

JESUS HEALS TEN MEN WITH LEPROSY

Luke 17:11-19

Key Verses: 17:17-19

"Jesus asked, 'Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?' Then he said to him, 'Rise and go; your faith has made you well.'"

In this passage, we learn two things. First, Jesus heals even a Samaritan leper, who was segregated by the Jews. This small event manifests that Jesus is the Son of God. Second, we also learn from ten lepers about unthankful people and thankful people. In this passage, as the children of God we must learn how to thank God as of first importance in whatever situation we may be in.

First, a story about ten lepers (11-19).

Now Jesus was going up to Jerusalem with his disciples and they had to pass the border between Samaria and Galilee. There was a borderline between Judah and northern Israel as a truce line. We call this border no-man's land. Even if it was a no-man's land and a truce line, many lived in the border. They were sorrowful lepers. Lepers from Judah and lepers from Samaria lived together in the border without any strife on account of their empathy due to their leprosy. They suffered from poor food supply which was on a subsistence level. But what made them most sorrowful was that they were human beings, yet they had to live in the borderline. Who knows if there were several teenage leper girls. How could you help them? As Jesus went into a village, ten men who had

leprosy met Jesus. They stood at a distance and called out in a loud voice, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us!" How did Jesus help them?

As we know, Jesus was on the way to Jerusalem to become a ransom sacrifice to save men from their sins. Therefore, Jesus must be bracing himself for the suffering to come. One young man who looked very courageous like Samson became nervous when his traffic court date was approaching. But Jesus was not selfish. At that moment, Jesus cared for ten lepers. When Jesus saw them he said, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." As they went, they were cleansed (14). Jesus' way of healing shows that he was occupied with the thought of trials, suffering, crucifixion and resurrection in Jerusalem. Nevertheless, he healed them. But only one of them came back to Jesus, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him--and he was a Samaritan (16). Jesus asked, "Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" Then he said to him, "Rise and go; your faith has made you well" (19). Nine of them were ungrateful, though their leprosy was healed. They did not come back to thank Jesus. Here we see two kinds of people.

Second, unthankful people.

When we read John 5:1-5, we feel that we look at a caricature of the world. The pool of Bethesda looked so beautiful. On the other hand, there were a great number of disabled people lying there--the blind, the lame, the paralyzed, because they believed that the first one who jumped into the pool when the water was stirred would be healed.

Secular humanism suggests a solution that the blind man carry the lame man piggy-back and run to the pool to save themselves. But they have to decide who goes into the pool first for healing. This is the human dilemma. Men can mutually help each other, but men cannot save others because of their selfishness.

There, Jesus saw a man who had been an invalid for 38 years. Jesus said to him, "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk." At once, the man was cured and picked up his mat and walked away, without saying, "Thank you, Jesus" (8,9). The day Jesus healed him was a Sabbath. When the temple police passed by, he reported that Jesus had healed him on the Sabbath in order to save his skin. If he were a man, he had to remember how much Jesus had done for him. But he was an unthankful man.

The parable of the vineyard (Mk 12:1-12) explains the unthankful man more vividly. This is a parable Jesus spoke to his chosen people. The owner of the vineyard made a beautiful vineyard and its environment and gave it to his tenants to take care of it. Here, the tenants refers to his chosen people. At first, the tenants thanked the owner that they could have the privilege of taking care of the master's vineyard. The vines grew and grew and bore abundant fruit. Then their hearts were occupied with a second thought. They only thought about the vineyard, not about the owner. They became victims of hallucination. In their hallucination, they lost themselves.

Actually, the owner of the vineyard gave them the vineyard to take care of it. But he wanted to maintain the spiritual order and the love relationship and a thankful mind between the owner and his tenants. So,

many times the owner sent his servants to see if they were doing well and wanted to get just a few grapes to see if they had a thankful mind. The tenants, however, only thought about such a beautiful vineyard and its fruits. When they only saw ever-growing and sufficiently abundant grapes, greed came into their hearts. Then Satan began to control their hearts. Each time the servants came from the owner, the tenants sent all the servants back empty-handed and badly injured. Those who went with two legs came back with one leg. Those who went with a beautiful nose came back with a bloody, broken nose. Nevertheless, the owner sent his servants again and again. Finally, the owner sent his own son. They also killed the owner's son. The owner could not believe that the tenants killed his own son. Here we learn that when man forgets how to thank God, he becomes a devil.

Third, thankful people.

When we study the Bible, to glorify God or thank God is our divine duty. So Paul said in 1 Thessalonians 5:18, "...give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." Paul, the greatest theologian, defines, "to thank God in all circumstances is the will of God for us." Once, Paul and Silas went to Philippi. Paul converted a witch-girl, who had made her owner rich. Then the owner brought gangsters and beat Paul and Silas. So, in order to stop a riot, the mayor of Philippi kept Paul and Silas in prison. That night, they did not cry, saying, "Look at my broken nose." Rather, they sang in deep thanks for the privilege of proclaiming the gospel of Jesus at Philippi. If we have this kind of thanks and praise to God, we can recognize ourselves as truly great men in the sight of God. When we

have a thankful heart in any situation, God is most pleased.

When we try to count God's graces one by one, we learn that God's grace is uncountable. We also learn that our sins are uncountable. God's grace is too great to fathom. But we can categorize it in three ways.

Jehovah Jireh (Gen 22:14). Jehovah Jireh is Abraham's life testimony. It is not so long. Abraham started his life of faith at the age of 75. God promised to make his name great and to make him a great nation and a blessing to all people. Abraham simply believed in his promises. Genesis 12:1 says in order to become the greatest man who ever lived in the world, he had to leave his country, people and father's household. This prerequisite implies that he must get out of ordinary life and live a life of faith based on the promise of God. All of a sudden, he said to his wife, "Quick, quick, pack up, Sarah! We are going to leave our hometown and relatives and go to the promised land." At that time, Sarah was barren. Out of her hysteria of barrenness, she could have said, "What are you talking about?" But she did not say so. She just followed Abraham.

The Lord had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you" (Gen 12:1). Abraham believed that the promised land looked like a paradise. But when he went there and saw, the people of the land looked strong and wealthy. Abraham was startled for a little while, thinking about how he could survive there. But he believed that this was the promised land that God gave him. Emotionally he was disturbed. But he built an altar

as the expression of thanks (Gen 12:8).

God wanted to see if Abraham loved God more than Isaac, God's blessing to him. So God commanded him to give Isaac as a burnt offering at Mount Moriah. Isaac really wondered. Everything was there, but there was no sacrifice. So Isaac asked, "Father, where is the sacrifice?" Abraham said, "God will provide (Jehovah Jireh)." When Abraham determined to make Isaac a burnt offering, there was a voice from heaven, "Abraham, Abraham. Do not lay a hand on the boy. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son" (Gen 22:10-12). On the mountain of the Lord, God prepared a ram in the place of Isaac. Abraham showed us the example that for those who believe in God's promise, God provides everything, and that God blesses those who believe in his promises. There are so many people who are slaves of future security. Even if they have mountain-like money, their future security problem erodes their souls. So Jesus said, "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (Mt 6:33).

Ebenezer (1Sa 7:12). Ebenezer means, "Thus far has the Lord helped us." The word, "Ebenezer," is Samuel's life testimony. Samuel belongs to the time of Judges. God appointed him as a king-raiser among his people. Samuel thought that God and the law of God are the standard of his people and they didn't need a king like the pagan world. But his rebellious people wanted a political king. What is more, his two sons were obnoxious and spoiled. Samuel was old. To Samuel, his life of shepherding seemed to have been a complete failure, and he cried. But when he prayed, he realized that God had used him thus far

preciously. During his time of shepherding, his people had undergone one hardship after another. He and his people could have been destroyed by the enemies. But God always helped them. When Samuel remembered the God of Ebenezer, he understood that God would help his people as before. Samuel thought that he had suffered enough to shepherd God's flock. He was bitter. But when he remembered how much God had helped his people thus far, Samuel was overwhelmed by a thankful heart to God, and he cried. Sometimes we think that we live our lives with our own effort. But without God's help we perish, as the crops perish without morning dew and rain in season. We must thank God that he has helped us. We must believe in the God of Ebenezer.

Immanuel (Isa 7:14; Mt 1:23). Immanuel means God is with us. Matthew 1:23 summarizes the concept that God is with us. It says, "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"--which means, 'God with us.'" God is with us to save us from our sins. He is with us to care for each of us. How nice it is if we can row our lifeboats in a glassy sea. But frequently, God gives the storm of life to us. The Bible teaches us that we must thank God whatever the situation God places us in. As we know well, Joseph was the eleventh son of Jacob, the father of faith. Because of his brothers' jealousy he was sold to an Ishmaelite caravan for 20 silver coins. In Egypt, he was sold as a slave to the king's captain of the guard, Potiphar. Potiphar's wife had been very proud of her husband thus far. But as soon as she saw Joseph, her husband's greatness looked small. When she saw Joseph's integrity, she felt that her heart was empty. She nagged Joseph with the authority of a master's wife to enjoy some together. But God was with Joseph. Joseph kept his heart right

with God. Then the woman put Joseph in prison with false accusation. In his teenage time, his most sorrowful event was missing his old father. Besides, he was imprisoned. Of course, Joseph cried and cried in the prison of a foreign land. But he believed that God was with him. Then God gave him strength to work for the prisoners. Romans 8:31 says, "What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us?"

When we look back on God's graces upon us, they are countless. But we do not remember; rather, we are bitter because of hard life and one or two things that made us bitter. These kinds of people are petty men. Like Samuel, we must thank God that he has led us thus far. We cannot do much for his flock. But we must thank God for the privilege of praying for them, in the hope of raising them a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

Let's thank God that he is always with us and cares for us. Let's pray that we may thank God in all circumstances. May the God of Jehovah Jireh, Ebenezer, and Immanuel be with you.