

57. Jesus Cleansed Ten Lepers

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to forgive one another. We also saw that we want to show our children by our example the importance of being obedient servants to Jesus. We are to do that in love because He chose to first show His love to us. In our topic today, we will see that Jesus healed ten lepers. Then, he used the actions of one of those lepers to show us the importance of having a thankful attitude.

We saw several chapters ago that Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem. He made a quick trip to Bethany which was close to Jerusalem to raise Lazarus from the dead. Because the Jewish religious leaders then wanted to kill Jesus, He went out into the wilderness to a city named Ephraim. This was probably on the boundary of Judea and Samaria. Now, in our topic today, we are going to see that Jesus makes one final extended trip on His way to Jerusalem. Luke 17:11-13 says, “Now it happened as He went to Jerusalem that He passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. Then as He entered a certain village, there met Him ten men who were lepers, who stood afar off. And they lifted up *their* voices and said, ‘Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!’” Here, we see that Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem from the wilderness, but He passed through Samaria and Galilee again on the way to Jerusalem, which means He went north before He went south.

It was probably as Jesus traveled north and was near the border of Samaria and Galilee that Jesus entered the particular village mentioned in these verses. As Jesus came close to that village, He met a group of men that were lepers. God had given instructions about what a person was to do if that person had leprosy. Leviticus 13:45-46 says, “Now the leper on whom the sore is, his clothes shall be torn and his head bare; and he shall cover his mustache, and cry, ‘Unclean! Unclean!’ He shall be unclean. All the days he has the sore he shall be unclean. He *is* unclean, and he shall dwell alone; his dwelling *shall be* outside the camp.” As a result, these lepers could not live in the village. That is also why they had to stand at a distance and shout to Jesus.

These men had apparently heard that Jesus had healed the sick and cleansed the lepers. As a result, they began to cry with loud voices to Jesus. They said, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!” This particular word translated “master” was used only by Luke in the New Testament. It *meant one who was a chief, a commander or an overseer* and spoke about the authority of a person. It is the word that the disciples used when speaking to Jesus during the storm in Luke 8:24 where we read, “And they came to Him and awoke Him, saying, ‘Master, Master, we are perishing!’ Then He arose and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water. And they ceased, and there was a calm.” In this case, the disciples recognized that Jesus had authority over the storm. Since these lepers had probably heard that Jesus had healed other lepers, they realized that He had the authority to heal them of their leprosy.

These lepers asked Jesus to have mercy on them. They knew that there was no help for their condition unless they found someone who had authority over leprosy and they knew that Jesus had that authority. That is why they begged Him to show mercy to them. Jesus responded and told them in Luke 17:14, “So when He saw them, He said to *them*, ‘Go, show yourselves to the priests.’ And so it was that as they went, they were cleansed.” Any person that had leprosy had to be

declared clean by the priests if the person was cleansed. Leviticus 14:2-3, 7 says, ““This shall be the law of the leper for the day of his cleansing: He shall be brought to the priest. And the priest shall go out of the camp, and the priest shall examine him; and indeed, if the leprosy is healed in the leper... And he shall sprinkle it seven times on him who is to be cleansed from the leprosy, and shall pronounce him clean, and shall let the living bird loose in the open field.”” Then, the leper also had to offer certain sacrifices.

Jesus just told the lepers, “Go, show yourselves to the priests.” Jesus chose to heal people in many different ways. In this case, these lepers were cleansed as they were on their way to the priests. We will see that Jesus had a particular reason for causing them to be suddenly healed while they were on their way to see the priests in the next few verses. Jesus had explained to a leper early in His ministry why He was to go show himself to the priests. Luke 5:14 says, “And He charged him to tell no one, ‘But go and show yourself to the priest, and make an offering for your cleansing, as a testimony to them, just as Moses commanded.’” The reason the lepers were to go and show themselves to the priests and offer a sacrifice for their cleansing was due to the fact that was what Moses had commanded in the book of Leviticus but also as a testimony to the priests.

The lepers were obedient to the statement of Jesus and they were healed as they were on their way to the priests. The word translated “cleansed” means *to make clean, to pronounce clean or free from the defilement or guilt of sin*. In this case, we see that all ten of the lepers were made clean from the leprosy that had affected their bodies. This is the way that the word is used in Matthew 11:5, where we read, ““*The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them.*”” Jesus provided physical healing to many lepers during the time of His ministry.

However, that did not mean that all of those who were healed of leprosy were also made clean from the defilement and guilt of sin. That only happened to those lepers who also showed true repentance for their sins. The leper in Luke 5:12 showed an attitude of true repentance when Jesus healed him. That verse says, “And it happened when He was in a certain city, that behold, a man who was full of leprosy saw Jesus; and he fell on *his* face and implored Him, saying, ‘Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.’” Here, we see that He recognized Jesus as Lord and fell on his face and begged Jesus to heal him.

We go on to read here in Luke 17:15-19, “And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on *his* face at His feet, giving Him thanks. And he was a Samaritan. So Jesus answered and said, ‘Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?’ And He said to him, ‘Arise, go your way. Your faith has made you well.’” Here, we see that one of the ten that was healed also received spiritual healing from the defilement and guilt for sin.

There are two things about this former leper that showed that he had true repentance and had placed his faith in Jesus. First, we see that he glorified God with a loud voice. This man was not ashamed to give glory to God for what the Lord had done in his life. 1 Corinthians 10:31 says, “Therefore,

whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” This man recognized that it was God who had healed him.

Second, we see that he was thankful and expressed His thanks to Jesus. Ephesians 5:20 says, “Giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” The giving of thanks is not common in the lives of those who are not Christians. However, it is the will of God for us to give thanks. 1 Thessalonians 5:18 says, “In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” Even though this verse was not yet written at the time this man returned to give thanks, he recognized that the Lord had changed his life and he wanted to give thanks.

We also see that this man was a Samaritan. Since Jesus had told the ten men to go show themselves to the priests, most of them were Jews. The Jews as a whole did not respect or show kindness to the Samaritans. Here, we see that Jesus had the same love for the Samaritans that He had for people of any group, including the Jews. Jesus had shown this love for the Samaritans early in His ministry when He purposely chose to go through Samaria to give some Samaritans eternal life. John 4:4 says, “But He needed to go through Samaria.” The result of that trip is seen in John 4:41-42 where we read, “And many more believed because of His own word. Then they said to the woman, ‘Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we ourselves have heard *Him* and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world.’” Jesus has a great love for people of every ethnic group in the world.

Jesus asked three very important questions when He said, “Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?” Here, we see that the nine were only concerned for their own physical healing and they did not even think about giving thanks. In contrast, Jesus told the Samaritan that he had received both physical and spiritual healing. Jesus said that his faith had made him well. The word translated “well” is the word that is usually translated “save”. Matthew 1:21 says, “‘And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.’” Here, we see that the promise was given that Jesus would save His people from their sins. We will see that Jesus again used this word in Luke 19:9-10, where we read, “And Jesus said to him, ‘Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham; for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.’” Jesus came to save and give spiritual healing.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that Jesus came to give spiritual life to all who would receive it. Nine lepers received physical healing but no spiritual life. In contrast, this Samaritan received both physical healing and spiritual life. As we help our children to understand the real purpose that Jesus came, we will help them learn to explain to others how to have spiritual life. May the Lord richly bless you as you equip your children to share the message of life with others.