

July 4, 2021

“Rescued from Doubt”
Lesson 5 of Unit

Leviticus 13:45-46
Luke 17:11-19

Intro

The medical condition of leprosy is center stage in today’s lesson. Leprosy is an infectious skin disease, so throughout history lepers have been removed and isolated from the general (non-infected) population. Some may have heard of “leper colonies”, where lepers were gathered to keep them together, and therefore away from everyone else. We are familiar with this idea of medical isolation/quarantine.

But what was a medical condition was also a religious and community situation for Israel. They would have seen physical afflictions as more than health issues; they were understood as punishment from God for sin. (Look at John 9:1-2 for this attitude/belief). A person with leprosy was unclean, not permitted to associate with those who were clean, and barred from worship at the temple.

A further complication in today’s Luke passage is the presence of Samaritans. They were “cousins” of the Jews both in their religious practices and their ethnicity. But the Samaritans had intermarried with pagans moved into the land during the exiles. So they were lesser in the eyes of the Jews.

Read Leviticus 13:45-46

1. vs. 45: Requirements for a leper

Torn clothes, uncared for hair, partially covered face

All of these are signs connected with mourning (see Gen. 37:34, Ezek. 24:17)

They would be in “mourning” for their disease the rest of their lives

There was no cure for leprosy

It is called a “defiling disease”

Defilement leans toward spirituality

It suggests that God is punishing the person, making them “unclean”

Lepers also have to announce themselves

They must shout “Unclean! Unclean!” as they approach others

Consider:

Lepers have a life-long disease which they have no hope of getting rid of; they must dress and act in ways that call attention to / humiliate themselves; they are seen as deserving of this disease as God’s punishment for some sin they’ve committed.

2. vs. 46: The lifetime consequences

“As long as they have the disease they remain unclean”

With no known cure, they are essentially doomed to this consequence forever

“They must live alone; they must live outside the camp”
Here is an additional consequence and punishment
They do not get to be a part of the community
We understand the medical reasons for this
What would the emotional toll be for knowing you are excluded forever?
No weddings, funerals, family gatherings, holidays, *no temple (church)*
What happens to a life with little or no hope?

Read Luke 17:11-19

3. vs. 11: Jesus on His way to Jerusalem

He purposefully takes a way that brings Him into contact with Samaritans
It is the fastest way to get to Jerusalem from Galilee
Jews from this area usually followed the Jordan River on the east of Samaria
It was a longer trip, but allowed them to avoid Samaria (and Samaritans)
He is traveling along the border between Samaria and Galilee
He is essentially walking in both worlds at the same time

4. vs. 12: Jesus goes into a village and meets 10 lepers

The verse here doesn't tell us if it's a Jewish or a Samaritan village
The lepers stand distant from Jesus, but obviously want to connect with Him
They are obeying the Law of Moses by staying distant
They may fear punishment for coming too close

5. vs. 13: The leper's request

They call out in a loud voice
This could be because of how distant they are
This could also be because of the emotional pain they suffer
It appears that they call out together to Jesus, in unison
This suggests coordination, a plan to reach out to Jesus
It also suggests that they knew Jesus was coming their way
Otherwise, why plan this coordinated approach?
They call Him “Master”
The word translated here from Greek is found only in Luke's gospel
It is a term of respect and deference—they are showing Jesus honor
They ask Jesus to “have pity on us”
The word pity carries the idea also of showing mercy
The mercy they seek is healing from their leprosy

These lepers see Jesus as One who can heal them
He has already healed others in Luke's gospel
A leper was healed in Luke 5:12-14

Thought Questions: Look at Luke 17:13 and Matthew 9:21. Under what circumstances should you express your need publicly rather than silently? What about the reverse? Other Scriptures to help shape your thoughts?

6. vs. 14: Jesus' response

He doesn't heal them; He tells them what to do

“Go show yourselves to the priest”

A priest must certify that a former leper has been cleansed

Jesus commands them to show faith

They are told to go to the priest before they can see the cleansing

Jesus sees this as a done deal; he wants them to act in faith by their actions

“As they went, they were cleansed”

They obey Jesus and start going to the priest

They were cleansed because they obeyed in faith—they went

“Cleansed” implies that all signs of leprosy are gone

7. vs. 15-16a: The one who came back

The man sees that he has been healed—he now has two choices

1) Go show himself to the priest

2) Go back and thank the one who healed him

He delays going to the priest to give thanks to Jesus

He “praised God” in a loud voice

This is an obvious sign of joy, relief, thankfulness

He “threw himself at Jesus' feet”

There isn't a more obvious way of showing gratitude and submission

This is also a posture indicating worship

These actions show his response to being shown mercy

He asked for mercy in vs. 13, and then receives mercy

These actions are the essence of worship

Praising God for who He is

Thanking Him for the blessings He has given to us

8. vs. 16b: He is a Samaritan

This is the big irony of this story

All were healed—only a Samaritan, hated by the Jews, comes back to give thanks

Similar to Good Samaritan story

Jewish leaders passed by the hurt man, but the Samaritan showed mer

9. vs. 17-18: Jesus' questions

Vs. 17: Where are the other 9?

He asks to point out that this Samaritan is different from the other 9

It serves as a reminder to us as well

Are we like the one who returns, or the nine who don't offer thanks?

Jesus is His miracles to teach about Kingdom behaviors

Vs. 18: Jesus points out that the one who came back is a non-Jew—a foreigner

His audience is primarily Jews

This comment reminds them that they (the Jews) should accept Jesus and His works as much or more as non-Jews do when they encounter Jesus

10. vs. 19: Jesus' parting comment to the healed leper

Jesus talks to the man directly, as opposed to the previous two verses (for the crowd)

"Your faith has made you well"

Jesus praises his faith that God could heal Him

Application: Imagine being a leper. You're excluded by both the social and spiritual community, you have to say things to draw attention to yourself as being both different and dangerous to others. You have to live with an incurable disease that is painful and will likely kill you.

The leper in our story suffered these traumas. But he also still had a heart that could be grateful. Under the circumstances, that's remarkable. And it should cause us to ask ourselves, "Could my heart still be capable of gratitude after suffering so much?"

God doesn't need our thanks. But he created us as beings that function best when we give thanks. If we don't give thanks, we become bitter and hard toward others, rather than finding God's peace and purpose in our lives, which happens when we are thankful of heart.

Prayer: Father God, forgive us for times we haven't been grateful for all You have done for us. We desire to have hearts that are full of gratitude to You always, in every situation You bring our way. Help us to worship you as You deserve. In Jesus' name, Amen.