

Jesus and the ten lepers

Text: Luke 17:11-19

V.11 – “now it happened” ...

With Jesus, something is always going to happen! There is no shortage of action wherever he went. Something always happened: no life was ever left untouched, no problem was ever left unaddressed, no demons was ever left undisturbed.

V.11 - Now it happened as He went to Jerusalem that He passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee.

The writer of the gospel places the event within time and space. We know where it took place and when. This is not fictional.

V11... “As He went to Jerusalem” ...

Jesus was going to Jerusalem but he kept stopping for the little villages, for the places not nearly as noble as Jerusalem, for the people with a strange accent like the Galileans, for the religiously confused and hostile Samaritans. Here, Jesus stopped at “a certain village”.

V.12 -Then as He entered a certain village, there met Him ten men who were lepers, who stood afar off

“A certain village” – Probably a small leper colony. “A certain village” – most likely a place too (ceremonially) unclean to even be given a name worth mentioning.

However, the presence of the Son of God went there. Jesus loves to manifest His presence exactly where it’s needed. Jesus said in Mark 2:17 that He had come to those who needed a physician. Regardless of where we find ourselves, we can always find Him!

V.12 ... “there met Him ten men who were lepers”

Jesus stopped for lepers. In the social hierarchy of the day, no one was lower than lepers, no one was more isolated and rejected – an no one stopped for lepers. If anything, they stayed away from them. Leprosy was also the most hopeless of conditions: they were people on death row, people experiencing a slow and agonizing death.

V.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!”

Leviticus 13:43-46 required them to stand afar off and to cry out: “unclean, unclean!”

Distance was part of their existence. They had to live distant from people, distant from anything we sometimes take for granted and that describes normal life: family, having an occupation, being independent, etc.

They could watch from a distance the world go by, the normality of other people's lives, the happiness of a newly married couple, the joy of a farmer reaping a harvest, one family's celebration of their son's bar-mitzvah, they could watch but never participate. They had to be distant, always on the outside looking in.

Suffering itself also has a way of accentuating distance. God always seems more distant when we hurt. However, nothing could be further than the truth:

Psalm 34:18 *The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit.*

He is the friend who sticks closer than a brother (Prov. 18:24)

Proof of that is that Jesus Himself was there with them.

V.13 – And they lifted their voices...

Don't expect people who are desperate to be silent and act dignified! They wanted to make sure they were heard. They were afar off.

Psalm 34:15 - *The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry*

Acts 4:24 - ²⁴ *So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said: "Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them.*

Luke 18:7-8 – ⁷ *And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? ⁸ I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?"*

V.13 - And they lifted up their voices and said, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!"

According to Leviticus 13:45 they were supposed to cry out "*unclean, unclean!*". However, they were done crying out "*unclean, unclean*". They were ready for a miracle! They were ready for mercy, they were ready for Jesus!

That was a shout louder than most prayers. It was shout energized by hope!

V.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.

In this instance, Jesus didn't touch them. Here he spoke the word for their situation. What Jesus says always works. A word from God can change everything!

Psalm 119:147 - *I rise before the dawning of the morning, and cry for help; I hope in Your word.*

They were told to go and get their certificate of release from the priests – even though on the outside they were still full of leprosy.

They left the presence of Jesus as full of leprosy as before, but they went. Nothing seemed to have changed or happened but they went. That is faith!

And so it was that as they went, as they took those steps in faith, something happened: they were cleansed. Something always happens if it involves Jesus, His word and faith!

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.

Sometimes those that pray the loudest also worship the loudest! We have to make the intensity of our worship proportional to greatness of our miracle.

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 man who came back was a Samaritan. The others were Jews. Normally these wouldn't mix but suffering is universal and doesn't respect cultures or ethnicity. They were together in suffering, they were together in the miracle but they were not together in returning to Jesus - who by the way waited for them in that place at least 3 days.

Jesus called him a “foreigner”. Maybe the ones who weren't “a foreigner” had a sense of entitlement, after all they were a chosen race. However, the foreigner acknowledged Jesus.

He was not part of the commonwealth of Israel, he was a stranger to the covenants, he was distant. But here's what happens with Jesus in the picture:

Ephesians 2:13, 19

13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

19 Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,

19 And He said to him, “Arise, go your way. Your faith has made you well.”

Your faith has made you well – “whole” (KJV) – complete spiritually and physically.