Ten Lepers – Luke 17

Okay, here's the scenario. You're driving home from grandma's house after a long Thanksgiving weekend up north. It's cold and snowy and the roads are starting to ice over but you really want to get home so you're going a little too fast. Then, sure enough, you go over a bridge and start to slide on the ice. You make it to the other side but you slide pretty hard into a ditch on the other side.

Your first thought is well, this is a bummer. You now have a fender bender on your new car. That's so frustrating. But you're okay so you just decide to go on home and worry about the fender later. But then the car won't start. You crank and crank but nothing. So, you figure you'll get out and pop the hood but then you realize you must have hit harder than you thought because the doors are both jammed shut. You can't get them open no matter how hard you try.

Well, okay, time to call for help. But you realize there's no cell service out here at all. No bars, no service, no internet. Nothing. That changes things, doesn't it? You realize this could be serious. It's getting colder and colder and while you can hear cars go past you on the road, you realize they probably can't see you down in this ditch and even if they could, they don't think much about it. Now you start to panic. You could actually die here. You could freeze to death. What are you going to do? Hours go by. Nothing. No cell service. It's getting dark. Nobody stops to help. It's snowing harder and harder. You bow your head. *"Lord help me!"*

Just then there is a knock on your side window. It's a tow truck driver and he's asking if you need help, of all things! He carefully breaks the window and pulls you out and puts you in his warm wrecker. Then he pulls your car out of the ditch and hauls it all the way to your house. He refuses any money, wishes you a happy Thanksgiving and drives away. So, let me ask you, just how thankful are you to that man? Are you a little grateful? Do you say, *"Hey, thanks dude. See ya"?*

No, you are huge thankful, right? You hug him and thank him over and over again. You cry and name your first born after this guy, right? You tell everybody you know about what this man did. You post it on Facebook. You tell your grandkids. You send him a Christmas gift basket every year for the rest of your life. Your thankfulness knows no bounds because you understand the horrible fate this guy saved you from.

Now, can you imagine not being grateful in this situation? Can you imagine just walking off and not even saying, *"Thank you"* to the guy? Well, that's the case with nine out of ten lepers in **Luke chapter 17**. I hope you have your Bibles with you this morning because that's where I'd like you to turn so you can read this interesting passage with me. **Luke 17, verses 11-19.**

Here we see Jesus just doing Jesus stuff. He is going around preaching and healing, preaching and healing. Walking with His disciples, He meets thousands of people and His popularity is growing. Word gets around all over the area that this Jesus is doing miracles and His reputation is growing so much even the lepers that live in the middle of nowhere have heard about Him. Let's read it in **Luke 17:11-19**.

Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. 12 As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance 13 and called out in a loud voice, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us!" 14 When he saw them, he said, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were cleansed. 15 One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. 16 He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him—and he was a Samaritan. 17 Jesus asked, "Were not all ten cleansed?

Where are the other nine? [18] Has no one returned to give praise to God except this foreigner?" [19] Then he said to him, "Rise and go; your faith has made you well."

I want you to know that in studying for this message, I learned way more about leprosy than I really wanted to. What a horrible disease! You probably know enough about it. I won't go into detail. But just know that it has to be one of the absolute worst ways to die of any disease. Not only does it ruin your body, but in the biblical days, the leper had to leave his family, his job, his people and was completely cut off from civilization. He had no way to feed himself or make a living but he also had no one to care for him. He had nobody to show him love. He could never feel the touch of another human ever again. It was mentally, physically and emotionally the most hellish disease known to man.

In today's world it's called Hanson's Disease and there is a cure for it. But did you know that cure didn't come along until 1982? And in Third World countries they still don't always have the cure and some people still live with it and die from it. But these ten men had no hope. They knew that without a miracle they would die and so when they somehow heard that Jesus was in town, they ran to find him. And when they did their lives were changed.

Look at **verse 13** again. *"Jesus, Master, have pity on us!"* **"Master,"** interesting. Of all the words they might have chosen, they chose "Master." In the Greek it's "epistats". It's used only by Luke and only here is it used to refer to Jesus by any other than His followers. It was a word of some weight. It was a word of some honor. In fact, "epistats" is a word that speaks of someone who has notable authority, or notable power, even miraculous power. And that's why it's used to apply to Jesus. So here these men are using a word that shows they recognized the notable authority and power of Jesus, which is to say that they had had some exposure to His power and His abilities. They knew His reputation; let's put it that way.

This was their only hope. This was their only chance. They had no way out of their dilemma. There were no cures. There were no solutions. Their faith may be small but they are desperate men. What other option do they have? And so they say, *"Have mercy on us,"* a phrase that recognizes that one is in a pitiful condition, that one is unable to solve a problem, that one is in a dilemma about which he can do nothing and must depend upon a superior power. That's why they ask for mercy.

"Have mercy on us," meaning show me pity and power, You are one greater than I am, You are one who is known to have power to deal with my disease. It expresses a recognition of superior power and one who at the same time is approachable. Not just a recognition of power but to cry *"Have mercy!"* assumes that someone before has indicated to you that this man listens to people who cry for mercy. So, His power and His compassion are widely known. They're aware of it, aware enough of it to cry out to Him for healing. (Ten Men Healed, One Man Saved, John MacArthur)

It's interesting how Jesus heals them. He rarely did it the same way twice. Sometimes He would touch a person like He did another leper in **chapter 5**. Sometimes they had to go somewhere or do something or maybe Jesus would do something special but it was rarely exactly the same as the time before. But this morning I want to ask you a question. The question is, why? Why did Jesus heal these men? I think there is probably more than one reason. First, He healed them because they asked. Simple as that. But in their asking, they showed faith. And God is all about faith. So, there's that. And how did they ask? *"Have mercy on us."* We know God is all about mercy.

Those are all good reasons but ultimately there is one reason. It was for glory. Everything Jesus did was to bring glory to God. In the powerful passage from **John 17**, Jesus prays, *"Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. [2] For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those*

you have given him. [3] Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. [4] I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do. [5] And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began."

Jesus is God and as God everything He did was for the glory of God and everything God does today is for the same reason. And sitting here in church this morning that is easy to say "Amen" to but I want you to really think about it. The reason those ten men had leprosy in the first place? So God would get the glory. Why were they healed? So God would get glory. Why do you have the physical problems that you have? Why would God allow that if He loves you? It's for His glory. Why does He allow you to have the financial problems you have or the relational problems you have. Couldn't God reach down and solve those problems? Of course He could but He chooses not to because it is an opportunity for Him to get the glory somehow some way. You may not see it in this lifetime but you don't have to see it. And when God gets the glory, it works out best for all of us like we see with these ten lepers.

So, because they asked and because Jesus is filled with compassion and to show His glory, Jesus heals all ten. Notice that they are only healed "as they went" which shows their faith in Jesus which is good. And Jesus knew **Leviticus 13 and 14**, of course. And He is upholding the law about leprosy. *"Go show yourselves to the priest."* That's exactly what He told the leper in **chapter 5 verse 14**, because leprosy required that. You had to go to the priest. There was a rather long and involved protocol you went through.

But as he was going, one of the lepers looks down, sees he is healed, sees his skin is clean and not scaly, sees his fingers have regrown, feels his face and his nose and lips are soft and full and it hits him. He realizes what has happened and who has provided the healing and his first response is to show gratitude. It's not a put-on. It's not fake. He understands that he is literally getting a new life. He can go back to his loved ones. He can work, he can hug his wife and pick up his kids and everything has changed now. Ultimately, he realizes what he has been saved from and what he has been saved to.

I learned something interesting and a bit scary this past week. The average American spends about 7 hours a day looking at a screen. That's a combination of TV, phone and computer for work and play. Let's break this down. If someone lives to about 73 and spends around 7 hours a day on screens, that adds up to 2,555 hours each year or a whopping 219,000 hours over a lifetime. That's more than 25 years just spent staring at screens. (How Much Screen Time Do We Actually Use in a Lifetime?)

Now, not all of that is wasted time obviously. That's not all bad. But let me ask you, how much time do you think that leper wasted when he got back to his family and friends? When he realized what he had been saved from…and what he had been saved to, to say his life was changed is an understatement. Don't you know every moment spent with family and friends was precious to that man?

He went from helpless and hopeless, dying a cruel death from a terminal disease looking forward to every day being more painful than the last to being healed, cured, cleansed, purified and made whole. And when I put it that way it makes me think…that's me! That is exactly who I was and exactly why and how God saved me. Think about it. We were all living in sin, a disease we were born with but also inflicted upon ourselves by our bad choices.

We were all destined to die alone and in darkness with nobody but some fellow diseased sinners for support. And our destination was Hell. The lepers had a hellish disease. I was destined for what **Revelation 21**describes as eternal punishment. **Revelation 14** says, *"the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, and they have no rest, day or night."* It says it is a real place with unquenchable fire and eternal shame and you can never die or get any kind of relief, separated from everybody else, all alone with no hope of anything better. That's what I deserve

and that's what I was headed for until God called me. I didn't originally call to Him like the lepers did. He found me. He called my name and by His mercy and His grace, He called me out of what I deserved.

So, not only am I thankful for what He called me out of, which is Hell, but I'm so thankful for what He called me into, which is Heaven! **Revelation 21** says Heaven is a real place with no more death, no more tears or pain and no more night. It will be Paradise with brilliant colors and smells and sights we can't imagine. And there is a place being built especially for you, prepared by the same Jesus who healed these lepers. It's a personal place and a real place and Jesus is preparing it for you because He loves you and for His glory.

Yes, this life is a struggle. It's hard and it gets harder the older you get in some ways. And when you focus on yourself and your attention is on your problems, it's hard to be grateful. Thankfulness is hard to come by sometimes. I know. In **John 16:33** Jesus admits that in this world we will have problems. That's for sure. But then He goes on to say, *"But take heart! I have overcome the world."* He says in the same verse that through Him we can have peace in this world. See, that's one more thing God has called us out of and into. He has called us – in this world – out of worry and bondage and fear and He has called us into peace and joy. It's easy to be grateful when that's your mindset, isn't it?

Think back now to the wrecker driver in my opening illustration. Wow! We are so thankful for that guy, right? But now imagine if when he towed your car home he pulled up to a big new mansion. You say, *"No sir, this isn't my house."* But he tells you that he has built you a new house. You have a new car. You have a new life and it has everything you like and want and need. It didn't cost you anything. And all you have to do is accept it. Now, tell me about your thankfulness to that guy.

Music

That's what Jesus has done for us and more. **Romans 3:23** says that we are all sinners. **Romans 6:23** says that what we deserve for that sin is eternal death in Hell. That's bad news. But Jesus comes along and lays down His life so we don't have to. **John 3:16** says God loves you so much He allowed His Son to die on the cross to pay the price you should pay and all you have to do is believe it. Accept it. Let it change your life in this world and let it change your eternity in the next world. And with that in mind we can always be thankful.

Do you have a life-changing relationship with God through His Son Jesus? You can. All you have to do is believe. Let the Spirit of God come into your life and change you and make you thankful. Do it right now as the music plays.