



## Luke 17:11-19 Small Group Questions and Notes

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Gospel Gratefulness

**Opening Discussion Questions: Do you still believe in writing thank you notes after Christmas? If you still practice this lost grace, why do you believe it is still important?**

- Luke 17:11–19 Jesus Cleanses Ten Lepers

- [11] On the way to Jerusalem he was passing along between Samaria and Galilee. [12] And as he entered a village, he was met by ten lepers, who stood at a distance [13] and lifted up their voices, saying, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.” [14] When he saw them he said to them, “Go and show yourselves to the priests.” And as they went they were cleansed. [15] Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice; [16] and he fell on his face at Jesus’ feet, giving him thanks. Now he was a Samaritan. [17] Then Jesus answered, “Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? [18] Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?” [19] And he said to him, “Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well.” (ESV)
- I do not believe this story is coincidental. Either Jesus sovereignly designed the timing, or Luke inserted this story into this section of his letter as an illustration. Why?
  - Let’s review what Pastor Jeremy taught us last Sunday.
    - We are called to exercise faith and be faithful in how we serve others, but we have to remember in humility that we serve at the pleasure of our king! We don’t have the right to sit in his chair (or on his throne) in how we view and esteem ourselves. This will be important as we wrap up this chapter with a teaching on the kingdom of God!
    - Perspective in life is really important, and we can become easily self deceived in our own hearts. If we aren’t careful we tend to default to christian narcissism, which is vastly different from christian hedonism.

- Hedonism is the pursuit of pleasure; it tends to be sensual and self-indulgent. John Piper describes Christian Hedonism in his book *Desiring God* as “God being most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him.”<sup>1</sup>
- Narcissism is excessive interest in or admiration of oneself and one's physical appearance. From a psychological standpoint it is selfishness, involving a sense of entitlement, a lack of empathy, and a need for admiration, as characterizing a personality type.<sup>2</sup> Christian narcissism is using our relationship with Christ to promote ourselves or gain from others to the benefit of ourselves.<sup>3</sup>
  - When someone says “God wants you to be happy”, that is Christian Narcissism. God supremely wants you to be holy, and in pursuing Him and His holiness, only then will you find true happiness.

**Question: What are some examples of people trying to convince others that God supremely wants us to be happy regardless of holiness, or even at the risk of being unholy?**

- One of the biggest indicators that you are making your relationship with Christ about you instead of Jesus is perpetual ungratefulness!
  - There is a sense in which we are to be happy in Christ, and there is even joy in obeying God’s commands. But it can be pretty clear that our root desire is selfish when we are perpetually dissatisfied.
  - That is why the Westminster Catechism reminds us that the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him!<sup>4</sup>
- This being the case, I believe this story is strategic to the overarching theme of this section of Luke.
- **Leprosy was symbolic of sin and judgment.**

**Discussion: What do you know about the disease of leprosy? Have you ever witnessed someone suffering this disease in real life? (Pop quiz: do you know what animal supposedly carries leprosy and lives here in GA?)**

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<sup>1</sup> John Piper, *Desiring God, Meditations of a Christian Hedonist* (CO: Multnomah, 2011)

<sup>2</sup> <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC5819598/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ccef.org/they-call-it-narcissism/>

<sup>4</sup> WSC Q1. 1 Corinthians 10:31; Ps 16:11; 36:9; 73:24-26; 87:7 John 17:22,24

- From the very beginning God wanted us to understand that sin separates us from God.
  - In the garden of Eden, Adam and Eve were separated by their own shame from feeling safe with God. As a result an animal had to be sacrificed and blood shed so that their naked shame could be covered with animal leather. In punishment, they were then separated from the garden relationship they once had with God.
  - Notice that Luke pointed out in this story that the lepers were separated from others who were close to Jesus.
  - **[12] And as he entered a village, he was met by ten lepers, who stood at a distance**
  - In the law of Moses, leprosy was diagnosed by the priests, and those who showed signs of leprosy were sent outside of the Israelite camp or city until they either died, or the signs of leprosy were gone.<sup>5</sup>

**Optional Question: has anyone seen the movie Ben-hur? Discuss the significance of this historic practice to the plot of the movie.**

- We might tend to view this similarly to how health officials viewed Covid-19. **But for the Israelite, “this plague (leprosy) was judicial in its frame of reference, not biological.”<sup>6</sup>**
- Leprosy was largely seen as a social curse for those who had already separated themselves in their personal lives from following whole heartedly after God. **It was seen as an outward illustration of an internal state.**<sup>7</sup> This is why a leper was treated with such disdain, being forced to cry out “unclean” whenever they were around others.

**Question: Can you see a picture of man’s fallen condition in this sad reality of a leper?**

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<sup>5</sup> Leviticus 13; Numbers 5

<sup>6</sup> Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16, Vol. 3 of the Anchor Bible* (New York: Doubleday, 1991) 772

<sup>7</sup> Gary North, *Leviticus, and Economic Commentary* (Institute for Christian Economics, Texas, 1994) 164-165. North states: “The theocentric meaning of this law is that Mosaic-era leprosy was a sign of God’s curses in history and eternity. God’s curses separate some men from others. Mosaic-era leprosy testified to the ultimate separation of heaven from hell, of the New Heaven and New Earth from the lake of fire (Rev. 20:14-15). Community is therefore evidence of God’s grace. Autonomy, as a theory of separation, is a demonic social theory. God’s final curse against self-professed autonomous man is eternal separation.

- To be deemed clean by a priest, a leprous person was required to be washed and cleansed with water, and a blood sacrifice had to be made. The combination of washing and sacrifice covered the judicial and biological uncleanness.
- Another picture of this in the Law of Moses was on the day of atonement, when the High Priest laid the sins of the nation on a goat (called the scapegoat) and sent it outside the camp, while sacrificing another goat to cover the punishment of that sin.<sup>8</sup> The priest (originally Aaron) would cast lots, and God would choose which goat would be sacrificed and which goat would be separated from the camp.
- Andrew Bonar connected the scapegoat and the guilty leper to the garden of Eden when he stated: “This may shew us, by the way, why God not only drove out the man from Eden, but removed Eden itself very soon. The place was polluted by having been the scene of the Fall—polluted by the most heinous of sins.”<sup>9</sup>

**Questions: How do we practice scapegoating in our lives today? Do you see an example of scapegoating in Adam and Eve’s sin in the garden? How was the priestly scapegoating different by contrast?**

- Jesus allowed the lepers to be cleansed at his beckoning, before they arrived at the priest’s location where they would have been sent outside the city and separated! **What Jesus did, allowed them not to have to live in separation! This was a glorious picture of the Gospel!**
- **1 Peter 2:24 [24] He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. (ESV)**
- **Hebrews 7:26–28 [26] For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. [27] He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself. [28] For the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath,**

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<sup>8</sup> Leviticus 16

<sup>9</sup> Andrew A Bonar, *A commentary on Leviticus*. (The Banner of Truth Trust: London, 1846) 309

**which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever. (ESV)**

- If we truly understand the Gospel, it causes us to be grateful for what God has done! Everything else becomes less significant! When we are ungrateful, we are elevating lesser things above the only thing that matters!

**Key Question: How can we exercise Gospel gratefulness daily in our lives?**

- **Only the Samaritan returned to acknowledge the source of healing (or forgiveness).**
  - Jesus brought forward the point of this moment with a statement about faith!
  - **[18] Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" [19] And he said to him, "Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well."**
  - The pointing out of Jesus that this man was a Samaritan foreigner was not coincidental! The samaritans were a living illustration of being separated from the nation.<sup>10</sup>
    - Because of the history of the samaritans setting up their own capital and place for worship of God, they were seen as heretics who "should be pushed (into the ditch) and not pulled out."<sup>11</sup> Samaritans had strayed from a proper adherence to the law, but in recounting this story, Luke wants us to see that this ignorant samaritan was the only one who understood what had been done for him through Jesus' act of mercy and grace.
    - Do you see yourself in the samaritan? You were separated from God not just by your sin, but by your very birth! We were all born dead in our trespasses and sins!<sup>12</sup> The samaritan understood he had always been separated. The leprosy he had just pointed out to him what was already obvious.
    - The samaritan truly understood what Jesus had done, and it caused him to return and worship with gratefulness.

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<sup>10</sup> Luke 10:25-37

<sup>11</sup> This rabbinical saying is quoted by J. Jeremias in *The Parables of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1963) 202 Sourced from Philip Graham Ryken in the *Reformed Expository Commentary on Luke, Vol. 1* (NJ: P&R, 2009) 544-545

<sup>12</sup> Ephesians 2:1

- Every Sunday, we receive the opportunity to worship Jesus with gratefulness and joy, just like the leprous samaritan.

**Application Questions: How do you approach your worship on Sunday mornings? Do you approach the singing of music as if it was your only opportunity to express your gratefulness? Do you pray with deep sincerity and pursuit during confession?**

- This begs the question “What was the source of the Samaritan’s faith?” Answer: **the source of his faith was also the source of his forgiveness: Jesus!**
- **Application: When our faith is about us, we will be merely religious lawyers bringing stumbling and condemnation. When our faith is about Christ, we will overflow with forgiveness, mercy, grace and gratefulness!**