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Message: Contrasting Responses to Christ's Mercy

Text: Luke 17:11-19

Introduction

- A. If you are born again as a believer in Jesus Christ, know that it is the Spirit of the Lord, the Holy Spirit, Who mercifully creates faith in the hearts He indwells and regenerates, so that we believers in Christ might receive all the benefits of being relationally united with Jesus, as His apostle Paul prays ...

Ephesians 3:16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power **through His Spirit in the inner man,**¹⁷ **so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith;**

- B. The benefits of our relational union with Christ through faith include:

1. the forgiveness of our sins, for God accepts His sinless Son's condemnation and death as payment for the condemnation and death we deserve for our sins.

Romans 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,²⁴ being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in **Christ Jesus;**²⁵ **whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith.**

2. The benefits of our union with Christ include our union with Christ in His resurrection by which God justified Him, so that we might hold title to Christ's justified status before God.

Romans 4:25 *He* who was delivered over because of our transgressions, and **was raised because of our justification.** 5:1 Therefore, **having been justified by faith,** we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,² through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and **we exult in hope of the glory of God.**

3. Being united by faith with the resurrected, glorified Jesus, we hold title, and thus hope, in inheriting the presence of God's glory with Christ forever (Romans 5:2).

- C. This Spirit-created faith also gives us the benefit of being transformed into the image of God's Son, of Christ developing in us His attributes of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, self-control, etc.

Galatians 5:22 But **the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,**²³ **gentleness, self-control;**

2 Corinthians 3:18 But **we all,** with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of

the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.

D. Those who desire the benefits of Christ will walk by faith, live by faith in His footsteps.

John 10:27 "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me;

John 12:26 "If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also;

E. What does following Jesus look like? Spirit-empowered faith necessarily produces in us the many virtues of Christ. In the Scripture text before us, the virtue of gratitude, of thankfulness to God, is an element of Christ's image that we see Jesus calling all believers to imitate.

I. 17:11 Jesus invites us to walk by faith with Him to Jerusalem, to the cross.

Luke 17:11 While He was on the way to Jerusalem, He was passing between Samaria and Galilee.

A. The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of our crucified, risen, glorified Christ, has inspired Luke to record, beginning in 9:51, a middle section of his gospel that describes Jesus's journey to Jerusalem, His journey to the cross.

Luke 9:51 When the days were approaching for His ascension, He was determined to go to Jerusalem;

B. We, the readers and hearers, are being invited by Christ to follow in His footsteps by a faith that loves and trusts Him enough with our lives so as to take up our crosses and follow Him, even to Jerusalem.

Luke 9:23 And He was saying to *them* all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me."²⁴ "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it."²⁵ "For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself?"

II. 17:12-13 Desperate, doomed, alienated lepers cry out to Jesus for mercy.

Luke 17:12 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!"

A. Leprosy was a devastating disease, contagious though infected human droplets, such a mucus (E.g., sneezing). Untreated, it can lead to irreversible disabilities including nerve damage, facial paralysis, claw hand or toe, inability to blink, and blindness. Many

deformities are due to a lack of sensation, and thus injury to body parts. The bacteria causing leprosy wasn't discovered until 1873 by a man named Hansen, so in Jesus's day there was no medical cure.

- B. So ten lepers stood at a distance as they called out to Jesus. God's Old Covenant laws, which taught us to love God and to love our neighbor as ourselves, required that lepers be isolated from society. This was to teach through ritual law our need for spiritual cleansing in order to live in the presence of God, and also to prevent transmission of the disease to others.

Leviticus 13:45 "**As for the leper who has the infection**, his clothes shall be torn, and the hair of his head shall be uncovered, and **he shall cover his mustache and cry, 'Unclean! Unclean!'**"⁴⁶ "He shall remain unclean all the days during which he has the infection; he is unclean. **He shall live alone; his dwelling shall be outside the camp.**

Numbers 5:2 "**Command the sons of Israel that they send away from the camp every leper** and everyone having a discharge and everyone who is unclean because of a *dead* person.³ "You shall send away both male and female; **you shall send them outside the camp so that they will not defile their camp where I dwell in their midst.**"

- C. Think about this: they could not gather to worship God, they could not be with their families, could not hold a job working next to others, had no social interaction with society. This was a pitiful group of men whose bond was their common devastating condition. So they cried out to Jesus for mercy.
- D. We have all entered this world with a disease far more devastating than leprosy, a spiritual disease that leaves our souls deformed and isolated from God. There is no medical, economic, or social cure for our condition. Our only hope is to cry out to Jesus for mercy. It is only by His wounds we are healed.

Isaiah 53:5 But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; **The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed.**

1 Peter 2:24 and **He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross**, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; **for by His wounds you were healed.**

- E. How does Jesus respond to lepers, to us?

III. 17:14 Jesus is the God of all mercy.

Luke 17:13 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.**

2 Corinthians 1:3 Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, **the Father of mercies and God of all comfort,**

- A. Jesus was on a sobering mission - to suffer shame, abandonment, alienation, pain, death on a cross. When we are pressing to devote our attention to an all consuming and burdening responsibility, we sometimes want to avoid a wave of needy people asking for our time, attention, energy, resources.
- B. Being fully human, Jesus's strength, energy regularly became drained, but being fully God, his heart of mercy, patience, kindness was never drained. God is the Father of all mercy (2 Cor. 1:3), and Jesus being God, is likewise the infinite source of all mercy. And so He gives attention to those who are society's outcasts, hears their cry for mercy, and displays in them the mercy and power of God.

- 1. He tells them to go and show themselves to the priest, which is what the law required a leper to do after being cleansed of his disease.

Leviticus 14:1 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ² **"This shall be the law of the leper in the day of his cleansing. Now he shall be brought to the priest,** ³ and the priest shall go out to the outside of the camp. Thus the priest shall look, and if the infection of leprosy has been healed in the leper, ... ¹¹ and the priest who pronounces him clean shall present the man to be cleansed

- 2. As they lepers were on their way, they were mercifully cleansed, healed of their disease! Jesus is the God of all mercy.

Luke 17:14 When He saw them, He said to them, **"Go and show yourselves to the priests."** **And as they were going, they were cleansed.**

IV. 17:15-18 A contrast in responses to Christ's mercy - which response is ours?

Luke 17:15 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?"

- A. The singular Samaritan, believing it was by Jesus's mercy he was healed, made a priority of turning back to Jesus, publically glorifying God, humbly worshiping at the feet of Jesus by giving Him thanks. Jesus's comment in verse 18 gives indication that the other 9 were Jews, who would have been the ones most expected to glorify God and give Him thanks.
- B. "But the nine - where are they?" Upon discovering they were healed, what must have been more important to them? "I can return to my wife or get married, hug my kids, be with friends, hold a job and make a decent living, be once again shown respect, have fun, etc."

Their thoughts were not of gratitude toward the Lord, but enjoying their restored bodies for their own pleasure's sake. Like their forefathers, they quickly forgot the Lord's mercies.

Hosea 13:5 **I cared for you in the wilderness**, in the land of drought.⁶ As *they had* their pasture, **they became satisfied**, and being satisfied, their heart became proud; **Therefore they forgot Me.**

- C. Unbelieving hearts do not honor God by giving Him thanks for His mercies and blessings they receive.

Romans 1:21 For even though they knew God, **they did not honor Him as God or give thanks**, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

- D. But believing hearts do give thanks, as illustrated by this one Samaritan. Which response characterizes us?

V. 17:19 By faith in Christ we are made well.

Luke 17:19 And He said to him, "Stand up and go; **your faith has made you well** (Gk: sozo = has saved you)."

- A. The Greek literally reads, "Your faith has saved you." In Luke's gospel, when Jesus commends people for their faith in Him, He is telling them their faith is resulting in their salvation, in having their sins forgiven, and not merely resulting in their physical restoration.

Luke 5:20 **Seeing their faith**, He said, "**Friend, your sins are forgiven you.**"

Luke 7:50 And He said to the woman, "**Your faith has saved you; go in peace.**"

Luke 8:48 And He said to her, "Daughter, **your faith has made you well** (sozo = has saved you); go in peace."

Luke 18:39 ... he kept crying out all the more, "**Son of David, have mercy** on me!" ...⁴² And Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; **your faith has made you well** (sozo = has saved you)."⁴³ Immediately he regained his sight and *began* **following Him, glorifying God;**

- B. The nine had no doubt heard that Jesus had performed miracles of healing, which motivated them to cry to Him for mercy. But their response to Jesus never moved beyond receiving His kindness to receiving Him as Lord. To them He was just a Jeannie in a bottle (make a wish), a means to their own ends to be used merely for their own benefit. Earlier in

Jesus's ministry crowds followed Him, not by faith in Him as Lord, but merely as a vending machine to dispense circumstantial blessings.

John 6:24 So when the crowd saw that Jesus was not there, nor His disciples, they themselves got into the small boats, and came to Capernaum seeking Jesus.²⁵ When they found Him on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, "Rabbi, when did You get here?"²⁶ Jesus answered them and said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, **you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled.**²⁷ **"Do not work for the food which perishes,** but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you,...."

- C. Spirit-empowered faith necessarily produces in us the many virtues of Christ, who Himself gave thanks to His Father in heaven, believing He was the God of creation from Whom all blessings flow.

Luke 22:19 And when He had taken *some* bread **and given thanks,** He broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me."

John 6:11 Jesus then took the loaves, **and having given thanks,** He distributed to those who were seated; likewise also of the fish as much as they wanted.

John 11:41 Then Jesus raised His eyes, and said, **"Father, I thank You that You have heard Me.**

- D. So saving faith in Christ necessarily produces a gratitude toward Christ that honors and glorifies Him as the God of all mercies, and a desire to grow in this aspect of Christ's own image.

Psalms 140:13 **Surely the righteous will give thanks to Your name;** The upright will dwell in Your presence.

Psalms 145:10 **All Your works shall give thanks to You,** O LORD, and **Your godly ones shall bless You.**

- E. We need such reminders as this text in Luke provides, for the human race is typically like the nine, and too often are we believers as well. To quote Charles Spurgeon: *More receive benefits than praise God for them, more pray than praise, ... and more believe, and receive benefits through faith, than rightly praise the Giver of those benefits* (no. 1935). Think about all of Christ's mercies and blessings for which we could and should give thanks, and yet don't. If we believers admit that we are deficient in prayer, how much more deficient are we in giving thanks for answered prayer, along with failing to thank the Lord for blessings for which we never prayed. So believers in Christ, hear our Good Shepherd's voice and follow Him, be ...

Ephesians 5:20 **always giving thanks for all things** in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God,

Philippians 4:6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication **with thanksgiving** let your requests be made known to God.

Colossians 3:15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; **and be thankful.**

Colossians 4:2 **Devote yourselves to prayer,** keeping alert in it **with thanksgiving;**

1 Thessalonians 5:18 **in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.**

Hebrews 13:15 **Through Him** then, **let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God,** that is, **the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name.**

Conclusion

- A. Being blessed by God's temporal mercies is not necessarily an indicator that God is blessing us with eternal mercies of salvation, for Jesus said that God (Matthew 5:45) ***“causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.”*** Our hearts for the lost resonate with Charles Spurgeon's: “Oh, that some poor soul would come to Christ (today), some leper to be healed of sin-sickness! If he does find healing, let him come out, and with a loud voice magnify the Lord Who has dealt so graciously with him.”
- B. For us upon whom the Lord continues to pour out eternal mercies in Christ, let's offer in loud unison from sincere hearts this prayer of thanksgiving:

Our almighty God, Father of all mercies, we Your unworthy servants give You a humble and hearty thanks for all of your goodness and loving-kindness to us, and to all people. We bless you for creating us, for preserving us, and for all the blessings of this life; but above all for Your immeasurable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, for Your means of grace, and for the hope of glory. And we beg You to give us that proper sense of all of Your mercies, that our hearts may be always thankful; and that we may display Your praise, not only with our lips, but with our lives, by giving up ourselves to serving You, and by walking before You in holiness and righteousness all of our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to Whom with You and the Holy Spirit, be all honor and glory forever. Amen.