

**Outcasts: Praising the Healer**  
**Sermon 7-30-17**  
**Pastor Curtis Dehmey**

**Luke 17:11-19**

*<sup>11</sup>On the way to Jerusalem Jesus was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee. <sup>12</sup>As he entered a village, ten lepers approached him. Keeping their distance, <sup>13</sup>they called out, saying, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!” <sup>14</sup>When he saw them, he said to them, “Go and show yourselves to the priests.” And as they went, they were made clean. <sup>15</sup>Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice. <sup>16</sup>He prostrated himself at Jesus’ feet and thanked him. And he was a Samaritan. <sup>17</sup>Then Jesus asked, “Were not ten made clean? But the other nine, where are they? <sup>18</sup>Was none of them found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?” <sup>19</sup>Then he said to him, “Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well.”*

**Message:**

(Play [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bZG\\_rTPF9eA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bZG_rTPF9eA)) Miracles can indeed still happen. God is faithful. When we think of healing miracles we often think of them as something that happened long ago. Or that modern medicine corrects, but there is nothing supernatural about it. I believe God can heal through modern medicine or through a miraculous moment. God can choose either of these ways. I’ve experienced both. I’ve witnessed both. It’s pretty incredible that in God’s creation he created all these things that have medicinal properties that can heal our most ailing experiences. I’m pretty allergic to poison ivy. The fact that when I get poison ivy, I can go to the doctor and they can order me a prescription to kill off the poison ivy is incredible. It’s incredible that God has given humanity the intelligence to mine for antibiotics that will heal the body. It’s incredible that God has given some the mind to understand the human anatomy enough to know how to heal it. It’s also incredible that God also heals in spite of modern medicine or in areas where modern medicine is not available. God is still working in all of these things. God is still working miracles.

In our passage today, Jesus performs a miracle. He heals ten lepers from leprosy. If you don’t know what leprosy is, it begins with a dark lesion on your body. It then spreads, numbing your nerve endings to the point where you can no longer feel in the infected areas. Many nations in the ancient world feared this disease would spread and continue to debilitate more people. While we know today that it is only contagious through bodily fluids, back then they feared that by

physical contact one would contract the disease. Today, it's treatable by modern medicine, but back then they had no such treatment. According to biblical scholar Allen Culpepper, it was required for lepers to stay outside the camp or village of people. As people walked by, they shouted out, "unclean, unclean" so that people would know and would not touch them. Once they were free of leprosy they had to go to the priest to verify that they indeed were clean of leprosy. That's why in verse 12, the lepers keep their distance from Jesus, but in verse 13 cry out, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!"

And here is where it gets interesting. Notice that Jesus doesn't physically do anything. He doesn't touch them. He doesn't fling mud on them. He doesn't pour a bucket of water on them. In verse 14, his response is, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And interestingly, as they went to the priest they were made clean. So the lepers somehow believed that they were clean or that they would be made clean by going to the priest. The next part is the key part of the story. "<sup>15</sup>Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice. <sup>16</sup>He prostrated himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him. And he was a Samaritan." Notice that out of 10 lepers, only one thanked Jesus. And the one who thanked Jesus was a Samaritan. This is another example in the gospels of the great reversal. Not only is he an outcast because he was a leper, but he's doubly an outcast because he's a Samaritan. A foreigner. And yet it is the Samaritan who takes the time to thank the healer, Jesus. "<sup>17</sup>Then Jesus asked, "Were not ten made clean? But the other nine, where are they? <sup>18</sup>Was none of them found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" <sup>19</sup>Then he said to him, "Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well." Notice at the end of the passage Jesus says, "...your faith has made you well."

While I've preached on this passage before, what captures my attention this time around is the role of the outsider. The Samaritan or foreigner. Out of all the lepers, the one who returns and praises the healer is the outsider. The other nine may have been religious insiders who knew that in order to be re-incorporated with society that they had to show the priests that they were made clean. Excited about their transformation, they hurry to get approved by the priest. Some of us may identify with these insiders because in their defense they are just doing what is customary and following the social rules. But the outsider does what many of us forget. He thanks and praises the healer. Jesus.

As long-time believers, many of us know how to play the game. We know how to operate within this Christian setting. We know how we should behave and be. We know which rules to make sure we follow. We know what social rules are appropriate and inappropriate. We know that if we ask for God's healing and provisions in our lives that God will answer. While this is all good and valuable. I don't mean to diminish these practices. But it can also easily become a lifeless

routine. To the point that when God moves and acts we hardly recognize it as significant or carrying any power. I believe the nine who walked away without thanking Jesus, experienced the power of God externally, but not internally. They reaped the benefits of Jesus' supernatural power, but were not transformed internally. How many of us have reaped the benefits of God's provision in our life, but have not been transformed in our faith?

Culpepper states, "When the leper saw healing, he did not just celebrate his good fortune; he returned to praise God and fall on his face before Jesus. Gratitude may be the purest measure of one's character and spiritual condition. The absence of the ability to be grateful reveals self-centeredness or the attitude that I deserve more than I ever get, so I do not need to be grateful...the grateful person reveals a humility of spirit and a sensitivity to love expressed by others. The grateful person, therefore, regards others' acts of kindness and experiences of God's grace with profound gratitude." Ironically, the Samaritans response is the faithful response because it reveals the true nature of his heart. This story parallels another story of the Bible in 2 Kings 5:1-15. If you remember Naaman was a commander of an Assyrian army. At the time of 2 Kings 5, the Northern Kingdom, Israel, had a King, but he was under the direction of the Assyrian King. The Israelite King attempted to rebel multiple times and each time lost to the Assyrian King. Naaman was the one who beat each rebellion. But Naaman contracted leprosy. He was about to be cast out of the Assyrian Kings court, but the Assyrian King sent Naaman to the Israelite King because the prophet, Elisha, was believed to be able to heal leprosy. Once Naaman arrived at the palace of the Israelite King, the Israelite King thought this was some cruel joke because he couldn't heal Naaman. And he thought this would mean further retribution from the Assyrian King. Instead, Elisha steps-in and agrees to heal Naaman. Elisha acts like this is no big deal. He doesn't honor Naaman with any kind of tribute to his status as a commander. Naaman is offended by the "lack of respect." Elisha tells him to go wash seven times in the Jordan. Naaman thinks he's crazy and is about ready to not listen to Elisha. But his servants convince him to give it a shot. So Naaman goes to the Jordan and washes seven times. To his surprise, "...his flesh was restored like the flesh of a young boy, and he was clean." Notice what Naaman does next. <sup>15</sup>"Then he returned to the man of God, he and all his company; he came and stood before him and said, 'Now I know that there is no God in all the earth except in Israel; please accept a present from your servant.'" Like our story in Luke, Naaman thanks the healer.

Naaman just wanted his status to change. To go from unclean leprosy to clean. Similarly in Luke, the other nine wanted their status changed, but nothing else changed. How many of us want our status changed, but to not be truly changed? In a social media world it's becoming increasingly easier to appear one

way, but actually be living another. It's become easier to mask our true intentions and desires. It's become easier to appear as if we have everything we need than to admit to our need for something more. Something better. I'm sure many of you have seen people post all of these happy and joyful posts on Facebook, but behind the scenes, their marriage is falling apart. Or maybe people pray for wealth and richness to simply appear more valuable. But inside they don't want to change their vanity or dependence upon Jesus.

If we look at Daniel 3, some of you may remember the story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. The Babylonian King, Nebuchadnezzar, want them to denounce their belief in God for follow Nebuchadnezzar's gods. They refused saying, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to present a defense to you in this matter. <sup>17</sup>If our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire and out of your hand, O king, let him deliver us. <sup>18</sup>But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods and we will not worship the golden statue that you have set up." To Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, it didn't matter whether they died by this or whether they lived. They were still going to testify that they believe in God. They could have changed their status by denying God, but the foundation was their faith in God. So as some of you may know, Nebuchadnezzar throws them in a fiery furnace that he multiplies the heat by seven times because of his anger towards them. And they walk out of the fiery furnace unscathed testifying their belief and trust in God.

This lesson of "thanking the healer" isn't just merely another thing to do. I'm not saying "thank Jesus or else." I'm not saying "try harder." But what this story reveals is the true nature of the heart. The true foundation of our faith. Do we truly want to be changed by Jesus, inside and out? Or do we just want to appear as if we have changed? Or appear as if we believe? Are we willing to believe regardless if our status is changed or not by God's work?

The unique thing about this passage is that we don't glean this revelation from religious insiders. The other nine don't reveal this truth to us. This truth is revealed to us from an outsider. The Samaritan, through his praising and grateful actions, exposes the true heart of the other nine. As we've been doing this Outcast series, I've talked a lot about compassion and grace. As if we've got it all together and others need to experience what we've got. But what if all the answers to the faithful life to Christ don't reside in here? That they don't all reside at Providence Church? It's almost belittling to an outsider of Providence Church. And therefore, we may undervalue what an outcast or an outsider brings to the table. What if outcasts don't just need to be ministered to, but we churched, religious insiders, need to be ministered to by outcasts? What if outcasts don't just need to be ministered to, but we churched, religious insiders, need to be ministered to by outcasts? What if we have something to learn from those on the edges of society?

You may have experienced this somewhat. If you've ever been around a new believer who has never been church, they ask questions and comments that you would never think to ask because you've assumed the answer is this. And by their presence, they strengthen and build your own faith because you begin to wrestle with those questions and comments you never thought to engage before. The other nine didn't think to thank the healer, but the Samaritan did. My hope is that the other nine saw this and said, "Oh yeah...we should be thanking and praising Jesus." And that it reveals other ways that they have not been grateful to God in their life.

So, yes, we should learn from these passages today to be sure that the true foundation of our faith is in Jesus Christ. That when we ask God for something, that it's because we want to continue to experience the transformation of salvation. That we should thank the true provider. But I also want you to take a look at your attitude towards outsiders. Are you someone who assumes that we have all the answers and our job is just to impart those answers to outcasts? Or do you see ministry to outcasts as a way of building up the entirety of Christ's church? To build up YOUR faith? That by connecting with outcasts, we also benefit from the relationship. That they have something to teach us as well. Who are the foreigners in our community who have something to teach us? What can we learn from their fresh eyes of faith that we may not have considered? We will only find out by connecting with those outside of this Christian circle, Providence Church. Lord, show us what we need to see and learn from the outcasts in our community. Amen.