

Sermon Transcript for September 5, 2021

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

All right, well, we have this parable, well, not parable, that's what we've been doing for the last several weeks. This is the real event of Jesus coming along the road. He's in Samaria and Galilee. Now remember that Samaria area is the area around that Sea of Galilee where Jesus grew up and where He did most of His ministry. It was sort of the border and a place where you had Jewish people, Gentiles, Romans, Samaritans, a real mixture of a broad spectrum of individuals, and this is where Jesus did most of His ministry, not in the center of Jerusalem. However, at this time, this is Jesus' travel towards Jerusalem. As it says, it's on the way to Jerusalem, this is building up and leading up to His triumphal entry into Jerusalem a couple of chapters from now, and then His death, of course, and resurrection that comes on Easter Sunday. But He is heading towards Jerusalem. He's been heading there for a while, and now He meets this group of lepers and they cry out, "Lord have mercy." Or "Jesus, master, have mercy on us." Jesus, Master. Master, Lord. It's a word that implies control. It's a word that implies authority and rule. They recognized that Jesus had the authority and power to do whatever it was that He chose to do. Now, they're lepers. They're not a part of society. They have been cast out. They are forced to live on the outskirts of humanity. They're forced to rely upon the gifts of family and friends, and even strangers sometimes, for their wellbeing. They have nothing, absolutely nothing, to offer as payment for anything. So they've got nothing that commends them to Jesus. They can't offer Him anything, except they can cry out for His mercy.

Jesus sees them, and when Jesus sees them, of course, He has compassion on them. And it's interesting, He doesn't say, "Go and you will be healed", or "I will heal you". He doesn't heal them and then send them off to the temple. He just says, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And the 10 of them went. Now this implies that these 10 actually believed, all 10 of them, that Jesus' words could do what He promises they would do, in other words. So Jesus said, "Go show yourselves to the priests." Now the priests are in the temple, which means in order to get in to see the priests, they had to have been cleansed, because a leper, not only can they not go into the temple, that's just completely forbidden, they couldn't even go into a village. They had to stay on the outskirts. So the only way they could justify going into the temple is if they were cleansed. So all 10 of them actually go to the temple, or go towards the temple, implying that all 10 of them actually believe the Word of God, this Word of Jesus that says, when you go, you're going to be healed. They assumed that they would be cleansed somewhere along the way because they trusted the Word of God. Yet we seem to in our Sunday school lessons, always go to, well, the nine of them didn't really believe Jesus, but the one did. That's not completely accurate. They all believed God's Word. They all believed Jesus' Word. It's what they did afterwards that is the difference. And so we are called to focus upon what is unique and different about this man.

Now think about this. Luke is writing to Theophilus. Now we don't know if that was a real man's name or just a nickname or a beloved name of someone, because Theophilus means lover of God. So was that his real name or was it just a description of who he was or who he wanted to be? We're not completely certain. But Luke writes the Book of Luke and the Book of Acts to this Gentile, to this foreigner, not a Jewish person. This is an evangelic message, you might even consider it a catechesis, a teaching method. Luke is teaching Theophilus about what to know and understand about God, and specifically about Jesus Christ.

So he's teaching this foreigner and this foreigner hears about this Samaritan coming back and worshiping Jesus and being told that his faith has made him well. So this encourages us to recognize that our faith is what heals us. It's not what we do, it's not our actions, but faith. It's what we believe. And that belief is, like the cleansing was for this leper, a gift. He didn't do anything to get his cleansing, he just believed Jesus when He said go, and he went.

Now these other nine, they went to the temple and they were cleansed of their leprosy, but they had a massively long process to prove it. They had to constantly go back to the priest, show that they were still cleansed, they had to offer sacrifices on a fairly regular basis for roughly three months before they were declared clean by the temple priests. The law demanded that they had to go through this process in order to prove their cleanliness, and Jesus supported them in fulfilling the law. Jesus was fulfilling the law by cleansing them.

But with the Samaritan, we have a different story. We have a story of recognition that the presence of God, the indwelling of God, is no longer centered in the temple like the Jewish people believed, but it has been transferred to the person of Jesus Christ. It's not so much about the other nine didn't really believe, but it's the fact that the one understood who this person was. That this person was the presence of God. So you could argue that he also, and even better, came to the temple to show himself to the priest. The other nine went to show themselves to a priest, but this was the priest, the one who was the intermediary between God and man, Jesus Christ. See he didn't have to go through the temple, he went directly to the source. And this is what Luke is trying to encourage Theophilus and us to understand, that Christ is the presence of God and that to worship Him is to be at the feet of the high priest, the one high priest who offers the one sacrifice for the forgiveness of all of our sins.

All of them received the physical cleansing. All of them received the physical healing. And the other nine might have come to understand their salvation later on, as Jesus is moving towards Jerusalem where He is going to sacrifice Himself. Maybe they were in Jerusalem. They're still doing their three months of cleansing when Jesus comes and they could see it. We don't know. What we do know is this person, this one, came back praising God with a loud voice, as he fell on his face at Jesus' feet.

This is a proclamation that Jesus is God. And the whole point of this is that we praise God and we recognize that this is where the presence of God dwells. This is where we put our trust. This is where our hope is found. And the Samaritan, the one who hadn't been instructed in the faith from his youth by the Old Testament, the Samaritan understood what was going on better than the Jewish people did. He understood it.

Now when Jesus tells him to go, "Rise and go your way, your faith has made you well," we need to unpack that a little bit, because, again, the Greek is a little bit different than the English. So the word "go" in Greek actually just means travel, it means either go or it means come. It could mean either one. It just means move in some direction. One way or the other, just move. So when we have Jesus saying, "Rise and go your way, your faith has made you well," the idea and the emphasis seems to be rise and come with Me, not go away, like, shoo, begone, but come this way, come with Me along your way. In other words, the Samaritan's way is now with Jesus, and he becomes part of the extended disciples who follow Jesus into Jerusalem and see His death and resurrection.

What are we called to do? We're called to hear the Word of God and believe it, but not only that, to come with Him and to journey with Him, because only there is the source of salvation. This Gentile was restored to the community, not by going to the temple, not by doing his own thing, no, he was restored to the community

by faith. It's not a contrast between they were wrong and he was right. It's that they were practicing the old and he is recognizing the new, and he is receiving his salvation out of grace, which all 10 should have understood, but did not yet know.

Because what does the law do? The law does not heal and the law does not save and Paul makes that clear in Galatians. The law is telling us the things that we desire to do in our hearts are not the things of God, that our heart needs to be transformed by the Word of God, through the power of the Spirit. That we are called to be led by the Spirit, not into the things of the flesh, not into the normal everyday things that we've always been doing. Which, again, those nine, they were just doing the normal everyday things that they've always done. But we are called to move away from the ordinary things.

Notice it says, the works of the flesh, but then it says the fruit of the Spirit. In other words, the works of the flesh, this is what we do. These are the things that we can take credit for. Not that we want to take credit for them, but unfortunately this is all we got. Sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, and so forth, and on and on and on. Now some of these, again, well, yeah, of course I'm not participating in orgies. Come on. That's just not a part of my life. But envy, divisions, dissensions, rivalries, fits of anger. I have to admit, I don't want to, but I have to admit, I got those. Jealousy, strife, and enmity. Now some of them may not be my issue, sorcery. I don't know where that fits in, but idolatry? We idolatze a lot of things in America, but also all throughout the world, all throughout history.

So these are the works of the flesh and they put us under the law and they put us under the curse. We receive God by His Word, and He fills us, fills us with the power of the Holy Spirit, fills us with the fruit of the Spirit. You see, we have joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. We have these things now, but do we kneel at the feet of Jesus? Do we bow before Jesus and trust Him that He has given us these things? Do we actually believe that these are ours, or do we think that well, once we get through this crisis, then we can have peace. Or once we finally attain whatever it is that we're looking for, then we can have joy. Or, you know, I don't really have patience right now. I don't want to. I'm not going to act with patience, I'm going to act impatiently.

But these fruits are what we have and we need to understand that. At the feet of Jesus, this is our heritage, these are the gifts that are ours today. Not something that we can practice and work harder at, and if we really discipline ourselves, we can attain these fruits, this fruit. But this fruit is ours today, and our calling is to worship God at His feet and trust that He provides all that we need. Everything that we need. Joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

So Christ has crucified our flesh. All the immoral activities that we do, they are crucified on the cross and He has brought to life these things in us. So now our task is to rise and come with Jesus in the fruit of the Spirit, dwelling within us, confident that those are the attributes that will manifest if we see Jesus. Those people saw Jesus, they cried out, "Lord, master, have mercy on us." We too are called to see Jesus, to cry, "Master, have mercy. Give us your Spirit that we might live in the fruit of the Spirit, as a free gift of God."

These fruits, they are yours. You have them now, not when things get better, not when you get through this crisis, but you have them now. Because Christ is within you. He is not a God who is far off. He is a God who has come and dwelt among us, body and blood. He is real. He is here. He is ours. There is no law against the Spirit of God and His fruits.

His grace and His mercy and His peace be and abide with you always, now and forevermore, unto life everlasting. Amen.