

“Where are the Other Nine?” (Luke 17:11-19)(11.13.22)

Luke 17:11–19 (NIV84) *Ten Healed of Leprosy*

¹¹ Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee.¹² As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance¹³ and called out in a loud voice, “Jesus, Master, have pity on us!”

¹⁴ When he saw them, he said, “**Go, show yourselves to the priests.**” And as they went, they were cleansed.

¹⁵ One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice.¹⁶ He threw himself at Jesus’ feet and thanked him—and he was a Samaritan.

¹⁷ Jesus asked, “**Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine?¹⁸ Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?**”¹⁹ Then he said to him, “**Rise and go; your faith has made you well.**”

The word of God for the people of God.

LET US PRAY.

Title: **“Where are the Other Nine?”**

INTRODUCTION:

Have you heard the story of a man who was up on a rooftop nailing down a loose shingle. As he was doing that, he lost his footing and began to slip. It was three stories high, so obviously he was terrified knowing he would fall to his death.

He started crying out to God. "God, help me. I am falling. God do something." He was coming to the edge of the roof. Just as he came to the edge his belt loop caught on a nail and it slowed him down enough that he was able to grab hold again. He said to God, "It's OK God. I got caught on a nail."
[pause]

In contrast, I use to sing in the Absecon United Methodist Church. I overheard one of the tenors explaining how he ended up in the choir. His young daughter had been sick. He prayed that if God would heal her he would start going to church. God did heal her. Not only did this tenor start going to church, he joined the choir, which continuously sings praises to God.

But there is a postscript to the story. That daughter is now a scholar athlete. And, she has a beautiful singing voice. Often she is called upon to sing solos during worship services.

I love this quote by the Prince of Preachers, Charles Spurgeon: "Praise is a great instructor. Prayer and praise are the oars by which a man may row his boat into the deep waters of the knowledge of Christ."

BODY:

Of the ten lepers, one responded in gratitude for answered prayer. He worshiped at Jesus' feet. Where are the other nine? My friends, I fear that too often, we are the other nine. We forget. We get busy. We get distracted. We intend but fail to follow through.

The Apostle Paul gives a grave warning in Romans 1:21 (NIV84) For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.

Paul is saying, "If God is not central to our life and we suffer from ingratitude, our hearts and minds will actually turn away from God." We can see this all around us in our culture. Like the one faithful and healed leper, we need to worship at Jesus' feet, praising God in a loud voice and thanking Him for Jesus.

Dr. Luke tells us that Jesus was traveling along the border between Samaria and Galilee on His way to

Jerusalem. At one time, Samaria was the capital city of Israel. When the Assyrians conquered Samaria they displaced the people. My Lexham Bible Dictionary says, "Samaria is also perceived to be Jerusalem's antithesis."

If you have spent any time studying the Bible, you know that the Jews held the Samaritans in disdain. The fact that this event records Jesus transiting the border demonstrates that Jesus transcends any human divisions. This is further supported by the one faithful leper being a Samaritan.

In those days, leprosy encompassed a broad range of skin diseases. They believed that only God could heal leprosy. Lepers were complete outcasts. They were separated from family, friends, and society. They dressed in a manner that indicated they were the walking dead and they had to warn others by shouting, "Unclean, unclean."

The most serious cases did result in death. The flesh would rot. Ears, noses, fingers, and toes would be lost. Blindness would occur. But, any type of leprosy was associated with sin in Jewish thinking. They were physically unclean AND spiritually unclean. Spiritual sickness led to physical sickness.

If a leper was cured, it had to be verified by the priest. Leviticus chapter 14 gives very specific

instructions for the priest. Once they have verified the person was cleansed, there was a whole sacrificial sacrament. Then the person went through an elaborate ceremonial cleansing. Then the cleansed leper was to bring sacrificial lambs along with oil and grain to be presented at the Holy Tabernacle.

So, Jesus was honoring the Jewish law by telling the ten lepers to show themselves to the priests. Warren Wiersbe interpreted our text like this: “Instead of *going to* the priest, the Samaritan *became* a priest, and he built his altar at the feet of Jesus.”

Psalm 116:12–19 (NIV84)

¹² How can I repay the Lord

for all his goodness to me?

¹³ I will lift up the cup of salvation

and call on the name of the Lord.

¹⁴ I will fulfill my vows to the Lord

in the presence of all his people.

¹⁵ Precious in the sight of the Lord

is the death of his saints.

16 O Lord, truly I am your servant;
I am your servant, the son of your maidservant;
you have freed me from my chains.

17 **I will sacrifice a thank offering to you
and call on the name of the Lord.**

18 I will fulfill my vows to the Lord
in the presence of all his people,

19 in the courts of the house of the Lord—
in your midst, O Jerusalem.

While meditating on this scripture this week, I wondered about the circumstances that brought these ten lepers to Jesus. How is it that they came to Jesus? Remember that they are NOT living on the fringes of society, they are outcasts, another society altogether. Maybe you have heard the term leper colony.

Let us imagine that this particular group was fifty or a hundred lepers living apart. Somehow, they had heard about Jesus. They had heard about miraculous cures. Some thought He might be the Messiah. Maybe they had heard what Jesus told John the Baptist's followers.

Luke 7:22 (NIV84)

²² So he replied to the messengers, "Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor."

Some in the colony believed. Some did not believe. They debated around their campfires. Time was of the essence. Jesus was passing them by on his way to the Holy City. In the end, ten lepers went out to meet Jesus. They stood at a distance¹³ and called out in a loud voice, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us!" And He did.

Was it desperation that brought them to Jesus? Maybe so. Sometimes I will pray to God that He will do whatever it takes to bring a lost soul to Jesus. And still, there was a measure of belief – if not quite faith. They come humbly and publicly pray for Jesus to heal them.

Again they demonstrate a measure of faith through obedience. Notice that, **as they went** they were cleansed. It was while they were on their way that they were cleansed. They didn't say to themselves, "Let me wait and see if Jesus is who He says He is." Jesus tells His disciples that if you love me you

will obey my word. Often it is in the obeying that we live INTO the love of Jesus the Messiah.

Of all those in the leper colony, we don't know how many, only ten went out to meet Jesus. Of those ten, only one came to a saving faith. Why so few?

Jesus says in Matthew 7:13–14 (NIV84)

¹³“Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. ¹⁴But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.”

Luke 13:23–24 (NIV84)

²³Someone asked him, “Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?”

He said to them, ²⁴“Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to.”

This does not sit well with human thinking. It is our naturally tendency to be Universalists. This is an age-old heresy...everyone goes to heaven. One way or another everyone gets in, right? Nearly every funeral you ever go to, if it is not said explicitly, it is implied that the deceased is in heaven.

Yes, it is the desire of God's heart that ALL would be saved. God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. Can you hear Jesus' broken heart in today's text? "Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine?¹⁸ Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?"

Pastor Greg Laurie shared: "I read about a hospital chaplain who kept a record of 2000 of his patients that he had visited, all apparently in a dying condition who all showed various signs of repentance. This chaplain recorded that among those who had been restored to health, he felt that only 2 showed a marked change in their spiritual lives after their recovery. In other words when they thought they were going to die, "I repent. I am calling on God." But when they got better, they said, "Forget about that.""

The one that was saved, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him. But where are the other nine? We are not told.

Some may have become trapped into works-based religion. Instead of a saving relationship with Jesus, they sincerely believed they had to earn their way to heaven. Some may have become too busy in getting back to "normal," enjoying the

good things of life. Some may have fallen back into a fallen life, filled with sin and strife. We don't know where the other nine were, except they were NOT with Jesus.

Author C.D. Pohl argues that the flower of our gratitude should find its roots in our salvation: "If we really understand our lives as redeemed by costly grace, then our primary response can only be gratitude. It's at the center of the Christian life; in fact, the theologian Karl Barth wrote that grace and gratitude "belong together like heaven and earth. **Grace evokes gratitude like the voice an echo.** Gratitude follows grace like thunder [follows] lightning." If the essence of God is grace, Barth explained, then the essence of human beings as God's people is our gratitude or thanks.""

CONCLUSION:

Our closing hymn today is "**When Morning Gilds the Skies,**" which has four verses. The translator of this German hymn was Edward Caswall. Throughout his life, he regularly added a verse to this hymn until it had reached 28 verses. I was only able to find a version with fourteen verses:

When morning gilds the skies my heart awaking
cries:

May Jesus Christ be praised!

Alike at work and prayer, to Jesus I repair:

May Jesus Christ be praised!

[Whene'er the sweet church bell, peals over hill
and dell]

May Jesus Christ be praised!

O hark to what it sings, as joyously it rings,

May Jesus Christ be praised!

To Thee, my God above, I cry with glowing love;

May Jesus Christ be praised

The fairest graces spring, in hearts that ever sing,

May Jesus Christ be praised

My tongue shall never tire of chanting with the
choir,

May Jesus Christ be praised!

This song of sacred joy, it never seems to cloy,

May Jesus Christ be praised!

When sleep her balm denies, my silent spirit sighs,

May Jesus Christ be praised!

When evil thoughts molest, with this I shield my
breast,

May Jesus Christ be praised!

Does sadness fill my mind? A solace here I find,

May Jesus Christ be praised!

Or fades my earthly bliss? My comfort still is this,

May Jesus Christ be praised!

Though burst my heart in twain, still this shall be
my strain;

May Jesus Christ be praised!

When you begin the day, O never fail to say,

May Jesus Christ be praised!

And at your work rejoice, to sing with heart and
voice,

May Jesus Christ be praised!

Be this at meals your grace, in every time and
place;

May Jesus Christ be praised!

Be this, when day is past, of all [our] thoughts the
last

May Jesus Christ be praised!

In want and bitter pain, none ever said in vain:

May Jesus Christ be praised!

Should grieve your spirit wring, remember Christ,
your King,

May Jesus Christ be praised!

The night becomes as day when from the heart we
say:

May Jesus Christ be praised!

In heaven's eternal bliss the loveliest strain is this,

May Jesus Christ be praised!

The powers of darkness fear when this sweet chant
they hear:

May Jesus Christ be praised!

To God, the Word, on high, the host of angels cry,

May Jesus Christ be praised!

Let mortals too, upraise their voice in hymns of
praise,

May Jesus Christ be praised!

Let all the earth around ring joyous with the
sound:

May Jesus Christ be praised!

In heaven's eternal bliss the loveliest strain is this:

May Jesus Christ be praised!

Be this, while life is mine, my canticle divine:

May Jesus Christ be praised!

Sing this eternal song through all the ages long:

May Jesus Christ be praised!

Gratitude must be a way of life for us. I recommend that you strongly consider using a Gratitude Journal over the coming weeks. There are a wide variety available. You can incorporate it into your daily devotionals.

In your bulletin you will find a 30 day scripture reading schedule. A women named Lisa Appelo created this schedule. In an email, she says, **"Gratitude for the gifts means little if we don't first and foremost love the Giver."**

We want eyes to see God, not just his hand.
We want hearts that beat for God, not just his good.
We want lips that praise God, not just his gifts."

Amen and amen. Let us pray.