

### **Never-Ending Mercy of Christ**

This morning is different only in the sense we are coming together via the internet. But it is the same, in that we are gathering to learn more about Christ, resulting in our praise and worship of Him. Please get ready to learn from God's Word. Open your Bible to Luke chapter 17. If you have a map of Palestine at the time of Jesus that would also be helpful. Jesus is traveling along the border between Samaria and Galilee. This is a border that divides the Jews and Samaritans, but it also is where the 3 territories of Galilee controlled by Antipas, Samaria controlled by the Roman Procurator and Decapolis which was Syrian came together. This was an area known for religious and political unrest. It is here were Jesus crosses racial, religious and political boundaries to heal lepers.

As some of you are aware, I enjoy movies. My favorite kinds of movies are those that end with an unexpected twist. We have all seen enough movies to usually know how the typical story line progresses toward its usual and predictable conclusion. However, when a movie turns from the predictable and follows an unexpected plot path to an unexpected ending and it has a good story line, well then, it is one worth watching. I can name several, but that is not what this morning is about.

However, in today's scripture passage, like a good movie, we have a text that also has a twist. Luke writes this account in such a way as to leave his readers at stop points where making assumptions can lead one to wrong conclusions. His purposeful vagueness at certain specific points in the story can lead one to make wrong assumptions. He uses these wrong assumptions to pull his readers into the story and to cause them and us to see some amazing things about Jesus. As always,

our purpose for being in God's Word is to impact our hearts, minds and souls to change us.

Here is an account of ten lepers who are all healed. Ten are cleansed physically but one is also saved, he is healed spiritually as well. The one who is converted returns to Jesus to give God thanks. There is a connection between this short story in Luke 17 and the 3 parables of Chapter 15; Luke's purpose for including this account where he does is to show us theologically the distance in which Jesus is willing to go to save sinners. As Paul wrote to Timothy, "The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." (1 Timothy 1:15) Jesus came to bring salvation to the world, not just Jews.

Let me begin with prayer and then read God's Word for Canyon Bible.

Pray

### **Jesus Demonstrates Mercy**

Reading in Luke chapter 17 beginning at verse 11, "On the way to Jerusalem Jesus was passing along between Samaria and Galilee. <sup>12</sup> And as he entered a village, he was met by ten lepers, who stood at a distance <sup>13</sup> and lifted up their voices, saying, 'Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.' <sup>14</sup> When he saw them he said to them, 'Go and show yourselves to the priests.' And as they went they were cleansed. <sup>15</sup> Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice; <sup>16</sup> and he fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving him thanks. Now he was a Samaritan. <sup>17</sup> Then Jesus answered, 'Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? <sup>18</sup> Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?' <sup>19</sup> And Jesus said to him, 'Rise and go your way; your faith has

made you well.’” My desire is that God the Father would reveal more of our Savior Jesus to us as we explore this passage.

In verse 11 we learn Jesus was traveling between Samaria and Galilee, which was the normal practice for many Jews, even though it was not the most direct route to Jerusalem. Many Jews took this longer route because of the Jew’s hatred of the Samaritans. However, Jesus, who always had a purpose for everything he did has a different reason for taking this route.

Remember back in Luke chapter 9 Jesus was in Samaria, “When the days drew near for *Jesus* to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. <sup>52</sup> And he sent messengers ahead of him, who went and entered a village of the Samaritans, to make preparations for him. <sup>53</sup> But the people did not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem. <sup>54</sup> And when his disciples James and John saw it, they said, ‘Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them?’ <sup>55</sup> But *Jesus* turned and rebuked them. <sup>56</sup> And they went on to another village.’ (Luke 9:51-56) Here we learn two things; Jesus had no racial problems or hatred with Samaritans. Even though there was hatred by the Samaritans against the Jews and the Jews against the Samaritans, Jesus loves all of God’s creation. However, James and John, as Jews, were filled with the racial and religious prejudice against Samaritans. It is the fallen and sinful nature of mankind to elevate themselves by putting other people or races of people down. In our passage this morning, Jesus moves with compassion and mercy towards 10 lepers, of which, at least one was a Samaritan.

### **Jesus Acts Because of Mercy**

Returning to Luke’ story in verses 12 to 14, “And as *Jesus* entered a village, he was met by ten lepers, who stood at a distance <sup>13</sup> and lifted up their voices, saying, ‘Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.’ <sup>14</sup> When *Jesus* saw them he said to

them, ‘Go and show yourselves to the priests.’ And as they went they were cleansed.” If we stopped here one would assume that these lepers were Jewish and headed to the Synagogue to find a priest. However, we find out later that at least one leper was a Samaritan and possibly several may have been. Here observe Jesus the Jewish Messiah going to what Jews considered the lowest social order – Samaritans. In our last message of study, we examined the unprofitable salves, but here these lepers are even lower. Jesus often broke man-made boundaries to express God the Father’s love for all humans.

Not only are some of these people the hated Samaritans but they are lepers. In chapter 5 of Luke, Jesus heals a leper and we learn a little of how horrible this disease is. More detail of this disease can be learned from the Old Testament books of Leviticus and Numbers, and about the laws set in place to deal with lepers. Let me share some of these.

Reading from Leviticus chapter 14 beginning at verse 1, “The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, <sup>2</sup>‘This shall be the law of the leprous person for the day of his cleansing. He shall be brought to the priest, <sup>3</sup>and the priest shall go out of the camp, and the priest shall look. Then, if the case of leprous disease is healed in the leprous person, <sup>4</sup>the priest shall command them to take for him who is to be cleansed two live clean birds and cedarwood and scarlet yarn and hyssop. <sup>5</sup>And the priest shall command them to kill one of the birds in an earthenware vessel over fresh water. <sup>6</sup>He shall take the live bird with the cedarwood and the scarlet yarn and the hyssop, and dip them and the live bird in the blood of the bird that was killed over the fresh water. <sup>7</sup>And he shall sprinkle it seven times on him who is to be cleansed of the leprous disease. Then he shall pronounce him clean and shall let the living bird go into the open field. <sup>8</sup>And he who is to be cleansed shall wash his clothes and shave off all his hair and bathe himself in water, and he shall be clean. And after that he may come into the camp, but live outside his tent seven days.

<sup>9</sup> And on the seventh day he shall shave off all his hair from his head, his beard, and his eyebrows. He shall shave off all his hair, and then he shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in water, and he shall be clean.” (Leviticus 14:1-9) So, in our story found in Luke, these lepers were abiding by the law and staying at a distance from people. Society wanted nothing to do with lepers and they were outcasts. For both Jews and Samaritans this disease had physical, social and spiritual implications for leprosy was considered judgement by God for their sins. Remember, Miriam in Numbers chapter 12 spoke against her brother Moses; this angered the Lord and she was made leprous. Likewise, God punished King Uzziah (*Uzziyah / ooʒ·zee·yaw*) with Leprosy in 2 Chronicles chapter 26, verses 16 to 21. Sin and disease came into the world by the fall of Adam, giving all people a sin nature. Some people suffer directly because of their sin; however, others suffer not because of their personal sin but because of the collective sins of mankind.

Another interesting point is that Jesus tells these lepers to <sup>14</sup> “Go and show yourselves to the priests” just as Moses instructed. Why is this significant? Because, Jesus tells them to go show themselves to the priests and at the beginning of their journey, they still have leprosy. For them to head out to the priests is an act that requires some faith. All ten set out but one returns. In Luke chapter 5 Jesus heals a man with leprosy by touching him. Here Jesus heals from a distance. This is a healing that requires faith from the one who is to be healed.

I can imagine the conversation among these lepers may have been similar to the conversation between Naaman and his servant in 2 Kings, chapter 5 beginning in verse 9, “So Naaman came with his horses and chariots and stood at the door of Elisha’s house. <sup>10</sup> And he sent a messenger to Naaman, saying, ‘Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored, and you shall be clean.’ <sup>11</sup> But Naaman was angry and went away, saying, ‘Behold, I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call upon the name of the LORD his God, and wave

his hand over the place and cure the leper. <sup>12</sup> Are not Abana (*Abanah /ab·aw·naw*) and Pharpar (*Parpar /par·par*) the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?’ So he turned and went away in a rage. <sup>13</sup> But his servants came near and said to him, ‘My father, it is a great word the prophet has spoken to you; will you not do it? Has he actually said to you, “Wash, and be clean”?’ <sup>14</sup> So *Naaman* went down and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, **according to the word of the man of God**, and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.” This healing in Luke and the healing of Naaman are similar in many ways. Perhaps so similar, Luke is making an important point. Luke is saying Jesus is the Prophet all have been waiting for, he is the long-awaited Messiah. Jesus is the Man of God and we are to do as He says for we will be healed.

I also could see these lepers in Luke’s account wondering why Jesus chose to heal them from a distance and over a delayed time period. They most likely had heard of Jesus healing the leper earlier by touching him and the healing was instant. Again, the 10 had to have some level of faith to set out to see the priests and are healed as they went.

Luke’s generalities up until now have led his readers to make some wrong assumptions. One wrong assumption was that these lepers were all Jews and went to find priests in a Synagogue or Jerusalem. However, since at least one was a Samaritan, he was headed to his temple and his priests at Mount Gerizim (*gher·ee·zeem*). Amazingly while they were going, all were healed.

However, this returning Samaritan is a cleansed leper and a saved leper. In verse 14 we have the common word for physical healing; **“they were cleansed”**. All 10 were cleansed of leprosy. However, in verse 15, we are introduced to a verb in the Greek language translated as **“healed”** and this word

implies more than physical healing. It implies a more supernatural holistic healing of both physical and spiritual. Another word to take notice of is as this leper went it says, “**when he saw that he was healed, turned back**”. When Luke records “**he saw**” this is a phrase Luke used often for spiritual insight. So, this leper had his eyes opened and had eyes to see and ears to hear the call of Jesus and his soul was opened to Jesus’ true identity as the Son of God. This is a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy

We see another example of Jesus fulfilling O.T. prophecy. In Isaiah chapter 61, at verse 1 we read, “**The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; <sup>2</sup> to proclaim the year of the LORD’s favor, ... <sup>3</sup> that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he may be glorified.**” (Isaiah 61:1-3) Here for this leper the Spirit of the Lord came upon him and as verse 3 of Isaiah and verse 14 here in Luke says as God revealed Jesus as the Christ “**he fell on his face at Jesus’ feet, giving him thanks.**” His life was changed forever when the Spirit of the Lord came upon him and his life was now to be lived glorifying the Lord. The same is to be true for each of us.

When one is saved by our Lord, Jesus, we share a common purpose in life that began in the O.T. found in Isaiah chapter 61 and Jesus reaffirmed in Luke chapter 4, verses 18 and 19. “**The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, <sup>19</sup> to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.**” Just like this Samaritan leper we praise the Lord, share the gospel with everyone who will listen.

I thought back to the Samaritan woman at the well. <sup>19</sup> “The woman said to him, ‘Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. <sup>20</sup> Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship.’ <sup>21</sup> Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father.’” (Luke 4:19-21) Jesus is telling her the day of worship at the temple is ending. No more will a worshipper of God have to worship in a temple to meet God. Because of Jesus, we as believers, worship God directly for His Spirit lives within us. This is what happened to the Samaritan leper; as he traveled to see the priests and go to where there were, “he saw” with spiritual eyes and stopped and turned around, and returned to Jesus because not only was his skin healed but so was his heart and soul as well. He was overwhelmed by Jesus’ mercy and grace, and his response was to “praise God with a loud voice”. As he came back into the presence of Jesus knowing He is the Son of God, “he fell on his face at Jesus’ feet, giving him thanks.” This non-Jew, this Samaritan worshipped the Son of God.

Luke wants us to see this Samaritan praised God and worshipped God by falling on his face in front of God, Jesus Christ. This phrase is a common way of showing that the person falling on his face is overwhelmed with divine authority. Here, Jesus is worshipped and submitted to as Lord. He was called Master earlier and now He is worshipped as the Messiah. If Jesus was not God, it would be idolatry to worship Him. He is God, so worshipping him is very appropriate. Jesus is thanked because He healed this man and 9 others who went by faith; Jesus healed 10 – “as they went, they were cleansed”. This one man, not a Jew, was received by Jesus and made a disciple – demonstrating Jesus came for all people of the world, but not all would respond.



## God's Kingdom Comes by Jesus' Mercy

Back to Luke chapter 17, reading at verse 17, “Then Jesus answered, ‘Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine?’<sup>18</sup> Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?’<sup>19</sup> And Jesus said to him, ‘Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well.’” It would be hard to say with any surety, but most likely the lepers were a mixture of Jews and Samaritans. Luke’s point is that miracles were performed by Jesus throughout Palestine and yet for the most part Jews rejected Jesus. Gentiles, like the woman at the well and this Samaritan leper came to Christ by his grace and through faith. This is a picture of Israel in general; Jews rejecting their long-awaited Messiah and some Gentiles coming to faith.

Jesus’ wording in verse 18 is stronger than it appears in the English language. When he says, “except this foreigner” it is weak. Maybe if it read “one from another nation – not from Israel” it would communicate in a stronger tone. Jesus did not look down upon the Samaritans as half-Jews, but they were representative of the Gentiles of the world who he came to save.

Jesus commands this man to “Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well.” This is what he commands all believers.<sup>18</sup> “Jesus says to all believers, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.’<sup>19</sup> Go therefore and make disciples of all nations” *Again it would more clear if it said, “As you go make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,<sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”* (Matthew 28:18-20) This healed leper was not a Jew and neither are we. We are saved Gentiles brought into God’s kingdom by Jesus’ life, death and resurrection. Saving faith results in the lives of believers, as they live their lives are lived out, are to “make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son

and of the Holy Spirit,<sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.”

Read the Bible, learn the Bible and share the Bible as you live your life.

Let us look at this faith in operation: we know this Samaritan believed Jesus was God. He cries out, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.” He knew what kind of disease he had. He knew that he was terminal. He also knew that only God could cure leprosy. When he cried out to Jesus - he was crying out to God. The other proof we have that this man believed Jesus was divine is that when he began praising God for his power in healing him, he headed straight for Jesus and fell at His feet and worshipped Jesus as God.

I want us to examine one more Greek word before I close, Jesus ends by says to this former leper, “your faith has made you well.” The word translated as “well” is a word meaning saved or delivered. This specific word is used seven times in the N.T. and every time including this one it means that faith has saved the individual by believing in Jesus as Lord and Savior. Jesus sees this foreigner exercise saving faith in Him and declares that his faith has saved him.

As far as application for our lives; we must consider what happened here and learn from it. First, we too must exercise saving faith in Jesus Christ to be saved. As John warned we are not to add or take away from the Bible, for the Bible is the only inspired Word of God. Second, Jesus healed all 10, but only one came to saving faith. We are not to be like the nine, who prayed for help, but did not praise God for their cleansing. We need to thank God for what we have instead of being worried about what we have not. We must be a thankful people and not a people always looking at our situation and wanting more. Humility is thankful but pride and self-centeredness is always unsatisfied and wants more. When we pray, let us ask God for a thankful spirit and not always ask Him for stuff that our prideful eyes desires. While we are praying, let us also pray that God would keep ever

before us our former condition, empty souls without God, so that we will never become puffed up with pride but see our unworthiness and praising Christ for healing our sinfulness and our spiritual leprosy and making us new creations in God.

As Paul instructed the believers in Philippi, let this also instruct us and be the marks of our lives as believers in Jesus Christ, <sup>4</sup>“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. <sup>5</sup>Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; <sup>6</sup>do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. <sup>7</sup>And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:4-7) If God has healed you from your spiritual leprosy, your fallen state, your sin – then let us shout - “Rejoice in the Lord always!” Amen and amen.



