

“YOUR FAITH HAS MADE YOU WELL”

Luke 17:11-19

Key Verse: 17:19

“Then he said to him, ‘Rise and go; your faith has made you well.’”

The event in this passage is recorded uniquely by Luke. Why was this event so noteworthy to Luke? The person Jesus praised was a Samaritan. This reminds us of Jesus’ earlier parable in which the hero was the good Samaritan (10:25-37). It seems that Jesus intentionally drew people’s attention to the faith and virtue of Samaritans. At that time, Samaritans were despised and segregated by the Jews. It was because they had been mixed with people of foreign nations through intermarriage, and they promoted syncretism by mixing all kinds of idol worship with the worship of the one true God (2Ki 17:24-33). Because of this, the Jews regarded Samaritans as the worst of the human race. There was no visible wall between them; but there were big walls in their hearts. It seemed impossible to break the deep-seated prejudice and enmity that had lasted for generations. But Jesus intentionally challenged this barrier and finally broke it through the cross. Jesus did not segregate Samaritans from Jews. Jesus praised a Samaritan for his faith. To Jesus, what really matters is faith.

These days, racial and ethnic issues have been hot topics. Students in many universities have demonstrated strongly against racial prejudice. This comes from a sense of justice. We need justice. It has often been pure and visionary students who renew the social environment, like fresh water flowing into a lake. As a result, many changes have come about. For example, Georgetown University just announced preferential admission status to descendants of slaves they sold in 1838. The problem is that fundamentally, we cannot solve racial prejudice with social action; though systems change, prejudice still remains in the human heart. In Jesus, there is a real solution. There is no prejudice or enmity in Jesus. Jesus is the Prince of Peace. Jesus breaks all kinds of barriers through the cross. To Jesus, faith is most important. Faith can make us well. Let’s learn what it means to have faith in Jesus.

First, Jesus blesses faith that cries for mercy (11-14). Luke begins this part by reminding us that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem (11a). Jesus’ purpose was to suffer and die, shedding his blood on the cross for the sins of the

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world. Then he would rise again from the dead, defeating the power of death. In this way Jesus became the Savior of the world. For this purpose, Jesus traveled to Jerusalem. Jesus didn't travel by expressway on a donkey or horse. Jesus walked step by step along a dusty road. On the way Jesus stopped at towns and villages, preached the good news of the kingdom of God, taught the word of God, healed the sick and drove out demons. At this point, Jesus was traveling along the border between Samaria and Galilee (11b). As he was going into a village, he was met by ten men with leprosy (12a). Based on Jesus' words in verse 18, it seems that one was a Samaritan and the other nine were Jews. Normally Jews did not associate with Samaritans (Jn 4:9). But their common suffering as lepers led them to disregard this social prejudice and live together in a leper's colony. According to the Law of Moses, lepers were isolated and quarantined (Lev 13:45-46). In that condition, they had no strength or heart to despise others. Rather, they had pity on each other. Due to their disease, each one had become hideous, unclean and unsanitary. To Jewish people, based on their law, cleanliness was very important. Someone said, "If you open a dry cleaning business in a Jewish neighborhood, you will succeed." But lepers are not concerned about cleanliness. As ten lepers lived together, it would be like a monster's village. There was no joy or hope.

But one day, they heard great news: Jesus was coming near! No doubt, they had heard of Jesus. Jesus was the one who had reached out his hand, touched a man covered with leprosy, and said to him, **“I am willing. Be clean!”** Immediately his leprosy was cleansed and he became a healthy man, and spread the news about Jesus (Lk 5:13). One of the marks of the Messiah was cleansing leprosy. When John the Baptist was in prison, he questioned Jesus' identity and sent his disciples to ask him, **“Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else.”** Jesus replied, **“Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor”** (Lk 7:20-22). To these ten men with leprosy, Jesus' coming was the best news they could hear. It was a “once in a lifetime” opportunity for them to be cleansed. So they came to Jesus as a matter of life and death. But they could not approach him directly because of the prohibition of the law. So they stood at a distance and called out in a loud voice, **“Jesus, Master, have pity on us!”** (12b-13). Most versions use the word “mercy” instead of “pity.” So we can say they cried out, **“Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!”** This was a united

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cry, and they must have practiced speaking out loud in unison. They were not demanding. They simply appealed to the Messiah to have mercy on them. It worked! Jesus heard their cry. Even though he was on the way to Jerusalem, he stopped and gave his full attention to them. When Jesus saw them, it was with eyes of mercy. Jesus is so merciful, even more than a loving mother.

Mercy characterized Jesus’ messianic ministry. When Jesus welcomed sinners and ate with them, the Pharisees bitterly criticized him. Jesus answered, **“It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice’”** (Mt 9:12-13a). Jesus once met a man possessed by demons who was very aggressive, violent and evil. He was a dangerous person, and he was crying out. Jesus didn’t avoid him. Rather, Jesus confronted him out of his great mercy and healed him. Later Jesus told him to testify how the Lord had had mercy on him (Mk 5:19). When we ask for mercy, Jesus never ignores our cry, no matter how undeserving we are (Heb 4:16). We need to know Jesus’ heart and depend on his mercy for ourselves and in serving others. We are happy to see so many students on our campuses. They look fresh and energetic and visionary. But inwardly, they are crying like the ten lepers. We want to help them come to Jesus through the word of God. Yet we need Jesus’ mercy in our hearts. If we rely on our own strength and love, we can easily become judgmental and critical. Then we are tempted to give up and look for a better Bible student. At that moment, we need to remember how the Lord has had mercy on us and practice his mercy toward them.

What did Jesus do out of his mercy? Jesus said to them, **“Go, show yourselves to the priests”** (14a). This implied that Jesus was going to heal and restore them, not only physically but also socially; it was really good news. At the same time, it required an act of faith. They needed to overcome doubt and believe that Jesus would heal them. They needed full trust in Jesus to go to the priests, who would examine them and pronounce them “clean.” Then they could obtain a certificate which would allow them to re-enter society. Furthermore, they could be a blessing to others by sharing their testimony that the Messiah had come. When they obeyed, a miracle happened. As they went, they were cleansed (14b). Jesus has power to cleanse leprosy completely and to make people new. This is a prelude of Jesus cleaning us from sin. We are all like lepers. We have spiritual diseases and sicknesses that destroy our souls and make us ugly. This disease of sin

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separates us from God and others and makes us lonely, miserable and fatalistic. This is why we were hopeless and helpless. But God has mercy on us. When we cry out for his help, he hears our prayer and cleanses us of all our dirty sins with the precious blood of Christ. He restores the image of God in us and gives us new life and new hope. Thank you, Jesus!

Second, Jesus laments over the unthankful (15-18). Being cleansed is important. Yet how one responds afterward is even more important. When the men realized they were cleansed, they were full of joy. When they saw their healthy new skin covering strong muscles and bones, they must have pinched themselves to see if it was true. It was! They could run and jump and dance and shout. They could have hope of marriage and a bright future. At this moment, they should have remembered the one who made it possible. They should have all returned praising God and thanking Jesus. But only one of them came back. He was praising God in a loud voice (15). He threw himself at Jesus’ feet and thanked him—and he was a Samaritan (16). This was an act of surrender to the one who had healed him. He realized that his new life was a gift of grace and he was full of thanks. He was ready to do anything Jesus asked him to do out of his deep thanksgiving. Though the other nine did not come with him, it did not matter to him. They may have discouraged him, saying, “We are a team. Let’s stick together. Later we can go back and give thanks, but not right now. Let’s have a party and celebrate!” However, he didn’t follow majority opinion; he acted based on his own conviction of faith and went back and gave thanks to Jesus, wholeheartedly, as a first priority. A thankful heart compelled him to do this.

How did Jesus respond? Let’s read verses 17-18. **“Jesus asked, ‘Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Has no one returned to give praise to God except this foreigner?’”** These verses tell us that Jesus expected them all to come back and praise God and give thanks to him. It was their obligation as human beings. However, Jesus did not want them to do so out of obligation; he really wanted to have a personal relationship with them. Then they could grow and be healthy—not only physically, but also spiritually. The fact that they failed to come back means that they did not form a personal relationship with Jesus. Their bodies were healed, but their spirits were not. Spiritually speaking, they were still men with leprosy. It was the leprosy of failing to glorify God and give thanks to him (Ro 1:21). This is a serious matter. They lost connection with Jesus, who is the source of life.

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They lost the spiritual blessing in Christ. Indeed, they lost everything. They became like Adam in the garden when he lost his relationship with God (Gen 3:9). Jesus was very sorry for them and he lamented over them. It was Jesus' broken shepherd's heart for them: **“Where are the other nine?”**

Why did the other nine respond like this? We don't know exactly. But we can find several possible reasons. One is that the hidden dreams and ambitions in their hearts suddenly came alive and captured their minds. Now they could pursue careers as athletes, politicians, and entrepreneurs, and enjoy romantic relationships with beautiful women. They could write best-selling novels based on their unusual experience. Their dreams and ambition so occupied their hearts that they completely forgot about Jesus, who had healed them. Another reason may be that they procrastinated. They knew they should return and give thanks, but it did not seem to be most important to them. They felt they could do it later; then they completely forgot. Still another reason may be a sense of entitlement. It seems that “the other nine” were Jews. They might have felt that God should do this for them because they were chosen people. They did not understand why God chose them. God chose them to be a blessing to all nations. They should not despise the Gentiles or segregate them. Rather, they should help the Gentiles come to God by setting a good example and teaching the word of God humbly. They should not just enjoy their blessings, but learn to serve sacrificially. They should have become shepherds for the Gentiles. But they took their privileges for granted and felt that God should favor them as his duty. A sense of entitlement made them proud and useless, and a bad influence. Those who have a sense of entitlement cannot praise and thank God. Instead, they become judgmental and critical and complain. So we need to examine our hearts. Do we have a sense of entitlement in ourselves?

One more reason might be that they were overcome by their sinful nature. There is a saying, “Bitterness is engraved on stone, while grace is written in water.” It means that we quickly forget grace and never forget bitterness. Though we received 99 acts of grace, the one time something unfavorable happens we remember that, while forgetting the 99 acts of grace. This is fallen man's mentality under the power of sin. In order to praise and thank God we must overcome this sinful tendency. We need to make an intentional effort to hold on to grace and reject bitterness. Though there may have been many reasons for the lepers not to return with praise and thanks, no

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matter the reason, they were wrong. Fundamentally, they displeased God and would bear the consequence of their failure. The Bible teaches us that not glorifying God nor giving thanks to him is at the root of sin (Ro 1:21). This is why Jesus lamented with a broken shepherd’s heart.

Third, Jesus blesses the faith that gives thanks (19). After lamenting over the unthankful nine, Jesus blessed the thankful Samaritan, saying, **“Rise and go; your faith has made you well”** (19). Here Jesus recognized his act of praise and thanks as faith. Jesus did not regard it as an ethical response, but as an expression of his faith. We assume that we should be thankful when we receive a blessing, otherwise we are lacking in basic humanity. So it seems that unthankful people are not real human beings. But as we learn here, thanksgiving comes from faith. It is this kind of faith that makes us well. This kind of faith enables us to have a right relationship with God. Faith is not dogmatic—it is not just assenting to correct doctrine. Faith is relational—it is to have a personal relationship with Christ. Faith is not static; it grows. All ten lepers had the faith that cried for Jesus’ mercy and received healing. But when they did not praise and thank God, they cut off their relationship with Jesus. Gradually they would wither and die. When the Samaritan praised God and thanked Jesus, he could have a right relationship with Jesus. Then he could take deep root in Jesus and be well; he could continue to grow and bear good fruit. Giving praise and thanks to God is crucial. That is why Paul said, **“...give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus”** (1Th 5:18).

There are numerous reasons for all of us to be thankful. What has Jesus done for you? When I thought about it prayerfully, I could find hundreds of things that Jesus has done for me: he forgave all my sins and delivered me from the power of sin through his blood; he has given his Holy Spirit and the privilege of living with him every day; he has given me living hope in the kingdom of God; he has sustained me as a servant of his word in spite of all my sins and shortcomings; he gave me the privilege of learning from Dr. Samuel Lee for 18 years as his assistant; he has blessed my family in many ways—Deborah and I will celebrate our 31st wedding anniversary this month; my son John accepted the word of God through Luke’s gospel and has faithfully studied the Bible with me; my oldest daughter is engaged to a sincere Christian man; the Lord has blessed our church in many ways by raising deeply committed fellowship leaders and staff members; he has

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restored our love relationship with his precious servants at West Loop; he has sustained his people one by one in the midst of many struggles, including Jonathan Reese as a missionary in Indonesia; BBF has grown to 47 members under the care of Amy Stasinos and 30 are baby boys; and there are so many more things the Lord has done. As I consider these things, thanksgiving flows in my heart and my faith becomes vibrant and strong. I hope we can all take time to acknowledge what the Lord has done for us and give praise and thanks to him.

When we realize that faith makes people well, we can learn how to bless others in the best way. It is to help them have faith in Jesus. Faith in Jesus makes people well. Though we have many problems in our nation, the best solution is to plant the faith that makes people well. We can do this by sharing our testimonies and teaching the word of God diligently. Whenever we hear grumpy people, let's remember Jesus' mercy and give thanks and praise to God. This is how we can be a blessing to many grumpy people around us. May our Lord plant faith that makes people well.