

RENEWED IN THE SPIRIT OF YOUR MIND - Knowing How the Life of God Gets Inside - Part twenty - Teaching #2188

Sunday, May 8th, 2022, 6:30 p.m.

Pastor Don Horban, Cedarview Community Church, Newmarket, ON

THANKFULNESS AND THE MAINTENANCE OF A RENEWED MIND

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

There is so much in the account of the healed lepers in Luke 17 that you almost have to hurry to get through it all:

1) **WE SEE THE GOODNESS OF JESUS IN RESPONDING TO THE CRY OF HUMAN NEED**

We know nothing about these men. Many assume that all but one are Jewish. They all seem to know about laws regarding leprosy. They keep their distance - even from Jesus. They seem to know about the law of showing themselves to the priests if they are to be pronounced clean.

Jesus doesn't even ask them if they are believers in Him or if they have any intention in the world of following Him. I might have checked that out if I were Jesus. We don't know if they were godly or ungodly. Jesus doesn't even ask.

But at least they all deserve this much credit - they ***cried out to Jesus in their need***. And to Jesus, that seemed to be enough. They weren't theologians. Nor are most of us. But they did have a desperate need. Like many of us. And they called upon the Name of the Lord. Incredibly, it never seemed to even dawn on them whether or not they were worthy of Jesus' favour or attention.

They knew their moment when they saw it. That's more spiritual alertness than many possess. And that opened the door for their miracle. They refused to miss a great opportunity for help.

2) **THEY ALL OBEYED JESUS AND THEY ALL RECEIVED FROM THE LORD**

These men knew who Jesus was. That's why they called out to Him when they saw Him. Probably they had seen Him heal people before. Sometimes He put His hands on people. They had seen Him reach out and actually touch another leper and heal him. They remembered that because they heard the crowd gasp. Nobody in his right mind would actually touch an unclean leper.

Listen, it's very Scriptural to focus on demonstrations of God's love to nourish present faith on God's past grace. And we've seen the greatest demonstration of God's grace of all. In fact, we sing about it - "Come and stand beneath the blood stained cross - proof of His unchanging love for us!"

But these lepers had less to go on. It was all so different for them. In fact, this time Jesus didn't touch any of them. He didn't even approach them. He just shouted out some instructions from a distance.

And nothing happened. Nothing at all. They heard His instructions and looked down at their decaying bodies. "Go show ourselves to the priest? Are you nuts?"

To their credit they didn't say anything like that. It is really quite amazing that all ten of these men, as far as we know, simply turned and went to the temple as Jesus had instructed. And sure enough, somewhere along that journey, maybe right at the temple gate, they were healed. All ten of them! They were just totally, miraculously, completely healed.

Now think of what this would mean. It's not easy for us to digest the significance and impact of this miracle. Some of them could actually go back to their wives. They could hug them again for the first time in years. They could play with their children. They could work and provide for their families. They could be with people again!

You can certainly understand their excitement. They didn't just get their bodies back. ***They got their lives back!*** And they were anxious to get about living again.

3) **ONE OF THEM TAKES THE TIME TO RETRACE THE STEPS OF HEALING RIGHT BACK TO JESUS AND EXPRESS HIS THANKS**

Luke is very choosy with his words at this point. He says the man came back and ***"fell on his face at Jesus' feet"***(16). That's very descriptive. He didn't just bow. He ***"fell on his face"*** at Jesus' feet. If you didn't know better, you'd think he valued Jesus as much as he valued his healing. He attached himself to Jesus.

He didn't look very dignified. You get your clothes dirty when you throw yourself at someone's feet. You wrinkle your pants. But this man doesn't care about that. His heart is about to burst, not just for ***joy***, but for ***thankfulness***. And there is a huge difference. All ten were ***happy***. Only one was ***mindful***.

And at one of those rare times in His public ministry, Jesus openly showed His disappointment - **“Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine?”(17).**

And right at this point it becomes very important how we handle this text. What is Jesus doing with those two questions? He surely isn't asking for *information*. He already knows they were all cleansed. And when He says, **“Where are the nine?”**, He doesn't want a list of their geographical locations right at that point.

Those words are meant to be a ringing rebuke for those who hear His voice. The nine should have been there. The nine missed their moment. Something should have happened in their hearts that ***didn't***.

Now, that's a brief outline of the story. Most of us know it. But ***why*** is the story there in the first place. We know from John's gospel that not ***all*** of the things Jesus did are recorded in the New Testament. Accounts were picked, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, to fit a divine purpose for the church.

So, what are we supposed to see in this account?

4) **AM I TO LEARN HOW RELIGIOUS I CAN BE WHEN PRESSED BY A NEED AND HOW MINDLESS I CAN BE OF CHRIST WHEN I HAVE NONE?**

It's not a far reach to see that lesson in this story. Here's what **John Calvin** wrote about these verses hundreds of years ago: **"There comes to many a transient faith which vanishes as quickly as it comes. This particular disease is too common, that our minds are moved to seek God when necessity presses us, but after we have received what we ask, an ungrateful forgetfulness swallows up that feeling of godliness. Thus need and hunger beget faith, while abundance kills it."**

My dad used to tell the old story of the boy who never spoke. Parents took him to every specialist. None could find anything wrong. This went on for 11 years. The parents lost all hope. Finally, one morning, while eating his breakfast the boy took a mouthful of porridge, lifted his head and said, ***"This porridge is cold."***

As you can imagine, his parents went wild. "You can talk! You can talk!" After the jubilation died down the father asked, "What took you so long to speak?" The boy very calmly replied, "Up until now, everything has been OK."

I see that kind of attitude frequently in the church. People get very serious about Jesus when they're very sick and want healing - when their marriage is falling apart - when they want their Christ-rejecting child to come back to Jesus. In fact, many people come for spiritual help when it's almost too late.

If God has done anything good for you - perhaps forgiving all your trespasses, adopting you into His eternal loving grace, bearing all your sin, shame and disgrace, and giving you eternal joy in His presence in a brand new creation - ***what permanent change has that made in your heart?***

5) **AM I TO LEARN TO STRIVE TO FULFILL THE PURPOSE OF ALL OF GOD'S ACTS OF KINDNESS IN MY LIFE?**

I said earlier that there is no indication that these were ten godly men whom Jesus healed. We know nothing of their moral qualifications or spiritual background. Yet Jesus showed His kindness to them.

Which makes us consider the obvious question. ***Why*** is God's goodness and mercy extended to anybody? Certainly the Biblical record is clear on some answer - **Romans 2:4** - "**Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, *not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?***"

And Jesus shed some light on the same subject of God's kindness - **Matthew 5:45** - "....so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust."

So I'd put these two passages together like this. Father God doesn't just mete out blessings based on our merit - our capacity to **deserve** them. So we know His gifts aren't **rewards**. Then **why** does the kindness and goodness of God ever come our way in the first place?

That's the question Paul answers in **Romans 2:4** - "Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?"

There it is. God sends gracious blessings to the just and unjust. His gifts are free and not **earned**. God extends kindness that through His kind acts people might be drawn to Him with loving, humble, adoring, repentant hearts. That's the **purpose** in the kindness of God. That's the method behind His love. That's the motive behind His grace.

The purpose of God isn't just that I appreciate the blessing I have received. The blessing I received is to make me throw myself at the feet of Jesus - to trace the gift back to the source - to crown Him king of kings and Lord of lords.

Now come back to our story in **Luke chapter 17**. One man returns to Jesus after receiving his healing. This man hears something from Jesus that the other nine never heard: **Luke 17:19** - **“And he said to him, “Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well.”**

Now here’s another important study question - **“Your faith has made you well”(17) - *When*** did his faith make him well? Was it when he went to the priest with the other nine? Or was it when he returned to thank Jesus? Is there a difference between being ***healed*** and being made ***well*** or ***whole*** (KJV)?

It’s not just a point of theological curiosity. It has significance for each of us here this morning. Luke has already warned about the possibility of receiving mercy and ministry from above and yet not ***maintaining the benefit of that mercy:***

Luke 11:24-26 - **“When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and finding none it says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came.’ [25] And when it comes, it finds the house swept and put in order. [26] Then it goes and brings seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell there. And the last state of that person is worse than the first.”**

Luke tells of one delivered from demonic strongholds. But in spite of being delivered, the individual couldn't grow - couldn't continue in the freedom gained. And finally we all know those last words - "**....and the last state of that person is worse than the first.**"

Back to the one returning healed leper. This man comes back to Jesus with his healthy body. He alone receives the commendation of Jesus. He alone falls at the Saviour's feet. He has received God's grace outwardly, ***but he is not going to stay empty inside.***

Healed isn't the same as ***whole***. There's ***outward grace*** and there's ***inward grace***. There are healthy bodies and there are healthy souls. Maybe that's what the old KJV means when Jesus says to this man, "**Go thy way. Thy faith hath made thee whole.**" Something is brought to completion in his life that the other nine missed.

6) **THANKFULNESS TO GOD IS MORE THAN COURTESY - IT COMPLETES THE PROCESS OF LOVING GOD WITH YOUR MIND**

Let me give you just one example from the Scriptures:

2 Peter 1:5-9 - “For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, [6] and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, [7] and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. [8] For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. [9] For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins.”

We all know those beautiful verses about how the life of Jesus is to be fleshed out in our daily walk. The text is clear about how these virtues are to be held “**and are increasing**”(8) in our lives.

So what keep those qualities from growing in my life? “Well, that’s a pretty silly question, Pastor Don. **Sin** keeps those things from growing in my life. What else?”

And I’m telling us all this morning that’s not what the text says. Those verses in 2 Peter go deeper than that. Those verses tell me **why** people allow sin to remain in their life in the first place. And the plain, shocking truth is that those verses don’t teach that sin is my number one problem as a believer.

What those verses say is my problem is not just that I sin. That's my **second** problem. Those verses say my **first** problem is I tend to forget that I've been cleansed from sins - **2 Peter 1:9** - "**For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins**"

My heart can be like the demon possessed man in Jesus' story. My life was, at one point, clean, swept and empty. But like the nine in our healing story, I can receive God's grace and go on my way. Perhaps even anxious to live my Christian life.

And many miss the greater blessing that this one Samaritan received. They're great at receiving but slow at remembering. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and **forget not** all His benefits!"

This **holy remembering** is a great theme in the writing of the Apostle Paul. He said that purity of life was impossible without it:

Romans 6:1-4 - "What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? [2] By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? [3] Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? [4] We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life."

God bless those who remember the example of this one Samaritan. They aren't just **consumers**. They are inwardly renewed into thankful, mindful worshippers. God bless that small minority who become obsessed with Jesus - who attach themselves to Him.

And the passion of their abounding gratitude for mercies received becomes the fuel for holiness and joyful devotion. **The commandments aren't a burden. They are the soul's delight.** Remember it all your life. A renewed life is sustained by a renewed mind. And a renewed mind is sustained through thankfulness - deep, slow thankfulness - for mercies received.