

“A LESSON FROM A LEPER”

Luke 17:11-19

For the last couple of weeks, we’ve been engaged in a series of sermons based on our theme for the *“Harvest Offering.”* That theme is “DIFFERENCE MAKER.” So far, we’ve identified Stephen and Barnabas as men of God who certainly qualify as difference makers. Today, we’re going to shine the spotlight on “THE UTIMATE DIFFERENCE MAKER”—the Lord Jesus Christ.

Open your Bible to Luke 17:11-19. As we peel back the layers of this story, we need to notice that Jesus and His disciples are on the way to Jerusalem for the last time. He’s already told them that His destiny was the cross where He would offer His body and blood to atone for the sins of the world. He’s told them that He would be resurrected from the dead and ascend back to heaven. This context makes the story even more amazing.

Luke 17:11–12... While He was on the way to Jerusalem, He was passing between Samaria and Galilee. 12 As He entered a village, ten leprous men who stood at a distance met Him.

Leprosy. The word rattled the emotions of anyone living in the first century. It was basically a long, lonely trek toward death.

Lepers were strictly forbidden to come near other people, or to interact with anyone except other lepers. They were forbidden to come within six feet of a healthy person (150 feet if the wind was blowing from the direction of the leper). One rabbi refused to eat an egg bought on a street where there was a leper. Another advocated throwing stones at lepers to force them to keep their distance. (cf. Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974], 1:492–95)

These lepers couldn't live with their families. Embracing their spouse or their children was only a distant memory for them. They were isolated.

Slowly but surely the disease would destroy their bodies. They were hopeless and helpless.

Luke 17:13... and they raised their voices, saying, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!”

Jesus, the ultimate difference-maker, has fixed his face like flint to go to Jerusalem. He’s going to pay redemption’s price for a sin-sick world. But on the way some nameless lepers on an isolated hill call out to him.

These helpless and hopeless lepers called Him **“Master”** which indicates that they had heard of His miraculous ability to heal. It was an acknowledgement of His authority and power. Jesus offered their only chance for deliverance. So, they cried out for mercy and compassion.

Luke 17:14... When He saw them, He said to them, “Go and show yourselves to the priests.” And as they were going, they were cleansed.

Get the picture fixed in your mind. Here are 10 helpless and hopeless lepers separated from the

Savior physically and spiritually. They are crying out for mercy. Here is a picture of every unsaved person who is dealing with the leprosy of sin. There is no earthly cure—not religion, not good works, not good intentions. The unsaved person is doomed to eternal separation from the Lord.
JESUS IS HIS OR HER ONLY HOPE!

Does the Lord Jesus have time for these poor guys? Yes, He did! I can picture Him stopping and looking at their disfigured bodies and into their troubled souls. Pay attention to the command of Jesus—“**Go and show yourselves to the priests.**” The Lord called for obedience to the Jewish law.

When they took their first steps toward Jerusalem and the temple, they still had leprosy. They obeyed the Lord Jesus **BEFORE** they were healed. The Scripture points to this outcome—“**And as they were going, they were cleansed.**” That is, somewhere along the way to the temple they were healed physically!

Luke 17:15-16... Now one of them, when he saw that he had been healed, turned back, glorifying God with a loud voice. 16 and he fell on his face at His feet, giving thanks to Him. And he was a Samaritan.

Only one of the ten grasped the profound implications of what had happened to him. Recognizing that Jesus was the Son of God, he wanted more than a mere physical healing; his heart longed for spiritual healing. His response was so amazing that the Holy Spirit inspired Luke to record it in his gospel account.

- **He turned back.**
- **He glorified God with a loud voice.**
- **He fell on his face at His feet.**
- **He gave thanks to Him.**

I love the way the Amplified Version of the Bible translates these two verses. . .

“Then one of them, upon seeing that he was cured, turned back, recognizing and thanking and praising God with a loud voice; And he fell prostrate at Jesus’ feet, thanking Him [over and over]....”

Here’s the shocker in this story. The one who turned back, who glorified God with a loud voice, who fell on his face at Jesus’ feet, and gave thanks to Him was a **SAMARITAN**! Mention of this has been delayed in the story to dramatize the fact that the Lord Jesus doesn’t cull anybody out. Before he could only stand at a distance. Now he is welcomed in the presence of Jesus.

Luke 17:17–18... Then Jesus answered and said, “Were there not ten cleansed? But the nine—where are they? 18 “Was no one found who returned to give glory to God, except this foreigner?”

Jesus asked three rhetorical questions. The second question is really an expression of Jesus’ negative evaluation of their ingratitude. This

rhetorical rebuke is an indictment for not responding to His gracious act. Jesus is making a stinging observation. They have “missed the moment.”¹

No story in the gospels demonstrates human ingratitude as clearly as this one. The lepers were helpless and hopeless when they cried out for mercy. Jesus healed them physically, and 9 of them never returned to give thanks to the Him.

So often, once people get what they want, they never get around to expressing their gratitude.

Luke 17:19... And He said to him, “Stand up and go; your faith has made you well.”

The phrase “made you well” translates the familiar New Testament term for being saved from sin.

¹ Darrell L. Bock, [Luke: 9:51–24:53](#), vol. 2, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1996), 1404.

Luke 7:50... And He said to the woman,
“Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”

Luke 19:10... “For the Son of Man has
come to seek and to save that which was
lost.”

Ephesians 2:8–9... For by grace you have
been saved through faith; and that not of
yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; **9** not as a
result of works, so that no one may boast.

The Samaritan’s nine friends were declared clean by the priest, but he was declared *saved* by the Son of God! While it is wonderful to experience the miracle of physical healing, it is even more wonderful to experience the miracle of eternal salvation.² This Samaritan leper was healed physically and spiritually. He was saved from his sins through the grace of God by placing his faith in Jesus as His Savior and Lord.

² Warren W. Wiersbe, [*The Bible Exposition Commentary*](#), vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 245.

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Now it's time to identify the "LESSON FROM A LEPER." Here it is. . .

DEVELOP AN ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE!

I read about a mom who went into a drugstore to pick up some medicine. When the pharmacist handed it to her, he also gave a little boy a piece of candy.

The mom said to him, "What do you say to the nice man?"

The little boy turned to the pharmacist and said, "Charge it!"

We have to work at developing this heart of gratitude towards God and to others. This principle can be found throughout the Bible...

Psalms 100:3–4... Know that the LORD Himself is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; *We are* His people

and the sheep of His pasture. **4** Enter His gates with thanksgiving *And* His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him, bless His name.

Colossians 3:15... Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful.

1 Thessalonians 5:18... in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

Without gratitude, we become arrogant and self-centered. We begin to believe that we have achieved everything on our own. On the other hand, developing an attitude of gratitude has an amazing impact on our lives. . .

Giving thanks reminds us that everything that is good in our lives is a gift from God (James 1:17).

Giving thanks reorients our perspective. It reminds us of how much we do have and keeps us from focusing on what we don't have.

Giving thanks pleases the Lord. That's obvious in our story today.

Giving thanks keeps us from taking God for granted. Ask yourself this question—What if you only had tomorrow what you thanked God for today? What would you have tomorrow? Let's spend a few moments thanking the Lord for what He has done in our lives.

Jesus is the ultimate difference-maker. He can heal you body, soul, and spirit. He has the authority to forgive your sins and give you the gift of eternal life.

Will you turn to Him?

Will you ask Him to save you?

Will you develop an attitude of gratitude?