

The Lepers Healed and the Lessons Taught

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Let's go to the gospel of Luke this morning, Luke 17, if you would. I have pretty much finished the next installment on Titus, but I kind of wanted to hit a theme this morning that would emphasize the spirit of thanksgiving, the spirit of gratitude that we should have as God's children and that comes out at the end of this text. We're gonna talk, Lord willing, next Sunday to the young men from Titus about being sensible, all right? But today Luke chapter 17, let's begin in verse 11 and go through verse 19. I'm reading now,

11 While He was on the way to Jerusalem, He was passing between Samaria and Galilee. 12 As He entered a village, ten leprous men who stood at a distance met Him; 13 and they raised 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 were going, they were cleansed. 15 Now one of them, when he saw that he had been healed, turned back, glorifying God with a loud voice, 16 and he fell on his face at His feet, giving thanks to Him. And he was a Samaritan. 17 Then Jesus answered and said, "Were there not ten cleansed? But the nine where are they? 18 "Was no one found who returned to give glory to God, except this foreigner [this stranger]?" 19 And He said to him, "Stand up and go; your faith has made you well."

2,000 years or so ago when Jesus was walking the earth, there were a lot of the same types of sentiments and viewpoints that there are today. The dominant religious viewpoint of the day coming from the Jews was that they were a part of God's kingdom, they by birthright belonged in the kingdom, that they had more or less themselves to thank for being pleasing to God. They commended themselves for keeping the law and obtaining righteousness and they thought they were the exclusive ones. No one else got in but the Jews, certainly not the Gentiles and doubly so, not the half-breed Samaritans who were half-Jew, half-Gentile. So there's a lot of teaching that was corrupting and polluting the truth of God. Jesus comes to the earth and among other things, Jesus is the great clarifier. I like to use the dictionary a lot. I like words and like seeing what they really mean. The word clarify is the idea of making a teaching clear or removing impurities from a substance. That's just what Jesus did. He came here on the earth and he cleared things up concerning the truth of God in contrast to the great errors of the day. He removed the impure things men had brought into God's religion and added to God's truth.

Jesus is the clarifier concerning the greatest matters and he clarifies things in the greatest way. Couple of uh examples from a couple of the verses. In John 14:5 and 6, Jesus has told the disciples he's going away and Thomas says, "Well, we don't know where You're going." And it's as if Jesus says, "Now Thomas, let Me clarify," because Thomas said in effect, "We don't know the way." But Jesus said, "Let's clear this up. I am the way. I am the truth. I am the life." He did that over and over and over again.

On another occasion, his half brothers were encouraging him to go out in public to the feast in Jerusalem and and just be real, be open about who he was. There was a problem with that though. The Jewish authorities wanted to kill him and it wasn't the Father's time for his death so he couldn't go show himself in public. And so in that context, he said, "You know what? The world doesn't hate you." In effect, he's saying, now these are his half brothers by his lineage brothers, not brothers in the faith, but he says to these half brothers, "The world doesn't hate you, but it hates Me." In effect, he's saying, "There's not enough righteousness in you for them to hate you. There's not enough holiness in you for them to hate you. There's too much sin in you and that's why you get along with them, but I'm different. I've come as the great clarifier. They hate Me because when they're around Me, My teaching and My presence exposes them and they hate the exposure."

So on and on and on, we could go about how the Lord Jesus was constantly clarifying, but then we come to these narratives in the Bible and these signs and these wonders and these miracles that the Lord Jesus did, and while it's right and proper to glory in and teach the wonder of Christ's compassion, his love, and in this text, particularly his great mercy, why it's proper and good, we could preach on those wonderful attributes of our Lord many, many times, but there's more than that here. He uses his miracles to teach lessons, to clarify some things, if you will. So let's talk about these healed lepers and the lessons taught, all right? You probably could pull out more than I've pulled out, but I wanna pull out three particular lessons or three particular things the Lord is clarifying through this narrative, this event of healing these leprous men.

First of all, he's teaching something here. I should say at this point, the text is teaching us something here about the true nature of his work. The true nature of his work. It starts out there in verse 11, "While He was on the way to Jerusalem." Now don't just run by that. That's not just a phrase to give you information about where he was going one day. If you know the balance of biblical truth and certainly the balance of the New Testament chronology of Jesus' ministry and purpose, you know that phrase, "While He was on the way to Jerusalem," means more than just a comment on which city he was gonna arrive at next. You see, Jerusalem was always his destiny. From the moment Jesus was a one-celled human but God at the very time, in the womb of the Virgin Mary, Jerusalem was his destiny. When he was a newborn infant and gave his first infant cry, Jerusalem was his destiny. It always has been his destiny. When he grew up and he began his ministry in Galilee of the Gentiles, Jerusalem was his destiny. And over and over as he traveled and as he talked and he equipped his disciples and performed wonders and miracles, still Jerusalem was his destiny. In John 6:38, Jesus said, "For I have come down from heaven,

not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me." Well, the will of him who sent him was that you will end your earthly ministry in Jerusalem. Jerusalem was his destiny. He prayed the night before his arrest and coming crucifixion, quote, "Father, not my will, but thy will be done." So therefore Jerusalem was his destiny. The Bible calls him the Lamb of God. The Bible says Jesus was the lamb slain from the foundation of the world and that will take place in Jerusalem. Jerusalem was his destiny.

You see, this is the true mission of Christ. I'm just pausing here for a moment in my notes because whatever you hear, whatever teaching, whatever preaching you hear that does not center on Christ and Christ crucified as the foundation, the centerpiece of all he's about, that is the cornerstone of who he is and why he came, going to the cross, and brothers and sisters, if a man or a teacher gets that wrong, listen to me, they will be wrong on everything else. That's why I think under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Dr. Luke writes, "By the way, He's on his way to Jerusalem." Don't forget that. That's the true mission he is about. As the Lamb of God and the lamb slain from the foundation of the world, he must go to that place where the one true Lamb of God will be slain for the sins of God's children.

Jerusalem was his destiny because Jerusalem was the place marked out by God the Father for the atonement to be made but not just Jerusalem, more specifically, an altar outside the camp, if you will. A place beyond the gate, the walls of Jerusalem. A little hill, not made by human hands, not an altar made by human hands, but an altar made by God himself. A little hill they called Calvary or Golgotha or the Place of the Skull. That's his destiny. Well, that's where he will die and give his life a ransom for sinners and in that death, the Father will be glorified, the children will be redeemed, and all of that is the reason why Jerusalem is his destiny. Isaiah prophesied of our Lord and said he set his face like flint. It meant whatever else he did and wherever else he may have gone and whatever signs and wonders of miracles he may have performed, there was one preeminent task he was headed to, and that's Jerusalem, where he would die for the sins of the world. So don't go past that, that he was on his way to Jerusalem. That reminds us afresh of his true mission.

My stars, my goodness, how our world is filled with professing teachers and preachers who want to make a big deal about everything but the cross. They want to talk about everything but Jesus and him crucified. So Jesus comes in as the light of the world and the light illumines, and he shows forth the true mission of God for his Son, and that is to go to Jerusalem, and that is to die on the cross for the children, and of course be raised for their justification, ascend up into heaven where he will ever intercede for us. Well, II. Not only does he give a teaching or clarification about his main mission, his primary mission, but the nature of his kingdom I think is spoken of quite clearly here. You see, while Jesus walked the earth, he was giving the earth for a little while a splash of what the kingdom will be like one day when he returns and establishes it in the earth. Now, if you're standing on the beach and uh the water's a little bit cool and uh you get a splash from the waves, that's that's invigorating, but the waves uh descend back out and it's over. And that's what happens here. Jesus is on the earth and for a while brings some splashes of what the future kingdom, the eternal kingdom will one day be like. And here's

where a lot of our charismatic friends get us wrong, they want the whole time since Jesus came to be like the future kingdom, that everything can be healed, every miracle can happen, everything can be perfect. I guess if you have enough faith, you'll never get sick, you'll never be without money, etc. etc. etc. But that's not what he was doing. He was giving a brief splash of what the eternal kingdom will look like one day when he returns. And so when he does this miracle, that's a reminder to us here that when his kingdom comes, there'll be no leprosy. There'll be no cancer. There will be no heart disease. There will be no death. There'll be no sorrows. There'll be no goodbyes. So while he walked the earth, he gave us glimpses of that.

Well, let's dive in here. Verse 11, talking about his the nature of his kingdom says, "While He was on the way to Jerusalem, He was passing between Samaria and Galilee." And that's very significant because, again, he's teaching a lesson primarily against the Jewish religious authorities of the day. They would teach that nothing good could come out of of Samaria, nothing good could come out of Gentile lands, they're called Gentile dogs. They said Gentiles are dogs. Dogs were unclean. They were defiled, the lowest of the low in the the uh viewpoint of an an ancient Jewish leader. But worse than just being a Gentile was being a half-Gentile, half-Jew, they called them Samaritans. And here Jesus is walking between, passing between, I guess he would pass over into both regions, Samaria and Galilee. I mean, a Jewish man of this day would go a long way around to avoid even walking on the soil of Samaria, lest he be defiled himself as he was on his way to maybe a pilgrimage of an annual feast there in Jerusalem. But you know, God's mercies reaches those places that men would discard. God's mercy is for those that the world would call unworthy or outcast and that's the way his mercy is.

In verse 12, he continues on. It says, "As He entered a village." The idea here is that Jesus came to this village but he's not even there yet, and as he enters it, verse 12, "ten leprous men who stood at a distance met Him." Now, it's understandable why this happened outside the village because leprous people were considered both physically and spiritually unclean. They were not allowed, legally, they were not allowed to go into the city cities or villages or towns. So they typically had something of a leper's colony outside the village and so it's outside the village that Jesus comes upon these 10 lepers. I'm gonna mention this many times, but leprosy is such a powerful illustration of a spiritual truth because because of this sin of leprosy, they were shut out and because of our sinful spiritual leprosy we have, we are shut out from God. We are at distance from God. One author said, this is the most vivid symbol of sinful corruption, and you know how the sickness of leprosy, literally your flesh would deteriorate and and just decompose and fall off the bone. It was the most grotesque and vile disease. And we are sinful lepers for our true and holy God and we are outcast from God because of that sin and and not welcome with God because of that sin. So leprosy is, as one man said, a symbol of sin in its deepest malignity and it is. It was viewed by the Jews in this day if you had leprosy that you had committed some very serious grotesque sin and God is punishing you for it. So can you imagine how these guys felt? I mean enough to have this horrible physical malady and on top of that the the forceful, harsh condemnation and cruelty of your culture that shuns you when you need their help.

The scripture says in verse 12, they stood at a distance. Again, they were not allowed to come clear and again, how vividly I think this is a spiritual truth of how we are not allowed to come near to God in our sinful leprosy. Isaiah chapter 6 verses, or 64 rather, verse 6, "For all of us have become like one who is unclean, And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment." You remember that's the garment covered, filled with the pus of an infected sore. These lepers would have a lot of those kinds of wraps around their hands and feet and legs, wherever the leprosy sores would be. But he says, we're all like that before God in our sin. "All of us wither like a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, take us away." But here, Jesus comes to their place. Jesus, in effect, comes to them. He comes to their place of misery. Oh, what a glory that is. Do you understand, sinner? Had Christ not come to you, you could have never come to him. It is God who is the great initiator and comes to us in the woeful depths of our sinful leprosy. Oh, what compassion, what mercy Jesus has.

They cry, verse 13 tells us, "and they raised their voices, saying, 'Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!'" And isn't it true of all of us, we are so depraved and fallen and sick and blinded in our sin, Christ first comes to us and then we call out to him for mercy. Matter of fact, you could say that we're all sick with a double leprosy. We need double mercy. We are ignorant of our true condition. That's why preaching is so important and that's why God's ordained preaching the word is so important. You need to hear the proclamation and the preaching of your true condition because you're ignorant of your great need. And that was certainly true of the people of this day. While Jesus is ministering to these unclean lepers, the religious authorities no doubt are out in their ivory towers, glorying in their holiness, ignorant of their great need of cleansing and of a Savior. But not only not only are we ignorant of our true condition, we even are lovers of that sin we possess. We are so fallen we begin to love and cling to and treasure sin. No wonder Jesus had to come to us. We would have never come to him. But you see, as one writer said, Christ is the prophet for our ignorance and the priest for our cleansing.

Now see, in this day, if you need to learn something about God, you went and heard the prophet. "Is there a prophet with a word from God?" If you needed cleansing and salvation, you went to the priest and participated with the priest in some sort of ritual or rite that would help cleanse you. But Jesus shows up and in effect, he is the prophet and he is the priest and you need no other. These lepers realizing their desperate condition and realizing Christ's divine power, look to him and cry to him for help. You see, man's misery and Christ's mercy are well suited for each other. The only kind of people Jesus saves are miserable men, miserable sinners, miserable wretches. That's the only kind of people he's looking for because that's the only kind of people they are.

Verse 14, and "When He," Jesus, "saw them," very interesting, very quick, very to the point, "He said to them, 'Go and show yourselves to the priests.' And as they were going, they were cleansed." So this was a promise of healing when he immediately says, go show yourself to the priest. Now, they were not healed immediately, they were healed as they went. I don't know how long it took, but it wasn't long at all, we understand from the narrative here. Jesus prescribes no medicine, no washing, no ritual to participate in, just go, and as they were going, they are healed. Now the reason he sends them to the priest is

because in this day uh, when you were a leper, you were again considered an outcast. It was illegal for you to be around the community of of the people and so to be allowed back into society, the priest had to declare, "Yes, I've investigated, I've looked at him well, and the leprosy is gone." So Jesus knowing um that they're wanting to find anything to condemn him for says, "Go ahead and show yourself to the priest, fulfill that part of the law. In effect, I've got enough trouble coming against Me already. I don't want anyone else to uh condemn Me of quote breaking the law by healing you today. So go and go through the steps and let the priest affirm that you indeed have become cleansed."

And then we learn that one of the lepers, just one out of the 10, returns to thank Jesus, to express gratitude. I I think there's a powerful picture here. The one that the community have considered the most ungodly, the most separate from God, the most unlikely to be welcomed by God, bypasses all ritual, all religion, all ceremony, the religion of the Samaritans and the religion of the Jews, and just comes straight to Jesus. What a lesson that is. Are you listening to me, sir? Are you listening to me, young man? Are you listening to me, lady? If you want God's forgiveness, you go straight to Jesus. You don't come to Jeff Noblit. You don't come to these steps, not that that would be absolutely wrong, but that's not where Jesus saves you. From your heart, you go to Christ. You don't need anyone else or anything else. So many lessons here.

The Bible says that when they left, they all 10 were cleansed. I think that's a powerful statement. Here Jesus is among the outcast of the outcast and he does this marvelous, merciful blessing for them. In other words, "My kingdom includes all people who will come to Me as Savior and Lord." All who will turn to Christ. Doesn't matter what your background. Look, I don't care if you lived in the backmost house on the wrong side of the tracks. I don't care if for generations everyone in your family have been heathens and rebellious and drunkards and drug addicts and and awful people. It doesn't matter. If you'll turn to Christ, you are welcome in God's kingdom. That's glorious. That's glorious. What a powerful picture the Lord is showing us here, that these Samaritans, not just Samaritans, Gentiles, not just Gentile Samaritans, but lepers are welcome in the kingdom of God. Man, that's good news. It's glorious good. You know what that means? That means you can be saved. That means you can be saved. His kingdom, the true nature of his kingdom is anyone who will come to Christ can enter in. Anyone who will come to Christ is welcome in his kingdom.

Well, now just to use the last part of this narrative to talk about the nature of conversion, I think there's a real clarity here as a contrast, the nine who didn't return and were not grateful with the one who was. We begin there in verse 15 of our text. It says, "Now one of them, when he saw that he had been healed, turned back, glorifying God with a loud voice." In the fullness of his heart, this poor Gentile Samaritan returns to Jesus with honor and thanksgiving for him and the Bible says he comes with a loud voice. He was pretty loud when he called out to Jesus and said, "Would You have mercy on me?" And now he's loud in his gratitude and in his praise and in his thanksgiving. Are you are you are you loud? Maybe not just in volume, but are you loud in your gratitude? Have you forgotten how much he's done for you? Have you forgotten how low in the pit of despair

and despondency and ruin and suffering and lost and uncleanness, how deep the pit was that he's lifted you up out of to save you? This man was just overwhelmed with gratitude.

John 5:23 reminds us, "so that all will honor the Son even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him." Well, this man honored the Son. That wouldn't have been popular in this context, by the way. Matter of fact, it could cost him deeply to show such honor to Jesus when the religious authorities were so against Jesus that they wanted to kill him. But it didn't matter. You and I live in a day when it's not honorable to love Jesus. It's not honorable to praise Jesus, not in this culture, but it's honorable to God to do so. All who love and praise God will love and praise Jesus.

I think there's something here that um comes out. I remember years ago, looking at the worship of the Old Testament, like when when uh Moses told Pharaoh, "Let My people go, that we may go and worship." The Hebrew word for worship, there's the same word for service. It's not in the text. I'm not spiritualizing, I don't think, but you see to worship Jesus, you serve Jesus. They're not, that's not just a worship service and then that's all worship is. No, as we live for Jesus, as we honor Jesus, as we obey Jesus, we're worshipping Jesus. We're saying, "You're right and You're wise and You're good and we want to follow You." That's a form of worship.

Now verse 16 shows this deep, what I would call gospel humility. In verse 16, "he fell on his face at His feet, giving thanks to Him. And he was a Samaritan." Again, what a what a tremendous thing this was for Jesus to welcome this Samaritan and for the Samaritan to feel the boldness to be welcomed by this Jewish man, Jesus, who obviously he's now views as more than just a man. He's overwhelmed by mercy. You want to build a strong church, a true church, a church that God uses, you got to have a church full of people overwhelmed by God's mercy for them. A church overwhelmed by God's love and goodness and mercy he's had toward us. This guy's a role model for us. He shows us what true conversion looks like. One author said, the sin that constantly pollutes should keep us all in the dust before him. In the providence of God, that's why you have some sins that keep creeping up on you. They keep reminding you you're only safe because of God's great mercy. You're only safe because of that great mercy and grace that he has.

Now later in the text, Jesus says, "Where's those other guys? Is there only one guy?" And here's here's the Lord's phrase, "And he's a stranger. He he's the one you people would say is the last guy that should be let into the kingdom of God. He's the outcast. He's a stranger." Matter of fact, it's the same word you'd use for a pagan or heathen. Jesus would be their minds would be blown by this. "You're gonna let this this Gentile, worse than that, this half-breed, half Jew, half Gentile, worse than that, he's leprous, which means he's got wicked sin God's punishing for." That's what they believed. "You're letting him be welcomed by You? The stranger, the heathen?" Oh yes, Jesus will save anyone. Did you hear me? So can I remind you again this morning, if you've got a loved one and you think they've gone so long, they've gone so far, they're so hard, they're so corrupt, they're so embittered, it doesn't matter, Jesus can save anyone. Thought I'd remind you of that this morning.

This fella is giving thanks as this stranger before the Lord. What a what a beautiful picture of gospel humility. He may have been a stranger in the eyes of the people, but I tell you what he's not anymore, he's not a leper anymore. And that's the way, when when we come to Jesus to be saved, by the time we get the first words of thank you out, the sin's already gone. By the time this guy turned around and got back to Jesus, the leprosy was gone, gone forever. And our sins are cast away from us as far as the east is from the west. He throws them in the sea of forgetfulness and remembers them no more, the Bible says. This dear desperate man, this outcast, this leper, he knew nothing of religious protocol, he knew nothing of sanctioned behavior, he was outside the acceptable religion of the day, he was the outcast of the outcast, he was a Gentile, a Samaritan half-breed, and a leper, but Jesus has mercy on those the world throws away. You might be shocked by some of the people you find in heaven one day. You might be shocked by some of the people you find in heaven one day.

Well, verse 17 of our text, "Then Jesus answered and said, 'Were there not ten cleansed?'" Interesting word. "But the nine where are they? Was there no one who returned to give glory to God except this stranger, this foreigner?" Now, he he asked a question here, like, "Where are they? Where are those nine? I I healed all of those lepers. Where's the nine that didn't come back?" Well, Jesus is not having a problem with omniscience. He is omniscient. He knows everything. He knows exactly where they are. He knows exactly why they didn't come back. It's a rhetorical question. He's wanting to teach a lesson. He wants you to see the difference between those who truly come to love him and treasure him and trust in him and those who only want him for the benefit of the moment. That's why it grieves me deeply to see all these television preachers preach about God will give you this, God will give you that, God will bless this, God will heal this, God will heal that, God will increase your bank account. Jesus is teaching us something here about true conversion, that it's not going to God just wanting things, it's going to God treasuring Jesus.

Something happened in this leper's heart to where he began the journey of honoring and worshipping and treasuring the Lord Jesus Christ. He's different than the other nine. So what what the Lord is doing with this rhetorical question here, "Where are they," he wants the people, he wants his disciples to think about this. You see, he did the same thing with Adam in the garden of Eden. Adam and Eve had sinned in the garden of Eden, and God walks in and says, "Where are you?" God knew where they were. And by the way, every single person is gonna answer that question before God one day. "Okay, where have you been? What have you been doing? Who did you trust? Who did you treasure? Who did you love? Who did you obey while you were down there? Where have you been?" He knows where you've been. He wants you to recognize that if you don't treasure Christ, it's not in your heart to honor him and worship him and serve him, you're missing something. You're missing what this leper had, true conversion. This is a this is a lesson, a clarifying, if you will, of the difference between the false convert might be pictured by the nine lepers who didn't come back, and the true convert who comes back to Jesus with gratitude.

Could we not say that one of the hallmark traits of the truly converted is gratitude? Gratitude. You just can't be around a really saved guy very long before they say, "Boy, the Lord's just so good. I don't deserve what He's done for me. I don't deserve how He's cleansed me and washed me." So I'm convinced that these nine represent those who may make a type of faith, a profession of faith, but not have true saving faith. And by the way, when we think about the hallmark characteristic of um of Christianity, or a hallmark characteristic is gratitude. Psalm 103 verse 2 says, "Bless the LORD, O my soul, And forget none of His benefits." I found this little quote. We're going to put it on the screen because it's just simple, but it just hit me. He said, let's not be like those who put our blessings under a bushel and our wants out on the hill. Let's not be like those who who cover up all these blessings we have, all these things we have to be grateful for, like they don't matter, cover them up with a bushel, but yet our wants and our requests, we put them up on the mountain. What a lesson this Gentile half-breed Samaritan leper teaches us about gratitude.

Verse 18, Jesus said, "no one was found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner? I love the fact again that this guy never made it to the priest. He didn't make it to the synagogue. He didn't make it to to the some uh seer of the day. He just went straight to Jesus. You see, if you go to Jesus and you love Jesus, you fulfill the law in him. You fulfill the requirements of the law if you've come to Christ. So this stranger, this one of purely heathen stock finds grace and salvation while those Jews would sit by piously, those Jews who had the law and the prophets, they had such an advantage, yet they miss salvation completely and this stranger, this heathen, if you will, this outcast, he receives salvation.

I think there's really something interesting in verse 19, and we're done. "And He said to him," the one that returned, "Stand up and go; your faith has made you well." Interesting that word "well" there. It's actually, it's not the word commonly used for healing in the Bible. Therapeuo is the word for healing in the Bible in the Greek, it's not therapeuo. It's not that word at all. It's a different word. It's sozo and the word sozo is the common word for spiritual salvation in the New Testament. I don't maybe know why the scholars didn't do it that way, but they didn't. I understand context and a lot of things as to that, but I believe there's something to that. Actually, you could translate that as Jesus said, "Your faith has saved you." And I think it's true that it did. Sozo. He didn't just get healed. The other nine got healed, but they didn't get saved. The other nine got therapeuo. You got sozo. You got saved. Powerful truth there.

So just for a moment, let's remind ourselves that there is a faith that is less than a soul saving faith. Did you hear me? There is a faith that's less than a sin-cleansing, heaven-securing faith. Hebrews 6:4 through 6 reminds us, "For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit." The Holy Spirit had some work on these people. Then verse 5, "they tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, as they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame." These people had a faith, but

not a saving faith. James 2:14, "What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him?" It's a faith, but it's not a saving faith.

From time immemorial, could I say millions have walked the earth and have a faith. These nine lepers who didn't return had a faith that he could heal but it seemed very clear to me from the narrative that they didn't have a faith that saved. We have the Joel Osteen's of our day and many others like this who who teach a faith that you go to Jesus and you get your problem fixed. That's what happened to these nine. Isn't it interesting that 2,000 years later, nothing's changed? These nine just wanted to have their best life now and Jesus in mercy heals them, but they didn't get saved. That kind of garbage, that kind of nonsense, that kind of preaching doesn't save anybody. It's inwardly focused. It's self-consumed in the basis of that faith. They view Jesus as a great fixer of their problems here on earth, in contrast, true faith. sees the greatness of our sin and the greatness of our guilt and the greatness of God's justified wrath that ought to be against us because he's holy, and true faith trembles at the thought that God is holy and just. True faith clings to the mercy and grace of Jesus Christ. And my phrase is that, "Jesus, if You don't save me, I'm sunk. If You don't do it, I can't make it. It's gotta be You." And I believe when you turn to God in that kind of bankruptcy and desperation, I'm convinced Jesus says, "I've got you. You can't hold yourself, but I can hold you." I don't trust me to keep me saved, I trust him to keep me saved.

True saving faith is so grateful for God's mercy on us. That's why Jesus said, "Blessed are you, well-off are you, you're thinking right," what that means. "Blessed are you when you mourn." Why? Because you you're grasping how much you need a Savior like Jesus. You're on the right track. But since this is the week that we think about Thanksgiving, let's go back to the, really probably the prominent gesture, the prominent aspect of this narrative is the deep gratitude of the one in contrast with the negligent lack of gratitude of the nine. So when we come up on Thanksgiving, let's remind ourselves that our souls ought to reside with a bottomless well of gratitude to our Savior for our salvation. And isn't it true, the longer we live, the more heartaches we encounter, the more trials we go through, the more troubles he gets us through, we kind of think the way old Bill Gaither thought in 1965 when he wrote the simple words,

"The longer I serve Him, the sweeter He grows.
The more I love Him, the more love He bestows.
Each day is like heaven, my cup overflows.
The longer I serve Him, the sweeter He grows."

I couldn't sleep last night. A man over 50 asked me one day if I'd joined three o'clock club. I said, "What's the three o'clock club?" He said, "You wake up at three o'clock, can't go back to sleep." I got the 11 o'clock club, the two o'clock club, three o'clock club. And so God convicted me, said, "Well, if you can't sleep, why don't you just practice what your text is?" So I just thanked God for everything in the universe. I mean, I started with God and got down to me. That's a long chasm right there. And I was blessed by it. Have you learned you do what is right, then you feel good about it? He's worthy of praise. He's

worthy of your gratitude, whether you feel like it or not. Then your emotions catch up with truth.

So this Thanksgiving, let's be more thankful than we were last Thanksgiving, certainly for the common grace. I'm convinced there was a divine hand that led our forefathers over the ocean to this land and God gave us this land. Were there sin and errors and failures? Yes, but by the providence and to the glory of God, it's the greatest nation that's ever existed on earth. I will not deny that ever. No matter what these leftists and liberals try to tell us. Certainly there were failures and sins, of course, but God's hand calls us. So we're thankful like our forefathers for giving us this land and protecting us as a people even with all that we see going wrong in our country. But above and beyond it all, all those common graces, let's be thankful for redeeming grace. Let's be thankful for saving grace. You are no more righteous than this old, Gentile, half-breed leper. Didn't take more of Jesus' grace to save him than it did you and I. Thank God for his full, sure, steadfast, never-ending, un-thwartable salvation he's cast on all of us. You can't get lost if he saves you. You can't lose it if he saves you. You can't out-sin the grace of God. Oh, the goodness of God.

Well, I've said enough. I'm grateful for you. I'm grateful for God's goodness to me. Let's be more thankful this year than we were last year.