

*The Miracles of Jesus*

## Miracle # 28

***"The Healing of Ten Lepers"***

Luke 17:11-19

In the miracle story that we are going to be looking at this evening, Jesus is making his way toward Jerusalem along the border of Samaria and Galilee. This miracle took place during the final phase of Jesus' life, as he is making his final journey to Jerusalem. As he approaches the outskirts of one of the villages in the area, he encounters ten men suffering from some skin disease, probably **leprosy**. Luke is the only Gospel in which we find the story of these ten lepers.

"Now it happened as He went to Jerusalem that He passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. (12) Then as He entered a certain village, there met Him ten men who were lepers, who stood afar off. (13) And they lifted up their voices and said, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" (14) So when He saw them, He said to them, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And so it was that as they went, they were cleansed. (15) And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned, and with a loud voice glorified God, (16) and fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks. And he was a Samaritan. (17) So Jesus answered and said, "Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? (18) Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?" (19) And He said to him, "Arise, go your way. Your faith has made you well."

***The Background of the Miracle*** (vv. 11-12)

*"Now it happened as He went to Jerusalem that He passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. (12) Then as He entered a certain village, there met Him ten men who were lepers, who stood afar off."*

Leprosy was the most **feared** disease of its time. The closest emotional equivalent today would be to be told that you have AIDS. The disease of leprosy was a painful disease but the physical pain was not the most terrible part of the disorder. It first meant they had to face **isolation**. They were shut off from their family. They were shut off from their friends. They were even shut off from God, in the sense that they could no longer enter the temple to worship. Lepers were swept into isolated colonies and

required that when anyone ventured too close to cry out in humiliation, "**Unclean, Unclean!!!**" (Lev. 13:45-46)

Secondly, it meant **humiliation**. Can you imagine having children point their fingers at you and either laugh or run in fear? Can you imagine what it was like to have everyone turn their eyes in distaste when they saw you? Can you imagine having to rely on the pity of people in order to have enough to eat? Leprosy was an especially humiliating disease because; those who had leprosy were thought to be suffering because of their **sin**. They were thought to be unclean, and incapable of having a right relationship with God. They made to feel that they were even isolated from God.

Leprosy also meant a total loss of your way of life. You had been left to **die**. Which brings us to the final effect of a diagnosis of leprosy, you are dying, a slow and horrible death.

### **The Elements of the Miracle** (vv. 13-14a)

Have Mercy on us. (13)

They kept their distance as prescribed by law, but they certainly did not keep **quiet**. These lepers only hope is Jesus and His mercy does not let them down. In verse thirteen, we told, "*And they lifted up their voices and said, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!"*" They asked for "*mercy.*" They were not asking for what they deserved they were pleading for mercy. The word "*mercy*" translates (**eleeo**) and means "**to help one afflicted or seeking aid.**" It is an aorist active imperative verb. The aorist means they are not asking for gradual healing. The imperative here is not in the sense of a command but conveys the **urgency** of the request.

Go Show Yourselves to the Priest. (14)

*"So when He saw them, He said to them, "Go, show yourselves to the priests..."*

The Old Testament law required that a person who was healed of leprosy was to go to the priest for inspection and proclamation that the person was healed. In fact it is the exact **reversal** of the way in which they were declared lepers in the first place (Lev. 14).

No healing words were spoken, yet the lepers apparently understood that when Jesus said "go to the priests" it is implied that they will be healed.

### **The Effect Of The Miracle** (vv.14b-19)

As They Went They Were Healed. (14b)

*"... And so it was that as they went, they were cleansed."*

By obediently making their way to the priest, the lepers were demonstrating that they had **faith** in the words of Jesus. All ten place faith in Jesus' power to heal.

One commentary states it this way, "Some times believers hope that God will give them faith so they can obey him. What a tragic misunderstanding. Faith is expressed in our obedience; as we obey God, he works in our lives." [Larry Richards. Every Miracle In the Bible. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998) p. 232]

### One returned...and gave thanks (15-16)

*"And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned, and with a loud voice glorified God, (16) and fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks. And he was a Samaritan."*

You would have perhaps expected all ten men to run to Jesus and thank him for the new start in life, but only one did so. But before we judge them too harshly, what is your own "Gratitude Quotient?" How often do we take our blessings for granted and fail to thank the Lord? In Psalm 107 the Psalmist four times says, *"Oh, that men would give thanks to the LORD for His goodness, And for His wonderful works to the children of men!"* (beginning in verse 7, and repeated in verses 15, 21, 31). The one leper who returned undoubtedly had just as great a desire to return to his family, to get back to work, and to resume his normal daily life; but there was a greater need within his heart. He needed to go back – he **had** to go back.

This one leper was different than the others. He did three things; he **turned back**, he began **praising** God and **worshipped** - he fell on his face at the feet of Jesus thanking him.

*"In 1637, amid the darkness of the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648), a German pastor, Martin Rinkart, wrote the hymn "We Thank We Now All Our God." In that year because of famine and deadly diseases, Rinkhart is said to have buried 4,480 of his parishioners in one year, that is an average of fifteen a day, among them was his own wife. In the heart of this time of great darkness and sorrow, with the cries of fear outside his window, he sat down and wrote this hymn that was intended as a table grace for his children. Listen to what he wrote "Now we thank we all our God / With heart and hands and voices; / Who wondrous things had done, / In whom His world rejoices. / Who, from our mother's arms, / Hath led us on our way / With countless gifts of love / And still is ours today." Through the grief and bloodshed he looked to his Savior and was able to thank God for the many blessing he still had."* [Hymn History. "We Thank We Now All Our God."

[www.schfrs.crosswinds.net/hymns.htm](http://www.schfrs.crosswinds.net/hymns.htm) ]

### Glorified God (15)

This leper not only gave thanks to Christ, but we are told that he with a *"loud voice glorified God."* With the same loudness and intensity which he had cried out for mercy he now glorified God.

Ron Hutchcraft says this about the need for thankfulness, *"When we stop praising God, we start forgetting God. And when we forget the kind of God we have we start wandering and start getting hurt – and we are much more likely to take matters into our own hands, to panic, to get impatient, to get discouraged or depressed. But the more you train yourself to be a praiser, the less mistakes you're going to make- the less regrets you're going to have. You lose so much when you forget."* [Ron Hutchcraft as quoted by Mike Hays "Have We Forgotten" Luke 17:11-19. [www.sermoncentral.com](http://www.sermoncentral.com)]

### Were There Not Ten? (vv. 17-18)

As one thankful man worshiped at his feet Jesus asked a series of three questions beginning in verse seventeen. *"So Jesus answered and said, "Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine?"*

In this verse we see two of the questions; *"Were there not ten?"* And *"Where are the other nine?"* Have you ever wondered what reasons the other nine could have for not returning to thank Jesus? There could have been as many as nine reasons, perhaps each man had his own reason.

*"The following are nine suggested reasons why the nine did not return:*

- One waited to see if the cure was real.
- One waited to see if it would last.
- One said he would see Jesus later.
- One decided that he had never had leprosy.
- One said he would have gotten well anyway.
- One gave the glory to the priests.
- One said, "O, well, Jesus didn't really do anything."
- One said, "Any rabbi could have done it."
- One said, "I was already much improved."

[Charles L. Brown, Content The Newsletter, June, 1990, p. 3. [www.christianglobe.com/illustrations/thanksgiving](http://www.christianglobe.com/illustrations/thanksgiving)]

Whatever their reason for failure to return to thank Jesus we are hardly in a position to condemn them. How often have we also taken our blessings for granted?

The third question that Jesus asks is found in verse eighteen, *"Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?"* Can you sense the disappointment in Jesus' voice as he asks this third and final question? There should not be any doubt that when we are **unthankful**, it grieves the Lord.

Nothing less than heartfelt praise and thanks is fitting when we consider what Jesus has done for us. One day a woman who was seeking to get right with God said to Charles Spurgeon, the famous 19<sup>th</sup> century

preacher, *"If Jesus ever saves me, he will never hear the end of it."* We all should feel that way.

*"The story is told of two old friends who bumped into one another on the street one day. One of them looked forlorn, almost on the verge of tears. His friend asked, "What has the world done to you, my old friend?"*

*The sad fellow said, "Let me tell you. Three weeks ago, my great-aunt whom I hardly knew passed away. I inherited almost 100 million dollars. His friend replied, "That's a lot of money."*

*The sad friend continued, "Then, two weeks ago, a cousin I never even knew died, and left me eighty-five thousand free and clear."*

*"Sounds like you've been blessed...." "You don't understand!" he interrupted. "Last week an uncle died and left me forty thousand dollars."*

*Now the other friend was really confused. "Then, why do you look so glum?" The sad friend replied, "This week... nothing!"* [Larry Sarver. *"Five Things We Need To Know Concerning Our Relationship With God."* Luke 17:7-17. [www. SermonCentral.com](http://www.SermonCentral.com)]

### Your Faith Has Made You Well (v. 19)

*"And He said to him, "Arise, go your way. Your faith has made you well."*

While all ten lepers had received physical healing, only this Samaritan had the faith for **spiritual** healing as well. All ten lepers were cleansed of the disease but only this thankful leper was **saved**. By coming to Jesus, this man received something greater than mere physical healing; he was saved from his sins. Jesus said, *"Your faith has made you well"* or *"literally your faith has saved you."* The words used here are the same words use to declare the woman who had anointed his feet saved (Luke 7:50). As Warren Wiersbe says, *"The Samaritan's nine friends had been declared clean by the priest, but he was declared saved by the Son of God."* [Warren Wiersbe. *Be Courageous*.(Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books. p. 54.)]

Why is it then that we are not more thankful? The truth is probably that we just don't stop to think. The cares and concerns of this life choke out our gratitude. Thank-fulness then is comes only as the result of a deliberate **decision** to take the time to thank God for all that we enjoy.