

Text: Luke 17:11-19 (NIV)

¹¹Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. ¹²As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance ¹³and called out in a loud voice, “Jesus, Master, have pity on us!” ¹⁴When he saw them, he said, “Go, show yourselves to the priests.” And as they went, they were cleansed. ¹⁵One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. ¹⁶He threw himself at Jesus’ feet and thanked him—and he was a Samaritan. ¹⁷Jesus asked, “Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine?” ¹⁸“Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?” ¹⁹Then he said to him, “Rise and go; your faith has made you well.”

Theme: It Is Faith in Jesus that Has Saved Us

The Samaritans and Jews were bitter enemies. After the 10 northern tribes of Israel had been taken into exile in 722 BC, other people were brought into the land. They intermarried with the Jews who were left, and took on aspects of the Jewish faith, but they built their own temple at Mount Gerizim. These people were the Samaritans. In Jesus’ day there were two distinct parts of Israel, Judea in the south, and Galilee in the north, with Samaria in the middle. Generally Jews would not even pass through Samaria. It would be like going to Kenosha county by going around Racine County. In 9:53 Jesus and His disciples tried to pass through Samaria, but they were turned away. In Luke 10 Jesus tells the parable of the Good Samaritan. It would have shocked the people that the Samaritan was the good guy. Today we have another story in which a Samaritan was the good guy. While the others continued on when they were healed, he returned to Jesus to thank and praise Him. He shows us that it is faith in Jesus, that has saved us.

I. This man experienced the greatest of tragedies.

He had the worst diagnosis possible at that time. He found out that he had leprosy. Leprosy was not only a fatal disease. It also made you an outcast. You had to leave your home and family and live in a leper colony outside of the city. If anyone came near you, you had to shout, “Unclean, Unclean,” so that they would stay away. When these men cried out to Jesus, they did so at a distance. It must have been horrible to live in a leper colony. When you saw the other people in the advance stages of leprosy, you saw what would soon happen to you.

As they say, “Misery loves company.” The plight of these men united them. They were all in the same boat. Although they were generally enemies, the disease that was now ravaging their bodies, was a greater enemy than each other.

We have all had experiences in life, which have been devastating to us. It might have been an illness, a tragedy, a financial mess. We might have brought all kinds of trouble into our own lives. There are all kinds of devastating experiences that we go through. At first we think that we are the only one who has ever been through this, but then, like these men, we begin to find other people who are going through the same thing. We see how they cope. We have people who understand what we are going through. When we go through such times, we often ask God, “Why?” “Why me?” “How long will this last?” “Where are you God?” It all doesn’t seem to make sense to us at all. How could God allow such evil to come into our lives?

II. But God can even turn the greatest evil into good.

The Samaritan learned to look to Jesus for mercy. Earlier his countrymen wouldn't allow Jesus to enter their country, but this poor man, who came into contact with these Jews, heard about Jesus. He heard of the many healings that Jesus had done. Now these men heard that Jesus was in the area. They called Him "Master," a title of respect. Peter called Jesus "Master" earlier in the Gospel when Jesus told him to lower the nets on the other side of the boat. Peter answered, "*Master, we've worked hard all night, but because you say so we'll lower the nets.*" (5:5) These men call Him Master, and they cry out for mercy. I like to define mercy as **God's love for those who can't help themselves.** There was nothing that these men could do for themselves, but they knew that there was help from Jesus, so they cried out to Him for mercy.

At such difficult times in our lives, we often turn to Christ for help. When people are sick, they often ask for our prayers. When people are in prison, they often turn to God. It's interesting that the most devastating experiences of life lead us to the merciful arms of our Savior. Especially, when we sin, we go to Him for grace and mercy, the forgiveness of our sins.

He also learned to trust in Jesus' Word. Jesus' answer was to go and show themselves to the priests. Did you notice that it wasn't until after they left, that they were cleansed. They were all still filled with leprosy when they left Jesus. But they trusted Christ's word, and all 10 of them were healed. That took a strong faith. Not one of these men bargained with Jesus. They all left, trusting that He would heal them. They trusted in His mercy and the power of His Word. After they left, they were healed.

That is an example for us. There are times when we cry out to God, but He doesn't seem to be listening. He doesn't bring the deliverance that we pleaded for. There are other times, when we hear His Word of forgiveness, but we still feel the shame of our sin. We are tempted to wonder whether God can forgive what I did. But God promises that He will never leave us or forsake us. He promises that nothing will ever separate us from His love. He tells us that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Hold to the promises of His Word. Trust in His love and mercy for you. Find peace in His forgiveness. Find hope in the promise of everlasting life with Him in His glory. You will find that His love will never let you down. He will fill your heart with the peace that passes all understanding. He will give you the strength that you need. He will guard you from all evil. He will take away your sin. In the end, He will give us the crown of everlasting life with Him in heaven. Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not yet seen. (Heb 11:1) Trust in Him, and in the end He will make everything well. (Ps 37:5)

The Samaritan learned to thank Jesus for His mercy. The nine Jews kept going, but he turned back and fell at Jesus' feet to thank and praise Him for all that the Lord had done for him. This is very important. There would be a time in the future when tragedy would strike again, but this man would remember what Jesus did on this day. The remembrance of Jesus' mercy on this day would give him confidence and peace in such times in the future.

That is one of the reasons why we give Jesus thanks and praise for His mercy to us. It helps to give us confidence for the future. When we remember how the Lord helped us in the past, it gives us the assurance that His love will never fail us. That goes especially for remembering what Jesus did for

us on the cross, and to thank and praise Him for giving His life for us. If He loved us so much that He gave His life for us, what could ever separate us from such love. Our thanks and praise keep us focused on Christ and His mercy for us.

In an ironic way, this man's leprosy was the best thing that ever happened to him. Had this never happened, he would have never sought Jesus for His mercy. He would have been like his countrymen who rejected our Lord. But his need brought him to Jesus. He cried out to the Lord, and trusted the Lord's Word of healing. It was that faith in Jesus that saved him.

God also gives us such blessings in disguise, times when we are forced to go to Him and cry out for mercy. Those are actually blessed times because we come to experience His love and mercy for us. They teach us to trust in Him, and that faith in Him as our Savior, is what saves us. When you receive Christ's salvation, don't forget to praise and thank Him for all of His goodness to you, so that you will always can be confident of in His mercy in the future.

Amen.

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October 13, 2013***