

Message #82

Luke 17:11-19

One of the great Biblical communicators of our lifetime was a man who went to be with the Lord in 2017. His name was Haddon Robinson. He once told the story of one thing motivated him to become such a serious student of preaching. He said he went to a church service one night with a family and after the service they were riding home and the people were saying, wow what a wonderful message. Dr. Robinson said, he thought, the guy said nothing. He said I listened to the exact same message and the minister said nothing. One of the questions that bothered him was why don't these people see it. Why don't they understand that they are going to church to hear nothing? Well, there is a Biblical answer to that.

Not long ago, someone said something that was very flattering about this church. I was told that some person said I don't understand why every person in Kalamazoo, who wants to know God's word, is not in this church. It certainly was flattering for someone to say that and there are some reasons for their statement. Frankly, I doubt that there are too many churches in this area that are as serious as we are about systematically studying God's word. We have gone through every doctrine very carefully; we have gone through every verse in the New Testament contextually and we are working on every verse in the Old Testament. Objectively speaking, one does have to admit that is a serious commitment to understanding God's word. So when someone says that, I get it. Why don't most people who go to church seem to care whether or not they are attending a church that takes the word of God seriously? Actually, there is a Biblical answer to it.

Jesus Christ came to this world to save sinners. He came to this world to make children of God out of children of sin. He came to bring people out of darkness and into light in their relationship with God. That is the grace of God.

The problem with many who believe that is that many have not developed as they ought. It would be nice to say that the vast majority of people who have believed in Jesus Christ truly love God and His word. But the fact is, that is not reality. The majority of people do not soar in their faith, they do not develop in their knowledge and they do not really glorify God.

That point is one Jesus wanted to address when He was here on earth. What we see here is this:

MOST, WHO HAVE BEEN TOUCHED BY THE GRACE AND MERCY OF GOD, DO NOT DEVELOP IN THEIR FAITH IN A GOD-GLORIFYING WAY AND ONE WHO DOES DEVELOP WILL BE IN THE MINORITY, NOT THE MAJORITY.

Jesus is teaching that it will always be a small percentage of people who, in the aftermath of being touched by Jesus Christ, will really soar in their faith. The vast majority of people will stumble through life and spend most of their existence living in this world not developing and never becoming what God wanted them to become.

Now it is my hope for myself and for you and for this church that we not fall into this category.

It is my hope and prayer that when all is said and done, not only are we able to say we had faith, but we had a faith that Biblically developed in a way that brought glory to God.

The reality of this text and what Jesus teaches is it is one out of ten. About one out of ten who truly believes in Jesus Christ really takes off for Him. It is not the majority who take prayer seriously. It is not the majority who sacrificially give of their time, energy, resources and effort; it is the minority. It will never be the big numbers who love doctrine and want to carefully know every book of the Bible. It will always be the minority.

Jesus Christ was challenging His own disciples (17:1) and apostles (17:5) to be in the minority. He is teaching them to be those who truly develop in a way that glorifies God and He is also teaching them, comparatively speaking, it won't be the majority who will do this.

We may recall that the Apostles initially thought they needed more faith (17:5). Christ says once you have been touched by Me, you have all the faith you need, just implement it.

According to **verse 11**, Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem and His travel route meant that He was passing between Samaria and Galilee. Now of course the self-righteous, religious, Pharisaical Jews hated these areas because they considered the people to be a bunch of "half breeds" who did not deserve any of God's blessings.

The Jews did not like or associate with the Samaritans (John 4:9) and quite honestly the Samaritans didn't like the Jews (Luke 9:52-53). These Jews would not be friendly to any of these people, and would not lift a finger to help them. In fact, they taught that you were unclean to even enter Galilee or Samaria.

Christ was on His way to Jerusalem to die for sinners. Christ was willing to reach out to any sinner and He ministered to sinners who were Jews, Galileans and Samaritans. He was going to die so that He could give Israel the righteousness she needed to get into the Kingdom and He was going to die so He could give sinners like us the righteousness we need to get into heaven.

Certainly we learn that we will never be able to use our background or prejudices as an excuse for not developing in our faith. Jesus Christ transcends all backgrounds, prejudices and sins.

As Christ entered a village, something happened. Two specific events occurred:

EVENT #1 – Jesus Christ was met by ten lepers. **17:12-14**

It is my contention, as well as many who have studied this text, that of the ten lepers, nine were Jewish and one was a Samaritan (**17:16, 18**). These lepers all lived together, as in a leper colony. They had a disease connection with each other. The leprosy broke down all national, political, social and religious barriers. The common denominator is they were all lepers.

Diseases have a way of uniting people with others who have the same disease. Just recently, we have seen the quarantine of all who have been exposed to the Corona virus. They all have to stay together. Things haven't changed. Years ago, I sat in an intensive care waiting room and saw two different families in the same waiting room whose loved one was going through open heart surgery. One of the families was a very successful corporate executive in Chicago and the other family appeared to be very poor. Normally these two families would not run in the same circle, but there they both were and they were discussing their loved ones and shedding tears because of their common denominator.

We have a common denominator with every human being in this world. Regardless of our background, occupation, nationality or color, we are all sinners. There have been moments in our lives when we have not measured up to the righteousness of God. Frankly, we are all diseased lepers when it comes to sin.

When Christ entered the village, He was met by ten lepers and there are two steps those lepers took that were right:

Step #1 - They went to Jesus Christ. **17:12**

Those lepers were fully convinced that only Jesus Christ could save them. They certainly knew that they could not be healed of their leprosy by the religious leaders. They certainly knew they could not heal themselves. They knew that no medical doctor could heal them. They knew that the only power that could save them was the power of Jesus Christ and they went directly to Him.

No one will ever be able to save themselves from their sin problem. No person may save themselves by their works. No religion can save them. No religious leader can save them. No medical doctor can save them. No Psychologist can save them. There is only One who has the power to save one from sin and that one is Jesus Christ. These lepers knew that and they went straight to Jesus Christ.

Step #2 - They asked Jesus Christ for mercy. **17:13-14**

Verse 13 says these lepers addressed Christ as being "Jesus, Master." They realized He was the Divine chief commander in charge of all things. They recognized Jesus the Savior is the Master who can save us.

When they saw Christ, they cried out "have mercy on us." All ten realized their need of the mercy of God and all ten cried out to Jesus Christ for His mercy.

Most people in this country and even most people in the world have heard about the delivering and saving power of Jesus Christ. Christianity is often mocked and "Jesus saves" is a theme that is at times stated quite loosely. But most people are aware of the concept of it.

The truth is until one is willing to personally go to Jesus Christ like these lepers and ask for His salvation and help, one will never be saved from the leprosy of their sin. A person could talk to God about many things, but until one asks Jesus Christ to save him, he will not be saved.

According to **verse 14**, Christ ordered the lepers to go “show” themselves to the priests. That word means He wanted these lepers to literally go and display themselves as an exhibit before the priests. This would have been in strict conformity to the O.T. law, which really was only operative until Christ was on earth (Luke 16:16). As they were going to the priests, even before any sacrifices were offered, they were completely cleansed. They were not cleansed by the law; they were cleansed by Jesus Christ.

Before moving on we want to make five observations:

- 1) All lepers honestly recognized and admitted their leprous condition.
- 2) All lepers cried out to Jesus Christ to meet their need.
- 3) All lepers asked Jesus Christ for His mercy because all realize they needed it.
- 4) All lepers were completely cleansed.
- 5) Only one leper ended up glorifying God in the aftermath of experiencing His mercy.

This is one of the great tragedies today. The vast majority of people who have been touched by the grace of God do not develop in their faith to the level that their faith glorifies God. It is true that all who are true believers have admitted they are sinners. It is true that all who are believers have cried out to Jesus Christ for salvation. It is true that all who are believers have been made clean by the grace of God. But it is not true that all who have cried out for salvation end up glorifying God.

EVENT #2 – Jesus Christ was thanked and God was glorified by one leper. **17:15-19**

Even though ten had personally experienced the amazing mercy of God, only one ended up glorifying God in the aftermath. One out of ten.

This is an eye-opening text. There are three specific ways that this one glorified God:

Way #1 - He glorified God by taking a different direction. **17:15a**

This man’s life literally turned around. As soon as he experiences the mercy of God, his life changed. He did an about face. He turned from his previous direction and course and headed straight back to Jesus Christ, who cleansed him. He wanted to get close to Christ.

Keep in mind that all ten were heading in a very religious direction. They were all heading to the O.T. priests who were steeped in the O.T. law. This man said, “Wait a minute.” Religion did not save me; the law did not save me; Jesus Christ saved me. He knew the real power was found in Jesus Christ.

A saved sinner who will bring glory to God will focus on developing a relationship with Jesus Christ; not religion or legalism.

The tragic reality of this story is that nine out of ten people who have been touched by the grace of God will pursue religion or a denomination. They will stay going in the same direction instead of turning around to the grace of God found in Jesus Christ.

Way #2 - He glorified God by verbally using his voice and speech. **17:15b, 16b**

This man was glorifying God with a “loud voice.” He was telling everyone what Jesus Christ had done for Him. He was thanking Christ for His mercy and salvation from leprosy.

That spirit of glorifying God by being thankful is something you see often from the Apostle Paul:

- 1) Paul thanked God for His Son. II Cor. 9:15
- 2) Paul thanked God for His delivering power over the law. Rom. 7:25
- 3) Paul thanked God for the privilege of ministry. I Tim. 1:12
- 4) Paul thanked God for any spiritual victory. II Cor. 2:14
- 5) Paul thanked God for memories of other believers. Phil. 1:3
- 6) Paul thanked God for delivering power over sin. Rom. 6:17
- 7) Paul thanked God for all leadership. I Tim. 2:1-4

People who glorify God are people who continually thank God just like this leper. People who glorify God are thankful people. A bunch of mumbling, complaining, sour people do not ever bring any glory to God. Those who thank God, glorify God.

Notice also that this leper is not shying away from telling people that Jesus Christ changed his life. He is loudly proclaiming the truth of God’s grace and mercy found in Jesus. About one in ten will do that.

Way #3 - He glorified God by His humility before Jesus Christ. **17:16a-19**

There was no pride in this leper. He fell down at the feet of Jesus Christ in complete worship and honor. He was a Samaritan, not some highly religious Jew from a legalistic denomination. He knew who Christ was and he knew what Christ had done for him and he was down on his face before Him.

When the Apostle John saw Jesus Christ, he too fell down at His feet (Rev. 1:17).

When Christ saw the faith of this man, He asked where the other nine are. Well the other nine are caught up in their religion and they are not really humbling themselves to Jesus Christ and the word of God.

Only one was giving glory to God by committing himself to Jesus Christ.

So Christ says to him in **verse 19**, “Stand up and go; your faith has made you well.”

What Christ means is not only has your faith in Me saved you from your disease of leprosy, but your faith has also given you a healthy level in your ability to glorify God.

All ten lepers were saved from their leprosy, but their faith was not a healthy faith and only one ended up with a faith that glorified Him. It won't be the majority who will love the Lord and the word; it will always be the minority. That is what Jesus taught here.