

Joshua Willadsen  
19th Sunday after Pentecost  
Sermons  
October 10, 2010

## LUKE 17:11-19 "THE WORD CLEANSSES"

"Jesus, Master, have mercy on us," the ten leprous men called out to the Lord. The Lord Jesus looked upon the leprous men and said, "Go show yourselves to the priests." And as they departed they all were cleansed. Stunning isn't it! The Lord Jesus speaks and according to His Word the ten leprous men are cleansed! They are completely healed of a horrible skin disease that rots the flesh, causes immense pain, and makes them unclean under the Law of Moses thereby separating them from Temple and synagogue worship; all by the Word of Jesus.

The reign of God come in Christ Jesus is amazing in grace and mercy for sinners, for those plagued by sickness and diseases, for those whose bodies are weak and frail, for those subject to the temptations and terrors of the devil, for those who are separated from God, and for those who die. Christ Jesus was sent by God the Father to heal and restore all creation, to cleanse every impurity of sin, to deliver from the devil, and to destroy death; Jesus came on a mercy mission that God first promised to Adam and Eve, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and to Moses and all Israel. God did not wait for Adam and Eve to ask for mercy when they sinned and all creation fell, rather God immediately promised to send the Seed of the woman, Christ Jesus, to rid the earth of evil, to cleanse from sin, and to restore to life.

God did not wait for Abraham to find Him, but God called Abraham to Himself and promised that all the families of the earth would be blessed through his Seed, Christ Jesus. God remembered His promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and so had mercy upon Israel and delivered them from Egypt through the leadership of Moses. God was gracious and had mercy upon His people even before they asked. It was God's will and promise from the beginning to demonstrate His grace and mercy toward sinners in Christ Jesus.

The Gospel of Luke shows us God's grace and mercy toward sinners come in Christ Jesus through encounter after encounter that is recorded from His birth all through His death and resurrection. The Gospel of Luke tells us over and over again that Jesus came to fulfill the destiny in Jerusalem that His Father willed, a destiny that culminated in His death, but procured mercy, cleansing, and life for sinners like us. Today our text in Luke shows us the mercy of God come in Christ as He journeyed to fulfill that destiny.

11 And it happened as He journeyed for Jerusalem and He was passing through the border of Samaria and Galilee. 12 And when He entered into some village ten leprous men met Him, they stood from afar 13 and they called out saying, "Jesus, master, have mercy on us." 14 And upon seeing them He said to them, "Go show yourselves to the priests." And it happened as they departed that they were cleansed. 15 But one from them, when he saw that he was healed, he returned with a great voice glorifying God, 16 and he fell

upon his face toward His feet giving thanks to Him; now he was a Samaritan. 17 And Jesus replied and said, "Were not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? 18 They were not found any returning to give God glory except this foreigner?" 19 And He said to him, "Arise go; your faith has saved you."

By the time of our text, countless people had heard Jesus' words and had seen the many miracles that He worked. Some people glorified God and gave Him thanks as Jesus healed them, forgave them, and restored them, but others were troubled, confused, and angered. Some trusted that God was at work in Jesus in some way, while others remained more skeptical; they appreciated the works and wonders He was doing for them, but failed to recognize that the promised reign of God had come in Him. By this time Jesus had become a popular figure and the report of His teaching and works spread all through Samaria, Galilee, and Judea.

The report of Jesus had come even to these poor ten leprous men, divided and alienated as they were from clean and well people. They were tucked away on the outskirts of Galilee, on the border between Galilee and Samaria, but even to them a witness of Jesus had come, so that when Jesus amazingly happened to travel near to them, they came out seeking mercy from Him. Indeed these men needed mercy; indeed these men needed to be cleansed! They lived a poor, painful, and pitiful existence.

The Law of Moses dictated that those infected by leprosy were to be separated from the congregation of God's people for as long the disease remained in their skin; they were unclean and less than whole. Leviticus 13:9-11, 16-17 reads: **9** "When a man is afflicted with a leprous disease, he shall be brought to the priest, **10** and the priest shall look. And if there is a white swelling in the skin that has turned the hair white, and there is raw flesh in the swelling, **11** it is a chronic leprous disease in the skin of his body, and the priest shall pronounce him unclean. He shall not shut him up, for he is unclean...**16** But if the raw flesh recovers and turns white again, then he shall come to the priest, **17** and the priest shall examine him, and if the disease has turned white, then the priest shall pronounce the diseased person clean; he is clean. Lepers were separated from Worship at the Temple where God's special presence and glory dwelt with His people ; they could not partake of the Feasts; they could not partake of the sacrifices; and they were isolated from family and friends. Lepers only company were other lepers who suffered like them.

From a distance these poor leprous men, called out to Jesus for mercy, and Jesus gave them mercy. Perhaps not as they thought or we might think. Jesus didn't lay hands on these men or heal them instantly, instead Jesus spoke His Word, "Go show yourselves to the priests." And it happened as they departed that they were cleansed. All ten were cleansed by Jesus' Word, not just the one who returned to glorify God and give Jesus thanks, all ten were cleansed. Jesus does not first question the sincerity of faith of these men before showing them mercy; Jesus simply shows them all mercy and cleanses them by His Word.

But the one leper, a Samaritan does return to glorify God and give thanks to Jesus and to that one Jesus speaks some more amazing words. What are we to make of them? 5 But one from them, when he saw that he was healed, he returned with a great voice glorifying God, 16 and he fell upon his face toward His feet giving thanks to Him; now he was a Samaritan. 17 And Jesus replied and said, "Were not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? 18 They were not found any returning to give God glory except this foreigner?" 19 And He said to him, "Arise go; your faith has saved you."

What are we to make of this word of Jesus, "Arise go; your faith has saved you," spoken to the one who returned? Many people have speculated all kinds of things in answer to this question usually focusing upon the differences between the one man who returned to give thanks and the nine who failed to. Thus they see Jesus' words as a pat on the back to the one man who had sincere faith or real quality faith and thus was saved, while the others lacked it. Then they apply this Scripture to themselves and others by saying something to the effect that 'make sure you give glory and thanks to God always for this proves the sincerity of your faith and gives assurance that one is saved. But this misses the point of Jesus' words and misses the point altogether of this encounter Jesus had with the ten leprosy men!

Jesus had given mercy to all ten leprosy men; Jesus cleansed them all according to His Word. All ten called out to Jesus for mercy, all looked to Him to help them. One a Samaritan returned to glorify God and give Jesus thanks. This is the only time in the Gospel of Luke that a person gives thanks to Jesus; it is often recorded that people glorify God for the miracles and wonders that Jesus did, but this is the only time that God is glorified and thanks is offered to Jesus with the man prostrated before Him! This poor leprosy Samaritan man who was cleansed by the Word of Jesus returned in faith, trusting indeed that God's reign had come in Jesus, to give Jesus thanks. Thus this poor man not only was cleansed of leprosy, but he was cleansed of his sins by the Word of Jesus. "Arise go; your faith has saved you." Jesus had sowed His Word, all were cleansed from leprosy and at least one that we know of was given faith and cleansed from sin.

What of the other nine? Were they given faith too; were they also cleansed from sin? We don't know. But we certainly know that Jesus wanted to give them this mercy too. For Jesus came to seek and save all the lost, to heal and restore all those sick and alienated from God because of sin; because Jesus continued on the way to His destiny in Jerusalem and died for all.

Jesus not only died for them, but He died so that you too might be shown mercy! Our risen Lord knows what has made you unclean, what has separated you from God and from your family and friends. Jesus sees the great disease of sin within you; He knows all the pain it causes you and the weakness it leaves you in. All your grief, sorrow, shame, guilt, suffering, fear, anxiety, all of it the Lord sees and knows. Our Lord Jesus sees and knows and He is present here today to show you mercy!

Jesus has spoken His Word to you for cleansing from sin. Jesus' Word for you has permeated this Worship service. In the Invocation you were reminded of your baptism in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit where Jesus

first cleansed you of your sins. You heard Jesus' Word proclaimed to you by His called and ordained servant in Absolution, "I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." You have prayed to the Lord for mercy in Kyrie and Jesus has been generous in giving you His mercy in the eating and drinking of His body and blood given and shed for you on the cross. And even now as our text from the Gospel of Luke is preached to you, the Word of Jesus cleanses you from all your sins.

Today Jesus has had mercy on you. Today Jesus has spoken the Word that cleanses you from sin. Today you may glorify God and give thanks to Jesus that you are forgiven and shall be made whole, that though you may die, yet shall you live, that Jesus shall raise up your body up to life everlasting.

Hear and believe in the Word of Christ that cleanses you. Receive the promised mercy of the Lord. Return to meet the Lord again next week in joy and thanksgiving. For to you the Lord says, "Arise go; your faith has saved you." Amen.