
Jesus heals the 10 Lepers

Sermon • Rev'd Andrew Hoggan • 20 October

Leviticus 13:1-6 • Luke 17:11-19



Lets pray, Lord Jesus, open our hearts and minds that we might see you, and more than that we might give thanks and worship you, amen.

Many years ago I watched a TV reality show on the kind of parties some rich folk throw for their teenage kids.

It was a sweet 16 party, no expense spared. The dad was particularly excited about the present he had brought for his daughter and was looking forward to seeing her reaction.

Outside in the driveway was a near new Porsche wrapped in a beautiful pink bow. Leading up to the reveal the father gave his speech, and then handed her the keys and told her to look in the driveway.

The cameras followed her out. On seeing the Porsche the girl burst into tears. Not because she was happy and grateful. But because she was angry. It wasn't a brand new Porsche and how dare she be given a second hand one.

I felt sorry for the father. I felt more sorry for the girl. I wonder if she will ever be happy or grateful for anything.

What's this got to do with the account of Jesus healing the ten Lepers? We have to look at the wider context.

As well as Jesus doing the work of the Kingdom and showing himself to be the fulfilment of the prophecy given by Isaiah, Luke 4, Jesus is sending a message to those who had been guardians of the gospel but had failed to recognise who the gospel pointed to.

“Were not ten made clean? But the other nine, where are they? Was none of them found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?”

Of all people, those who had been entrusted with the law and the writings of the prophets, they should have recognised Jesus as saviour and Lord.

Instead, the religious authorities, by en large, rejected, misunderstood, and or, persecuted Jesus.

Example. Ch 15 vs 1-2, the Pharisees and scribes are grumbling and moaning because Jesus was accepting people they thought were unacceptable.

Three stories take the rest of the ch. The lost sheep, the lost coin, the lost son. Various details in the stories make the point that salvation is more about what God does as compared what we do.

Ch 16. Jesus is teaching on the kingdom of God and wealth. Vs 14-15 the Pharisees who were lovers of money ridiculed him and showed that they were trusting in their wealth and not God.

The story of the rich man and Lazarus shows the end result of trusting in something other than God.

ch 17 Jesus healing ten lepers one of them a Samaritan. Yes, on the one hand it is an example of the mercy and the power of God that can meet us no matter our status or circumstances.

On the other hand, it points to the failure of those who, despite having the scriptures to guide and teach them, failed to grasp who Jesus was. Worse, they were working against the purposes of God.

Sometimes when Jesus was challenging the religious leaders he was less than subtle. Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, Hypocrites! Blind guides! Fools! Whitewashed tombs! Snakes! Brood of vipers! Sons of your father the devil!

Sometimes he was subtle. “Did only this one come back, and a foreigner, a Samaritan, what of the other nine?”

Was Jesus expecting a greater recognition that God was at work? Was Jesus expecting that those who experienced the goodness and work of God would give thanks and glory to God? It looks like it.

You may have heard the story about the husband who was getting himself into a bit of trouble because while his wife was always telling him she loved him, he never said it back.

One day in frustration the wife raised it. How come when I tell you I love you, you never say it back? The husband's reply's, "on the day I married you I told you that I loved you and I always would. If anything changes I'll let you know". Good luck with that one.

In a marriage or a relationship, for love and appreciation to stay fresh it has to be articulated and shown.

Just so, in our Spiritual lives, in our relationship with God, expressing our thanks, and giving glory to God for his work in our life is a great habit to have. ■

I dare say all the 10 lepers were overjoyed and grateful to be healed because being a leper was a miserable existence physically, socially, spiritually.

I was working in London for a few months in 1988 and I remember something of the hysteria and social, even spiritual shunning of AIDS patients. It's pretty hard when you are suffering and most people want nothing to do with you.

Jesus did not shun the lepers. Against all the religious and cultural norms of the day, Jesus actually sometimes touched lepers when he was curing them.

Here he simply tells them to show themselves to the priests which was pretty much the same as saying you are healed.

In faith they set off. Pretty soon into the journey things begin to happen. Maybe they begin to get sensation in their fingers and toes. Something lepers loose which is why they so often injure themselves and that is one of the reason they loose body parts.

Maybe some who have lost bits of their body are restored. At the very least the rotting or disfigured skin would start to look normal.

We don't know the details except all were healed, and only the Samaritan, one considered by the Jews a religious half breed, came back to give thanks to Jesus and glory to God.

Aside from scripture encouraging us to be grateful does being grateful and expressing that gratitude have any positive effect that can be varied scientifically?

Well, according to research in Neuroscience expressing gratitude is very good for you. It increases dopamine and serotonin, a natural feel good drug. It helps counter anxiety and depression. It fosters mental resilience. It even encourages good decision making.

Neuroscientists, psychologists, mental health professionals, life coaches, and various other ones tell us it's good to be grateful and to express that gratitude.

I'm so thankful, and I let the good Lord know, that after retirement for the second time, I again get the privilege of ministry and especially the opportunity to, I hope, encourage folk from God's word, the bible. ■

It's not just spiritual stuff though. I'm always looking for things to be grateful for.

- My kids, Nikki, friends, church family.
- When I see the new leaves coming on my grapevine I'm grateful to God and I tell him how marvellous I think it all is.

It might sound silly but I'm thankful when I open my eyes each morning and I can still see. I'm thankful when I jump out of bed each day that my arms and legs still work.

It seems the older I get the more grateful I am for a bunch of stuff.

I even try to be thankful when things are tough, or I stuff up in some way. It's an opportunity to experience the closeness and faithfulness of God. It's an opportunity to grow.

I promise, if you look for things to be grateful for you will find them. As we find them we can make it a habit to thank God.

Let's look a little into the way Jesus ends the story of this healing and what he says to the one who came back. ■

Vs 19, “your faith has made you well”.

What exactly is Jesus saying because there are two kinds of faith. It could be “faith of” which could be thought of as an amount or measure of faith.

I have this amount of faith today as compared that amount of faith yesterday. Yesterday I was a 8 on the scale of ten. Today I’m only a 3.

One problem of “Faith of” is it is fairly dependent on our feelings and emotions. The other problem is that it can lead us to focus more on ourselves rather than focusing on Jesus.

Just before the story of the healing of the ten lepers the apostles had asked Jesus to increase their faith. Jesus says this, “if you have faith the size of a mustard seed you could say to this mulberry tree be uprooted and planted in the sea, and it would obey you.”

Without going into what Jesus was getting at there, it would seem that Jesus can do remarkable things with a tiny bit of faith. That is as long as that faith is focused rightly. Faith in. Faith in Jesus.

That’s the other type of faith. “Faith in.” I have great faith that my daughter Jessica will do well in her exams and studies because she is bright, and she works incredibly hard.

That kind of faith has nothing to do with anything I have. It’s all about her.

“Faith of” on the other hand is more about us. It seems to be what the prosperity, or faith preachers focus on. That can have the very unfortunate effect of leaving a person thinking it must be their fault if their prayer is not answered. If only I had more faith.....

It’s good to remember that ultimately , it’s not about us. It’s about God. I for one am very relieved and thankful about that. It means God can, and does, still work when my faith is weak and fragile.

Early in Jesus travels when he went back to his hometown of Nazareth he was rejected, largely because his townsfolk thought they knew him.

“Is this not the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James etc etc, and they took offence at him.”

The account ends vs 5. “And he could do no deed of power there, except he laid his hands on a few sick people and cured them, and he was amazed at their unbelief.”

How come it says on the one hand “he could do no deed of power there”. And yet it also says “he laid his hands on a few sick people and cured them”.

How do we reconcile that? Is it because in failing to recognise who Jesus was, only a few people came to be healed. |

And in comparison to what Jesus could’ve done if people had recognised who he was, what he did could be described as nothing.

The key point is recognising who Jesus is and coming to him. That is “faith in” as compared “faith of”.

If we have faith as a mustard seed remarkable things can happen. As long as that faith is faith in Jesus.

Faith, gratitude and giving Glory to God. The application is simple and somewhat obvious. |

We have reason to be grateful and give glory to God if we recipients of the good news of the gospel and the saving work of a Jesus in our lives.

We can be grateful and thankful when things go well.

We can even be grateful and thankful even when things don’t seem to be going well, because no matter what, we know and trust that God is with us, and for, us no matter what.

What does it mean to give glory to God? |

For myself, it means taking stock, being aware, and acknowledging that when I get it wrong and sin I am responsible and I best sort it out, with God’s help, lest I bring dishonour to God’s name.

It means knowing that where and when I might succeed, ultimately all good things come from God, and if by God’s grace, his hand is on my life, or my actions, that is to the glory of God and has far more to do with him than me.

Thanks be to God.

Let's pray. Whatever we might be going through, good or bad, help us to see your hand in our life and help us find things that we can be grateful for. Help us to live thankful lives and lives that bring glory to your name, amen.