makes this distinction would get our culture all worked up. We can't even distinguish between boys and girls these days, let alone set someone apart because they are a different race. *And he was a Samaritan.*

God set apart the Jews as His own people so there would be a family on earth who would worship Him. Thank Him. Sing praises to Him. But it isn't the 9 jews who were healed who return to glorify and thank God for His benevolent goodness. It's a samaritan.

Luke tells us that because this is a parable. Jesus is a jew. He came to His own people. He banished sickness from palestine. He healed their illnesses. Miracle after miracle after miracle. Israel didn't believe.

Ten people are miraculously healed. 9 jews go about their business. One samaritan comes and falls at Jesus feet in worship. John tells us;

1:11 He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. 12 But to all who did receive Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God

That Samaritan former leper will meet us in heaven. The 9 jewish lepers, we'll assume they were jews, the other 9 who got what they wanted from Jesus won't be with this Samaritan to welcome us into heaven. How sad is that.

What happened to those 9 lepers? They simply lived out their lives, like any other normal person, worked, loved, grew old, died. 10 bodies were healed. Only one soul was healed.

The miracles aren't an end in themselves. The miracles are to cause us to realize Who this person is, and having realized we are in the midst of God of

very God, they are cause for us to fall on our faces at His feet in worship. Only God can create billions of new cells to replace the dead and damaged ones. Only God can create the universes. The right response to that authority . . . is worship.

This man was thankful. Did you know that thankfulness to God for all of His care, for the next breath that you will inhale, is a form of worship. Thankfulness for the creator's care and undeserved love is worship. Complaining about what you have and whatever your situation is, is the opposite of worship. God hates complainers. God loves thankful worshippers. Worship from a thankful heart is what pleases God.

17 And Jesus answered and said, "Were there not ten cleansed? But the nine—where are they? 18 "Was no one found who turned back to give glory to God, except this foreigner?"

I've been around the church for a long time. 50 years a christian. I've watched the people come, and I've watched the people go. Just like these lepers. They come because they're broken. They come because their marriage is on the rocks and maybe Jesus can fix it. They come because their loved ones are broken and sick and maybe Jesus can restore them. All kinds of reasons. Every kind of perceived need. They want something FROM Jesus.

They come. They hang around a while. And then I don't see them any more. You go to their funeral and the preacher says, old joe blow was a christian. He filled out a card after his wife left him and he attended for about 3 years. That was twenty years ago. No one's seen him since. But he was a christian. Oh, he's in heaven now. Is he?

Are these 9 lepers who went on their merry way after Jesus healed them, are they in heaven because of that encounter? They got what they wanted. Physical healing. They got *their* life back. Does that mean we'll see them in heaven?

All these people with their perceived wants and needs who show up. Some

actually get what they wanted. Some don't. Then they're gone, either way. Are those folks saved? It was all about them. They came. They stayed as long as it suited their needs or pleasures. They left. The Church of the Open Door. It should actually be, the Church of the Revolving Door. You come in. You get what you want. Or not. You leave the same way you came. Lots of them in my 50 years.

17 And Jesus answered and said, "Were there not ten cleansed? But the nine—where are they? 18 "Was no one found who turned back to give glory to God, except this foreigner?"

I'm a little bit glad that I'm not an ordained minister. I don't have any papers. That's perhaps a little selfish of me but it's working out well. I don't want to perform any weddings. I would like not to give any eulogies. I don't want to be the guy who says, oh, so and so went to church for about 9 months after 9-1-1. So he's in heaven for sure. Yah. He was a christian. Signed a card in the '80's and attended pretty regular there for about 3 years. Let someone else do that.

Thousands of people in Israel followed Jesus from place to place to hear Him speak with authority and to see the miracles. Thousands, I'm very sure, received healings from Jesus. Thousands were fed in two different instances with wheat that never grew and fish that never swam. Created on the spot.

Are all of those people in heaven today. After the ascension into heaven when the group that I do expect to meet in heaven were huddled together waiting for the Holy Spirit to come, we have a number. It isn't the thousands. It isn't the multitude who followed Jesus about. Many of those same folks called for His blood. The number we have of true believers after the ascension and before pentecost, is 120.

19 And He said to him, "Rise, and go your way; your faith has made you well."

I give the Christian Standard Bible credit for the best translation of this verse;

CSB *And he told him, "Get up and go on your way. Your faith has saved you."*

We have your faith has; made you well, healed you, made you whole, cured you, with some variations of thee and thou from about 20 translations I checked.

But the word Jesus uses here has as it's root, the greek word sozo which is our word salvation, or saved. The same root is in soterion. Salvation. We get our word soteriology which is the study of the mechanics of regeneration, and salvation.

All of the other words deal with the physical. Certainly he was healed physically. But the word is spiritual. It goes beyond the physical body. The other 9 were also cured, healed, made well, made whole, and any other words I might have missed from the common translation.

This man who came back and worshipped was not just made whole physically. He was made spiritually whole. He is glorifying God, but he is face down at Jesus feet. And Jesus makes no corrections. Glorifying God in the person of Jesus is exactly right. This man was sozo. Saved. Spiritually redeemed.

And being a gentile among 9 jews, he is also a parable. God is taking the salvation, the sozo, to the gentiles. Ten men were healed. One man was called out of this world and into the next one. And he was a gentile. A samaritan.

We can't finish this morning without looking within ourselves to question our own motives. Are you here this morning because you want something from Jesus? Or are you here this morning because having gotten life, eternal life, from Jesus you have returned over and over again to worship Him.

We want to be the one guy who came back with thankful heart, fell on his face prostrate at Jesus feet, and worshipped Him.