

# Richard Clark: 1 August 2021

(Sermon Summary)

## The ten lepers: Luke 17:11-19

Social distancing and self-isolation are nothing new; these were the reality for lepers in Bible times. Lepers were defiled, disfigured and separated from God's people, but Jesus brought hope and healing for them. He can do the same for us if we face up to the reality of sin, a disease even more serious than leprosy.

This event took place while Jesus was making his final journey to Jerusalem, a journey which would end at the cross. Ten lepers were waiting for him outside a village.

Leprosy is a dreadful disease, and, in those days, there was no treatment. Sufferers were disfigured; their hands became like claws; they could lose their fingers and toes and tumours would appear on their skin. They lost the ability to feel pain so would suffer additional accidental injuries. Because the disease is highly infectious, lepers were forced to live as outcasts, calling out 'unclean' to warn others not to approach them. (Leviticus 13). These lepers may well have had to leave families, homes and farms. They were helpless and hopeless.

But there was one hope for these men - Jesus. Everyone knew about Him, although people held different opinions as to who He was. He had sent messengers ahead of Him (Luke 9:52) so the people of the village probably knew He was coming. Jesus had already healed lepers, so the ten men called out to Him for mercy.

When Jesus saw them, He didn't shrink away but was full of compassion. He gave them one simple command - to show themselves to the priests. He did not touch them as He had with other lepers. They could have doubted this instruction, like Naaman who at first refused to obey Elisha (2 Kings 5). Normally, lepers would only show themselves to the priests if they were sure that the disease had already gone (Leviticus 13-14). However, these lepers acted in faith, and as they went, they were healed. There is much blessing in trusting and obeying Jesus.

This healing was their ticket back to normal life, and nine of the men immediately returned to their lives and futures. Only one was interested in Jesus. So often, people turn to God in times of trouble, then forget Him once their lives improve. The leper who came back was a Samaritan, perhaps the most unlikely to return.

This man was not just showing gratitude; he understood that Jesus is the Messiah. Jesus had previously explained to the woman at the well, another Samaritan, that from now on true worship would be neither in Jerusalem nor on Mount Gerizim (the Samaritan holy place) but in spirit and in truth. As the leper fell at the feet of Jesus he was giving true worship. In the original Greek verse 19 reads "Your faith has saved you" this man was healed spiritually as well as physically.

## What can we learn from this event?

1. Leprosy is a picture of sin.

Sin DEFILES: Isaiah said, "I am a man of unclean lips and I live in the midst of a people of unclean lips" (Isaiah 6:5).

Sin DISFIGURES: pride, jealousy, anger, greed, lust and pride make us ugly in character and spoil the image of God in us.

Sin SEPARATES us from God. Adam and Eve lost their fellowship with God when they sinned; Peter said to Jesus "Depart from me, a sinful man". Nothing unclean will ever enter Heaven.

David, like the leper, was conscious of his sin and cried out for mercy, but most people today are not aware of their guilt and lostness. Have you seen your great need, that only Jesus can meet? He is willing to save all who come and cry out to Him.

2. There is disappointment in the work of the Gospel: 'where are the nine?'

We see very little fruit from our evangelism. The Lord understands and shares in our disappointments and frustrations.

However, there are also some surprises and some conversions. There is still some good soil. No-one is beyond the grace of God: think of the thief on the cross and Saul of Tarsus. The angels rejoice over one sinner who repents.

Does the grace of God amaze you as you think of your own conversion? Gratitude and thankfulness should lead us to praise and glorify God. Do you identify with the one leper, worshipping at the feet of Jesus?