

Pentecost 21
October 9, 2016

"Only Jesus Can Make You Clean"

LUKE 17:11-19

Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. ¹² As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance ¹³ and called out in a loud voice, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us!" ¹⁴ When he saw them, he said, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were cleansed. ¹⁵ One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. ¹⁶ He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him-- and he was a Samaritan. ¹⁷ Jesus asked, "Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine?" ¹⁸ Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" ¹⁹ Then he said to him, "Rise and go; your faith has made you well."

We spend a lot of time each week trying to keep things clean. We love being clean. That is why we shower and wash our hands and wash our clothes. We love the smell of clean sheets that have been hung out in the wind to dry. We try to keep our homes clean and not let the dust accumulate. Every week a cleaning service comes in to clean our church.

If I am going to be loved by God in this life and for all eternity, I need to be clean, totally clean, 100% clean and pure. It is very obvious from another week of life here on this earth that we are far from being clean. We see the dirt and filth of sin in what we do and what we say, and especially in our thoughts. Jeremiah 17: 6 says, "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?"

There is nothing we can find within ourselves to clean up the sin that stains our lives. We desperately need Jesus to do this for us. Let's take a closer look at how Jesus miraculously heals ten men who had leprosy and makes them clean to remind ourselves that **"Only Jesus Can Make Us Clean."**

The need to be clean

Just as the ten lepers needed to be clean before they could be accepted back into society, we need to be clean before we can be accepted back by our God. We are told, "Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee." Wherever Jesus went, he was always looking for opportunities to heal people and help them. He wanted to heal their bodies of diseases. He also wanted to heal their problem of sin so they would have eternal life with him.

"As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance and called out in a loud voice, 'Jesus, Master, have pity on us!' They stood at a distance. They didn't get close. Old Testament laws required that people with this disease of leprosy be isolated in their own communities away from other people. Think of how hard it would be to be away from people that you loved. You could not hug your husband or wife, or children or relatives or friends. You could not work with other people at your job. They

were marginalized by this terrible disease of leprosy. They wanted to be healed.

These ten lepers stood off at a distance and they shouted out loudly, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us!" It doesn't say they cried out with loud voices but with a loud voice. They joined their voices together in one loud cry for mercy. You can hear them repeating this over and over again, louder and louder, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us!" If I were teaching this lesson to a group of children, I would ask for ten volunteers to be the ten lepers. I would ask one of the children to cry out, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us." Then I would have all ten join together in unison. In our worship this morning we joined our voices to cry out, "Lord have mercy on us" and "Christ have mercy on us."

We don't know how these ten lepers found out that Jesus was traveling on the road that went up to Jerusalem. Somehow they heard the good news that Jesus healed people of their diseases. They even heard how he healed people who had leprosy. There were no medicines, no ointments, and no special injections and no combination of herbs that could cure this disease. Their only hope was that it might go away by itself. Then they could go to the priest and be pronounced clean and go back to their family and friends and jobs.

When we think of how leprosy separated people from other people, we think of how sin also separates us from people and also from our God. When you are mean and nasty to other people in your family, they don't want to be around you. If you are always talking about yourself in a prideful and boastful way, people don't want to have you as their friend. If you have outbursts of anger, they want to stay away from you.

Sin also separates us from our God. Listen to these words from Isaiah 59, "But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear." Ephesians 2 says that because of sin we were once with God and without hope. Romans 3 says, "Therefore no one will become righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscience of sin." We cannot get righteous before God or clean before God by following the law because we always fall short of God's requirements. The law acts like a mirror to show us the dirt and filth and scum of sin that makes us unacceptable to God.

To illustrate. Last weekend when our children were with us we had a picnic in a park along the ocean. I was eating a turkey sandwich with lots of mustard. I must have had some mustard on my mouth because my daughter very politely and nicely said, "Dad, you have some mustard on your mouth." I didn't know I had mustard on my mouth. I don't know how unclean I am before God unless God points this out to me. I don't realize how the sin in my life needs to be totally cleaned away so I can escape the judgment to come, unless God's Word points this out to me. So like these lepers covered with leprosy, we come to Jesus and cry out with loud voices, "Lord Jesus have mercy on us."

The way to be clean

The ten lepers hoped that Jesus could help them. They were not disappointed. "When he saw them, he said, 'Go, show yourselves to the priests.' And as they went, they were cleansed." Notice that Jesus does not cry out to them, "Be healed!" He does not go over to them and touch each of them as he did with another leper that he healed. He tells

them to go to the priest to show that they were clean. They took Jesus at his word. They started on the way to the priest even though they were still covered with leprosy. As they went on their way, they were miraculously healed.

Wouldn't it be exciting to act this out with a group of children in our Bible Camp? As they are walking along they suddenly notice the person next to them no longer has disfigurements on his face. The ugly blotches and sores on his arms are gone. Then they start looking at themselves and their skin and fingers and hands are the way they once were without this terrible disease on them. They are jumping up and down for joy. And then they start running as fast as they can to show themselves to the priest so they can be pronounced clean. They run because they cannot wait to get back to the people they love, to hug and kiss them and touch them and be close to them. And when the priest examines them not a spot of leprosy will be found because when Jesus heals people he does it completely.

So it is with us when we come to Jesus for cleansing from our sin. I think of the hymn verse we sang this morning in response to hearing that our sin is completely forgiven in Jesus. "I lay my sins on Jesus, The spotless Lamb of God. He takes them all and frees us from the accursed load. I bring my guilt to Jesus To wash my crimson stains, White in his blood most precious Till not a spot remains." That's good news. Very good news. He washes us so clean that not a spot remains.

Just as the priest announced the leper cleansed by Jesus to be clean, so our Heavenly Father announces that he has accepted the blood of Jesus that has healed us of our sin. He pronounces us clean by raising Jesus from the dead. You see if just one spot of your sin or mine was still on Jesus when he died on the cross, the Father would never have raised his Son to life again, because a perfect God can only accept something that is totally and completely clean. Ivory soap may boast about being 99.44% pure but that is not good enough for God. Big smiles come across our faces, joy springs up in our hearts, and songs come on our lips as we look at each other this morning and see how clean we are in the cleansing blood of Christ. The Scripture does not tell us the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from some sin. It says very clearly "all sin." Till not a spot remains.

How strange it was that only one of the ten returned to give thanks to Jesus. "One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus feet and thanked him- and he was a Samaritan." The Samaritans were considered outcasts because of the way they intermarried with the heathen. The lepers were also outcasts because of their disease. Here is a man who is both, a leper and a Samaritan. You can't get any more marginalized than that!

Every day is a new day to thank the Lord for the blessings he brings into our lives. At the top of the list of all the blessings we have not deserved is this blessing of being clean before God. During this election hear we get so tired of the dirt candidates are throwing at each other. We get even more tired of the dirt we see in ourselves. Today we celebrate and praise God as this leper did that we are clean. Not a spot remains. That's good news! That's great news.

This man who returned to give thanks received another blessing in his life. He was privileged to have Jesus speak to him and encourage him in his faith. "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.'" Not only was this man healed, but he was blessed with faith in Jesus as his Savior. Faith takes hold of Jesus and the cleansing we have in him. Faith is a gift of God. Faith in Jesus enables us to live a new life that wants to stay away from the dirt and filth of sin.

Jesus speaks to you and he speaks to me this morning. He tells us "Rise and go!" You are healed! You are forgiven! You have a whole new life to live out of love for Jesus. When Susan's dad was in his final days of life on this earth, I was privileged to be there when he suddenly woke and said loudly and clearly, "I am so thankful" even though it was so hard to speak. I want that to be the theme song of your life and mine. I am so thankful, so thankful to be clean in Jesus and close to my heavenly Father in this life and for all eternity. Amen.