

# Ten Quarantined Men Healed from Leprosy by Jesus

*Thanksgiving Day*

By Pastor Pieter Van Ruitenburg

**Bible Text:** Luke 17; Luke 17:17-19  
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## **Bethel Netherlands Reformed Congregation**

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Congregation, the text for this morning's hour sermon is from Luke 17, especially the verses 17 through 19. Luke 17, the main text being 17, 18 and 19.

17 And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? 18 There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger. 19 And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.

So far.

Ten quarantined men healed from leprosy by Jesus. Ten quarantined men healed from leprosy by Jesus. In the first place, quarantined; secondly, healed; in the third place, one returning to Jesus; and in the fourth place, where are the nine? Ten quarantined men healed from leprosy by Jesus: quarantined, healed, one returning to Jesus, and where are the nine?

So congregation, in our minds we are in Israel and we see the Lord Jesus traveling with a few of his disciples. He's going south and it's between Samaria and Galilee. It's probably the last time that Jesus goes south and he goes to Jerusalem. It's probably the time that he is going to die and to be crucified and to give his life as the shepherd of the sheep. So we see the Lord Jesus walking there and then they are entering a small village, and in that small village, a group of people is kind of approaching him. They're not coming too close, not coming too close, and they call Jesus, "Master, be merciful unto us." But they don't come close. They stay at a distance, I don't know how far.

So who are they? Why do they stay away? Why don't they come to the Lord Jesus and just touch him? Well, they are lepers, today we call it the Hansen's Disease, HD, Hansen's Disease. So they're not allowed to come close, we suspect at least a few meters, and what I found out, I did not know, is that they were wearing masks. That's what I read in the Bible, I read it in Leviticus 13. Listen to that, "And the leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip." So not for his eyes, the top part of his face, the lower part up to his upper lip. His mouth was covered because they know that this disease was absolutely contagious. They knew

that. What we know is that this disease, this Hansen's Disease can affect the person and just stay dormant for 5-20 years and then it can surface. And the doctor says you probably had this for five years already, maybe for 20 years and you don't know who the source is and who has infected you. It's very hard to trace back.

It started with spots in their face usually. There were shiny pieces of skin and if you would have used a needle and you just touch it, it doesn't even hurt anymore because the nerves are dying. There are kind of little bubbles on the nerves first in your face and the eyes and the mouth and the fingers. And people, of course, were really scared when they saw something and felt something on their face and they had to go to the health officer, and the health officer examined them. It's all in Leviticus 13 and 14. He examined them and said, "You know, I don't trust this. You have to go in quarantine for a week and then come back." When they came back after seven days, and he looked at it again and he said, "I still don't trust this. Another seven days." And so it could go on and if it would get better, if it was not Hansen's Disease, if it was not leprosy, then they had to go to the temple and sacrifice and then they could go home. And those health officers were the priests. All the priests, local priests and the priests in Jerusalem, they also functioned as health officers in this way.

So here is a group of people that are quarantined and they are quarantined for life, not only for a couple of weeks or months but just for the rest of their lives they could not go home. Isn't that something? No future. No solution. They had to live with that and it was a progressive disease. Nowadays we have antibiotics for it and with a mix of antibiotics you can stop it, although not really heal what has been damaged. In those days, there were no antibiotics, it was just progressing and was not a nice disease. The skin was itchy, reddish, rough. The color changed. It was going to smell. But you know, it was also numbing, numbing your fingers and numbing your feet so if you were to hit something hard with your hand, you wouldn't even feel it; you could have bad bruises and bleeding in your hand and you didn't even notice. And that's very dangerous because pain is very important. If you have no pain, then there's no limits and you don't hold back.

Now what has helped them is that at least they had some friends, right? So they found each other. They could not go home, they had no contact with wives and children and husbands. They were separate in a special colony, in a special community, all quarantined, and they at least could talk to each other and go for a walk together, and that's why they're here. And one of them, by the way, is a Samaritan because the Jewish people don't like Samaritans and they have no use for them and they keep their distance, but at this time the disease has united them, has brought them together. It can happen, right, that people who won't talk to each other in the same boat, in the same situation, and just connect. So they're connecting here.

So again, something I've found, a slowly progressing disease characterized by scabs and crusts and white shiny spots that appear to be deeper than the skin. Another sign is the hair of the affected parts are turning white and later there is growth of quick, raw flesh. It's quite an infection, contagious and tending to increase, incurable except by the power of God. It was also a shame. People didn't like it. They didn't look that good anymore.

Disgrace and it rendered them off to be alone and they experienced separation, right? So no wonder that this disease also became a metaphor for sin, right, because there are quite a few similarities between leprosy and our sins because our sins also separate, separate from God, not separate from your home family but from the Almighty One. Think of that numbness, people because of their sin are fallen and have become numb. We don't feel it. We don't realize what sin is about. And it's progressing and it's not getting better and it brings us to death eventually.

So back to that traveling Lord Jesus with his disciples and approaching that small village and hearing them cry, and at least they cried, at least they have a need, at least they know their need. So many don't even know their need so that you don't pray, that you don't say, "O Jesus, Master, be merciful!" You're just callous and dead. So I think it's important to know your situation, to know your diagnosis, to know what's really the matter, and what the future is like, and what the consequences are of our sin. It's good to know. We need to know otherwise our prayers are shallow.

So let me show you from the Bible that diseases and sin are close. Isaiah 1, "the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment." You know that's us, right? That's not only Israel, it's us, completely affected by the sin from the sole of the foot to the head, no soundness in it. So we should pray with Psalm 41 and say, "LORD, be merciful unto me: heal my soul." Heal my soul. You can be so concerned about COVID, right? "Heal me, Lord! Heal me from the disease! Prevent me from getting it! May I get better, please?" Some of you have been really sick and have feared but have you also said, "Heal my soul"? Isaiah 53, "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." So we need to be healed by his stripes. Or Hosea 6:1, "Come, and let us return unto the LORD: for he hath torn, and he will heal us." That's faith expressed in Hosea 6, "he will heal us." And Luke 4, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted."

So ask the Lord for insight into the situation and Wilhelms a Brakel writes somewhere I remember, go over the 10 Commandments. Start with the first one and just maybe you can use the Heidelberg Catechism for that, and realize that you've sinned against the first commandment, and go to the second, and the third, and the fourth, and seek to be humbled. Seek to realize. Look into the mirror. Realize it. Seek to be humbled, not to prepare yourself as something not in order to pay anything or make yourself worthy at all. No, but yet it's good to realize what's the matter so that you cry, "Heal my soul, O Lord, that I may be healed by thy stripes. Heal my broken heart."

Do you see those men coming? "Jesus, Master, have mercy." You know, that's remarkable. They could have also stayed in their place and said, "You know, it's hopeless with us anyway. And Jesus is in the village but I'm not approaching him because, whatever. It's impossible anyway. I'm doomed to die. There's no solution for us, right? It's

incurable so let's stay home together." No, they leave their place and they go and they want to know, they want to see him, they want to call unto him. So there is something of a glimmer of hope. They see something of the Almighty God in the Lord Jesus Christ. He could do it. He's the Master. He could do it.

So that's part of faith, right? It's a type of faith, being convinced that he could do it. He could heal them if he wanted to but also "be merciful unto us." They have heard of mercy. They have heard of the mercies of Christ and he is apparently approachable. So he's not only able to do it, they also wonder about his mercy and they see there's some hope, they see some light, so that's why they go and that's why at a distance they say, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us."

So in all faith, saving faith, miraculous faith, all faith there is a part of "he can do it," and pleading for mercy. So the Lord Jesus heard that, he saw that and how did he respond to that? Did the Lord Jesus touch them? Did the Lord Jesus say something, kind of, "Be healed"? Did the Lord Jesus tell them to wash themselves in the Jordan River like Naaman, the Syrian? What is the Lord Jesus saying? The Lord Jesus said, "Turn around and go to the health officer. Go to the health officer and show that you have been healed." But they weren't. They were not healed. They were still sick. They were lepers. So should they not first be healed and then go instead of with their sick bodies turning around and going to the priest? Then the priest would say, "What are you doing here?" The priest would say, "You know better." He would rebuke them and give them a hard time of approaching him with their diseases.

So the Lord Jesus said, "Turn around." And they lifted up their voices and said, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. And when he saw them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests." So did the Lord Jesus not skip something? Is not something missing here? No. The Lord Jesus was testing them and was commanding them to simply obey him to turn around and to show themselves to the priests. And surprisingly, they did. All 10 did. All 10 turned around. All 10 believed that and all 10 were on their way to the priests, the local priests or a little further, I don't know. But they did, they obeyed. And when they were turning around and on their way to the health officer, they looked at each other and said, "What's that? You look so good. Your face, there is no deformation anymore, no effects anymore. Your skin is like a baby, like Naaman the Syrian, and you're better. You do, you look better too. What's happening? He has healed us!"

So just by obeying the word, they were healed, they were healed upon faith. So Naaman the Syrian when he was asked to wash himself in the Jordan River refused and said, "You know, I think there are better places to go. We have rivers in Syria as well that are clear and pure." So he was resisting and his servants had to say, "Well, what's the matter? Just go to the Jordan River and you have it all." But here nothing had to happen, they just obeyed and here we see how important obedience is, right? Obedience is. The men obeyed and as they went, their skin color changed and they were better. They looked at each other and their skin was normal, they must have been saved so upon obedience.

And in their case, the disease not only stopped and was in remission but also all the damage that was done was taken away and they're just healed, really healed, which is something that today doesn't even happen. When you get a mix of antibiotics, you can stop the leprosy, the Hansen's Disease, but the damage that is done, is done. But here those men were healed upon faith. So, yes, this is mainly a miraculous thing and not saving faith but also miraculous faith has its value, it's not saving but it's not wrong, right? It's also recommended to believe in a wonder-doing God, no? And there are similarities also with saving faith, also in saving faith. It's about obedience. Also in saving faith it's about someone who feels a leper and is an impossible case and just crying, "Master, be merciful?" And the Lord Jesus says, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be healed. Just turn around. Just turn around."

Do you see? It sounds so strange and so uncertain and so, can you do that? Is it even allowed? Is it even allowed to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ that way? To be so convinced about him? Well, without faith it is impossible to please God. They that come unto him must believe that he is and the rewarder of them that diligently seek him. So my recommendation to the congregation, to sinners, is to flee unto the health officer or to flee unto Jesus, rather, to seek salvation only in him and to be convinced that if you would only touch the hem of the garment, you will be whole. You know, that's the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit does not just give you a feeling, a fuzzy warm feeling, the Holy Spirit shows you the Bible and the Holy Spirit applies the word, and then comes home and then you hear the voice of God in the Bible. "He that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." Because they are given by the Father, right? So only he can wash and cleanse and heal and you know what a wonder that is in the life of God's people if they feel cleansed and washed and saved by the power of such a God.

So the third thought: one returning. So the Lord Jesus is still in that area, in that area of that small village where the 10 lepers had approached him. He told them to go to the health officer and they all left so we didn't see them anymore. Then after awhile, people, different opinions on how long it took, an hour or two days. I don't know. It doesn't matter. But then I see one coming back. It is the Samaritan, the Samaritan man who is coming back and that's strange, that's wonderful. So the other nine, they went to the priest and they were maybe quarantined a little longer or what happened, I don't know, but I don't see them. They want to go home, I suppose, as soon as possible. But that Samaritan is, in the first place, coming back to Jesus, right?

"And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, And fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan." So four things about that. Four things. In the first place, with a loud voice praising God, right? He was singing. In the original it says "megale phone." Megale, mega, phone. So with a loud voice, he was so beside himself, he was so excited about it. He was healed and he went back to the Lord Jesus because he knew, I will explain it later, he knew that, "I need something more. I need something else. I don't only need to be healed from my disease, I need to be healed in my soul."

So he was praising God. So what is the difference between praising and giving thanks? Giving thanks is to thank God for something you got and praising him is exalting God for who he is and what he did. So praising God is God-focused, Christ-focused. It's about him. It's about him. And giving thanks is being appreciative of what you receive from him. So Thanksgiving day should not only be expressing our gratitude to God but also praising him, right? "How great thou art. How good thou art. How kind thou art. How faithful thou art. How powerful thou art. How promising thou art." Just exalting God, praising him with a loud voice of the soul. So when you bow your knees today, think about that. You know, I hope you will praise him and speak well of him to him. Don't we praise each other? Don't you ever praise your wife? Your husband? Your child? Your friend? So the Lord has made us to be praised, to be glorified, right, glorified.

"With a loud voice glorified God." You know what that means, right, glorified? Fied, fie means to make, to give glory, to give honor. But the second thing is that he is with his face in the dust, he "fell down on his face at his feet." On his face at his feet. So, you know, this Samaritan, he is not standing there and saying, "I was healed. Thank thee, Lord." But he wanted to express his gratitude by humility, he felt so absolutely unworthy of it because sometimes we praise and we thank God in a proud attitude, with something like that we feel good about praising him, feel good about thanking the Lord and feel this great ourselves, "because he has blessed me so well." No, the real thanksgiving is that you have that praising with a loud voice but you being nothing but dust and ashes and really putting your nose in the dust, right? Do you know that? Do you know that special low place at the feet of Jesus that you say, "Lord, I have sinned against all thy commandments. I have not kept any of them. I'm prone to all evil and I realize the Lord has no obligations, and now this. Lord, I don't understand it. I really don't get it. Thou art so good to someone like me." Do you know that? That's thanksgiving day.

And this man doesn't only praise God and is really humbled at his feet, he's also at his feet. He's at the feet of Jesus. That is thankfulness, to also receiving that closeness and wanting that fellowship and that communion with his Savior, right? So he is not going away from Jesus praising God and somewhere else on his knees, he is on his knees, on his face at the feet of Jesus because he cannot miss him. He feels he is the Savior. "He has more to give. I need more than only healing. I need the spiritual healing of my soul."

And yes, he also gives thanks. So he praises, he is with his face in the dust, he is at the feet of Jesus, and he is thanking God for what he got. Well, that should be something to meditate upon today, right, about the true thanksgiving, praising God, bowing deep, giving thanks at the feet of the Lord Jesus.

And this man was a Samaritan, right? So who would have expected that? Not a full-blooded Jew, a stranger, a sojourner. So this is almost a parable. It isn't but sometimes the miracles in the Lord Jesus are like parables, like the parable of the Good Samaritan, right? So although the priests and the leaders, they just walked by and that Samaritan, who would have expected that? He just bowed down and he just took care of that man almost dead on the road.

So you see that contrast that's expressed here and then the Lord Jesus is saying in verse 19, "I promise to go there. And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole." Thy faith hath made thee whole. You know, that word "whole," I looked it up the word "made thee whole," and it does not say "has healed thee," it does not say "it has cleansed you." I think the translation is "has saved you." It's as *sojul* in Greek. *Sojul* is delivering, saving from. So I understand this as that faith "has saved you." And when you think when you put all the things together, his humility and his praising and his coming at the feet of the Lord Jesus and this word "made thee whole," I can come to the conclusion then that the Samaritan was saved and that he received more than only healing. So isn't it also true for us? We may acknowledge the Lord for his gifts but do we also acknowledge him for that salvation? Do we see that salvation even in him? Do we obey him in that sense and seek no salvation anywhere else, being convinced of him? That's what we need. That's the work of the Holy Spirit.

So in quarantine and healed and one returning and where are the nine? Let us first sing.

So I see the Lord Jesus still close to that small village. He has sent those 10 lepers away to go to the health officer, and one is returning. That's good. He's a Samaritan. And now the Lord Jesus, of course, he knew but he is expressing his surprise, "Where are the nine? Were not 10 cleansed? Were not 10 healed? And why is only this man coming back?" "And Jesus answering," verse 17, "Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger." So I hear an accusation, don't I, the Lord Jesus saying, "Those other nine should have been here. I missed them. Where are they? They should have been here, absolutely. Why not coming back to me, the giver of all this?" The Savior himself. "And why were they not interested in more? Where are the nine?"

So where are you? Where are you? Did the Lord not ask Adam that when he was hiding in the thicket, hiding from the Lord and the Lord said, "Adam, where art thou?" So now the Lord in this morning's hour is asking, "I haven't seen you. Where are you? Have you never received my blessings? Have I not endowed them to you? Have I not poured them out over you?" I had to think of Isaiah 5 praying something similar, "My wellbeloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill," a friend of mine is a farmer, he has a vineyard, "My wellbeloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill." It's such a fertile ground, unbelievable, "And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine," the best he could find, "and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein," because he was certain that it would be a plentiful harvest, "and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes. And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?" So where are the nine? Has the Lord not given enough? Has the Lord not shown his mercy to you? Wherever are you? "What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?"

So there is also that surprise, right? That surprise the Lord knows but there is also that surprise that he is expressing, so the Lord is also expressing surprise this morning hour. If you don't praise him, if you're not at his feet, if you're not at his feet, if you're not humble, if you don't really thank him from the heart, if you're not coming back to the Lord Jesus and seek salvation in him, the Lord says, "I don't understand it. What should I have done more?" And maybe you say, "Well, the Lord should have given me conversion. He should have been first. I can't help it." Why did the Lord say to Adam, "Where art thou?" Why is this piece of John 5 in the Bible? Why do we read this verse, "Where are the nine?" Only this stranger?

You know, the Lord Jesus is still the same. He's still the same Savior and he can still save you instantly, right? Instantly if you bring all your sins with all your curse and your unworthiness. Obey in him, right, and take refuge with the heart to the Lord Jesus Christ and that's the work of the Holy Spirit but in the same token, the Lord is saying, "I haven't seen you. Why not?" Or has the Lord brought you to that place where you say, "I have been like those nine for years and years but things have changed, and the Lord has shown me my leprosy and the Lord has shown me my incurable state, and the Lord has shown me my unworthiness, and I was numb and stinking and rotten and I couldn't help myself, and then that merciful Jesus came by and I had no other desire than to flee unto him and to be at his feet and to say, 'Master, have mercy on me!'" And he was merciful, wasn't he? Do you know about that, about that mercy of God, the forgiveness of sin? Your faith has made you whole. Your faith has saved you from the wrath of God and saved you from all the consequences of sin, in a sense, because a better place is prepared for you.

"Where are the nine?" So that one came back, it was the Lord drawing him. It was not himself. The Lord drawing him. It was not his work. Although the Lord gave him to repent and to believe, it was not from his field. But those nine, it was their choice because we have no free will, right? No free will. Absolutely not. We have no free will but we have a will, an evil will, a perverted will, and we don't [unintelligible]. We have a will, oh yes, we have a will, a bound will, a perverted will, and that's another account he did not want but this Samaritan, God's sovereign grace, he pulled him in and he glorifies God still in heaven. That man existed, that man is still in heaven and he still gives glory to God and he's still busy. And I don't know what exactly that will be felt in heaven but will there be something like, "Where are the nine?" Do I see a child, I heard this example, a child talking to his mom in heaven, "Mother, where is father? Where is father?" And mom saying, "He did not want to be here. He didn't think it was worth it." And then for your own account.

So may this sound for a long time in your ears, "Where are the nine? Where are you? Because what could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in him?" Oh, the Lord Jesus, he is pictured here as the willing Savior, he did not send him away and he did not have a complicated way of healing him, he just said, "Turn around." What power for the glory in the Lord Jesus Christ that he can create things out of nothing, he can just say turn around and things have happened already. That Savior we preach unto you and in him you will not be disappointed. Amen.