

This morning, we are in the 25<sup>th</sup> week of a sermon series that I have entitled “Meeting Jesus.” I have been making my way this year through Luke’s account of the life of Jesus, looking at various interactions that people had with Jesus, in order to better understand what it means to know and follow Him. This morning, I will looking briefly at Luke 17:11-19, looking at an interaction that Jesus had with ten lepers, and then we will hear some testimonies from those who are going to be baptized.

**Luke 17:11–19** - Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. <sup>12</sup> As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance <sup>13</sup> and called out in a loud voice, “Jesus, Master, have pity on us!” <sup>14</sup> When he saw them, he said, “Go, show yourselves to the priests.” And as they went, they were cleansed. <sup>15</sup> One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, **praising God in a loud voice.** <sup>16</sup> He threw himself at Jesus’ feet and thanked him—and he was a Samaritan. <sup>17</sup> Jesus asked, “Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? <sup>18</sup> Has no one returned to give praise to God except this foreigner?” <sup>19</sup> Then he said to him, “Rise and go; your faith has made you well.”

In this passage, Jesus and his disciples are on their way to Jerusalem, and their journey is interrupted by ten men who had leprosy, who stood at a distance shouting at Jesus to have pity on them and heal them. Leprosy was a terrible – and highly contagious – skin disease, which explains why they stood at a distance. As the law of Leviticus put it:

**Leviticus 13:45–46** - “Anyone with such a defiling disease must wear torn clothes, let their hair be unkempt, cover the lower part of their face and cry out, ‘Unclean! Unclean!’ <sup>46</sup> As long as they have the disease they remain unclean. They must live alone; they must live outside the camp.”

So not only is leprosy a terrible disease, it requires social isolation; lepers could live together in a colony, but needed to stay apart from the rest of civilization in order to not infect them.

But evidently these men had heard of Jesus, and believed that he could heal them, and so they cried out to him for help when they saw him passing by.

### **1) The pain of life causes us to cry out to God for mercy**

It is often pain, disease, relational brokenness, loneliness, and the tragedy of life that causes us to cry out to God for mercy. There is a reason for the saying that

there are no atheists in foxholes, for when trouble and danger and death are all around, we instinctively recognize our lack of control and cry out for a greater power to rescue us. It isn't the comfortable life that wakes us up to our need for God. **CS Lewis, in his book *The Problem of Pain***, famously said, "God whispers to us in our pleasure, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world."

As much as we try to avoid pain, it wakes us up to the reality that something is terribly wrong with this world and that we need help from a power greater than ourselves. And that is a good thing, even if it is a hard thing. As the first three steps of the twelve steps go:

1. We admitted we were powerless over our addiction — that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.

As the lepers cry out to Jesus, He tells them:

**Luke 17:14** - When he saw them, he said, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were cleansed.

Why does Jesus send him to the priest? Because the priest's ritual, which is outlined in Leviticus 14, would give a stamp of authority on the lepers' new condition. They would be pronounced clean and able to rejoin the community by the powers that be. And the lepers take Jesus at his word, leaving for the priest, and on the way, they are miraculously healed. Notice once again Jesus' compassion for the outsiders. And He is compassionate towards you and towards me. He does not remove all of our troubles in this world, but as we will see, He offers something greater.

Continuing with the story:

**Luke 17:15-19** - One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. <sup>16</sup> He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him—and he was a Samaritan. <sup>17</sup> Jesus asked, "Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? <sup>18</sup> Has no one returned to give praise to God except this foreigner?" <sup>19</sup> Then he said to him, "Rise and go; your faith has made you well."

One leper, upon receiving his healing, turns around to fall at Jesus' feet and thank him, praising God for his healing. Jesus asks why only one has returned to give praise to God, pointing out that this leper came despite being a Samaritan, an enemy of the Jews. And Jesus ends by telling him, "Rise and go; your faith has made you well," or "your faith has saved you."

Although ten are healed, only one returns to praise God and to thank Jesus.

## **2) There is a difference between using God and worshiping God**

There is a difference between God being our end and using God as a means to an end, between living for God and trying to use God to get something else that we want more than God. Most of us come to God with mixed motives, as we talked about last week, and as we see here with the ten lepers. We come because we need help, because we want healing, because we are hoping he will fix a broken relationship. Some of us get what we want, and then were good, because that's what we were hoping for, and so now that we have what we want, we have no use for God any more. Others of us don't get what we want, and so we grow angry with God and then have no use for him.

In this story, all ten of the lepers desperately wanted healing, and they had enough faith to believe that Jesus could heal them. But then, when they were healed, only one returned to praise God and thank Jesus. Nine got what they wanted – physical healing – and went on with their life. Only one recognized the goodness of God and the mercy and grace of Jesus, saw that this Jesus was worthy of worship and devotion for His grace and goodness to Him, and returned to give Him worship.

Do you recognize the goodness of God in your life? Or are you one of the other nine, receiving gifts from His hand but never turning to thank Him, to worship Him?

## **3) Gratitude is central to salvation and health**

The end of this story shows that, once again, while Jesus often heals physically, there is a deeper and more important healing that only one of these lepers experienced. His faith saves him, heals him, makes him whole. He was already physically healed, so clearly Jesus is referring to something greater, a deeper healing. The Greek word used here is "sozo," which also means saved. His faith in Jesus has saved him from sin.

Think of the paralytic dropped through the ceiling. Jesus forgives his sins, and then to prove that he has the authority to do that, he heals him physically as well. The most important aspect of Jesus' ministry, and the most important healing, is spiritual.

**Luke 4:40–44** - At sunset, the people brought to Jesus all who had various kinds of sickness, and laying his hands on each one, he healed them. <sup>41</sup> Moreover, demons came out of many people, shouting, "You are the Son of God!" But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew he was the Messiah. <sup>42</sup> At daybreak, Jesus went out to a solitary place. The people were looking for him and when they came to where he was, they tried to **keep him from leaving them**. <sup>43</sup> But he said, "I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent." <sup>44</sup> And he kept on preaching in the synagogues of Judea.

As much compassion as Jesus had, and as much as he healed people, he had to move on, because his main calling was to proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God. He came not just to heal physically, but to set people free spiritually, to rescue people from sin and death and hell.

Gratitude is central to salvation and health. When, like the leper, we recognize our pitiful state and our need for mercy, and then we experience the compassionate mercy given to us by Jesus, we experience salvation, healing, gratitude, and devotion.

We are no different than the leper. We may not have a physical disease coursing through our body, spreading to every nerve and body part, but we have a worse disease, sin, that has infected our whole body and infects others through us. But Jesus has compassion on us in our pitiful state. Listen to these words of grace:

**Romans 5:6–8** - You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. <sup>7</sup> Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. <sup>8</sup> But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

**2 Corinthians 5:17, 21** - Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!... God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

**John 3:16** - For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Do you understand your pitiful state? Do you understand that you could not save yourself? Do you understand that you were destined for hell, eternal separation from God, and that Jesus came to this earth and suffered alongside of you and died on the cross in your place, taking the punishment you deserved, so that you might have eternal life? Are you like the one leper, returning to the feet of Jesus regularly to praise God for your healing and for His grace? Or are you like the other nine, using God to get what you want and then having no use for God?

**Romans 7:15–8:2** - I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. <sup>16</sup> And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. <sup>17</sup> As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. <sup>18</sup> For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. <sup>19</sup> For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—**this I keep on doing**. <sup>20</sup> Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. <sup>21</sup> So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. <sup>22</sup> For in my inner being I delight in God's law; <sup>23</sup> but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. <sup>24</sup> What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is **subject to death**? <sup>25</sup> Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in my sinful nature a slave to the law of sin. Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, <sup>2</sup> because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.

Look at how Paul, even after being saved, is so keenly aware of his pitiful state, his inability to truly save himself, and his desperate need for a Savior. And see how it causes him to cry out in praise to God for his salvation in Jesus.

The law would require the leper to go see the priest in the temple. This leper comes to Jesus, the true temple, the person in which God dwells in His fulness. Let us come to Jesus to find true healing today, and to give Him the worship and thanks that He deserves.