**THE CLEANSING OF THE TEN LEPERS**

***Where Are the Thankful One’s?***

***Luke 17:11-20***

Sunday School Lesson 14

*The Miracles of Jesus*

04/14/2019

**Introduction:** As we move forward in our study of the miracles performed during the ministry of Jesus, we are now just months away from His crucifixion. Each miracle that Jesus performed greatly increased the animosity that the Pharisees and the Jewish leaders had for the Messiah. The miracles on the Sabbath were the most offensive to them. Last week, we saw how He healed the blind man on the Sabbath. After that, He also healed a man with the dropsy and a stooping woman on the Sabbath. The Pharisees were similarly troubled at the number of the Lord’s disciples. He had sent out seventy full-time disciples to preach and heal throughout the region. The disciples had such great success that when they returned to Jesus, they were filled with amazement and joy at the works that they had accomplished through the name of Christ. This week’s miracle finds Jesus travelling back to Jerusalem. While the Bible does not give us a definitive timeline, it is very likely that this trip was being made to observe the feast of dedication (Hanukkah). This would be the Lord’s final trip to Jerusalem prior to His triumphal entry. Along the way, Jesus met ten lepers in a certain village between Galilee and Samaria. While the Lord healed all ten of them, only one of the ten showed any appreciation for what had been done. We will look at four reasons why the other nine forgot to be thankful!

1. THEY WERE UNTHANKFUL BECAUSE THEY WERE TOO BUSY DOING WHAT THEY WERE COMMANDED TO DO. (VS. 14)
2. **Notice that the lepers were obedient to the Lord’s command.** As the lepers received the command from the Lord to go to the priest, they immediately went on their way to find him. Their response to the Lord is very commendable. In fact, it showed great faith on their behalf. They had not been healed yet. There was no obvious reason to go to the priest, other than to fulfill the command that they were given. In our last study of the healing of the leper, the leper received his healing prior to being commanded to go to the priest. In his case, it was the obvious next step. While these lepers did not show their appreciation to the Lord, we can at least acknowledge their faith and obedience. This should be an eye opener for us. It is not just the faithless and disobedient that are unthankful for what they have been given. Often, it is those who are busy doing God’s work that forget to thank the Lord that they are busy serving. Sometimes, we are so busy that we do not even notice our lack of thankfulness. It is good for us to take time to reflect and examine what it is that we are doing for God.
3. **Notice that it was possible for them to obey the Lord and to show their thankfulness at the same time.** Some might look at this story and excuse the behavior of the nine lepers. After all, they were only doing what they were told to do. Jesus had told them to go to the priest. Was it disobedient of the one that went back that he did not go to the priest? Given that Jesus did not reprove the man for returning, the answer is that Jesus clearly did not see this as an act of disobedience. We are also expected to give praise to God for everything. The lepers understood that going to the priest was mostly for their own benefit. It was the way that they would be reconciled back to society. The thankful leper wanted to first give praise to God prior to doing anything else. This should be the manner in which we prioritize things. The reality is that we are commanded to do many things by God’s Word. Praising the Lord should be a priority. As long as our motivation for praise is sincere and not to intentionally delay other responsibilities that God has given us, the Lord will be pleased with that praise.
4. THEY WERE UNTHANKFUL BECAUSE THEY VIEWED THE MINIMUM REQUIREMENT TO BE ACCEPTABLE TO GOD. (VS. 14; LEVITICUS 14:1-32)
5. **Notice that the lepers would be required to make an offering unto the Lord (Leviticus 14:10; Mark 1:44).** The process of being cleansed of leprosy was an eight-day process. Without studying the Old Testament law, we might be tempted to assume that this was a quick or simple task. Instead, the book of Leviticus tells us that the cleansing was a very thorough process. The men would be required to stay outside of the camp for seven more days. After that, they would have to shave themselves. This was not just their head. The Law explicitly commanded them to shave their beards and eyebrows as well. On the eighth day, they would take three lambs and offer them as a sacrifice to God. They would also have to make a meat offering with flour and oil. Given this extensive process, the men probably assumed that the sacrifice would be enough to appease God.Yet, that sacrifice was more of an outward form of praise to God. They still needed to have that personal and communicative time of praise. We should be careful not to think that our works are enough of a form of thankfulness or praise.
6. **Notice that the priest would also offer a sacrifice and present the lepers before the people (Leviticus 14:12-20).** Not only would the leper be required to offer a sacrifice before the Lord, but the priest would also have to make a sacrifice on behalf of the leper. Specifically, a trespass offering and a wave offering both needed to be made. The priest would also take the leper and present him at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. This was so everyone could see that God had healed the leper. The lepers might have thought that this display was enough to show their thankfulness. Yet, praising God is not just so others can see and hear about God’s goodness. While this is an effective way to minister the Gospel to the lost world, it still does not take the place of praise that is for the pleasure of the Lord. We must consider that participating in praise of God with others does not indicate a heart that is truly thankful for what the Lord has done. Being in a church service where people are thankful is not the same as being personally thankful to the Lord. Let us not only seek to meet the minimum expectation of thankfulness. Let us be in a constant state of praise.
7. THEY WERE UNTHANKFUL BECAUSE THEY WERE A PRIVILEGED PEOPLE. (VS. 11-12; 18)
8. **Notice that there was no sense of privilege when they were outside of the camp (11-12).** The focus of this story is the fact that the one leper who came back was a Samaritan. Some Bible students infer that the other nine were all Jews. Truthfully, we do not know how many were Jews and how many were Samaritans. Clearly, some of them were Jews though. It is interesting that we see that the Jewish and Samaritan lepers were together in that certain village between Galilee and Samaria. This would have never happened within their own respective countries. Yet, the humbling effect of sin brings all people down to the same level. Whatever superiority the Jews had felt over the Samaritans disappeared with the onset of that terrible disease. Leprosy was humiliating, and so is our sinful condition. In Hell, there will be no hierarchy or sense of entitlement. There will only be sinners of every race under the Sun. As the lepers cried out for the Lord, you can see their humility. They asked for mercy.
9. **Notice how quickly they returned back to their status upon receiving mercy (18).** It did not take long for those Jewish lepers to return back to their former way of thinking. Now that they had been restored, they felt their self-worth. It did not take long for pride to return back to their hearts and minds. I’m convinced that we often underestimate the power of pride. It is such a strong force of the flesh. With the smallest bit of victory or success, the voice of pride shouts for our attention. It is there to remind us of who we thought we were before we fell. There are so many examples of this in the Bible. Even the greatest of Old Testament heroes had moments where they utterly failed because of their pride. These lepers’ pride was based in their view of themselves as a privileged people. Whenever we think that we are deserving of some Heavenly benefit, may we remember that we are most certainly not. This will help us to be a thankful people.
10. THEY WERE UNTHANKFUL BECAUSE THEY TOOK THINGS FOR GRANTED. (VS. 20; 25)
11. **Notice that Jesus had little time remaining on the earth (vs. 25).** As we noticed in the introduction, the Earthly ministry of Jesus was quickly coming to an end. Shortly after this, He tells the disciples that He was going to suffer many things and be rejected of that generation. He had been preaching this message to them more and more. These lepers may not have ever seen Jesus again after that day. Can you imagine living during the Earthly ministry of Christ? What an amazing opportunity it was to live during those days! Of all of the places that Jesus could have been, He chose to pass through that small village between Samaria and Galilee. Did those lepers truly understand the opportunity that had been afforded to them on that day? Clearly, they did not.
12. **Notice that the Jews assumed that they had more time with the Lord (vs. 20).** We know that the Jews were looking forward to Jesus establishing His earthly kingdom. At the conclusion of this miracle, the Pharisees came to Jesus to ask Him when the kingdom of God should come. For three years, they had been waiting for Jesus to reveal His true power and authority. Most of those who believed in the Lord thought that He was establishing His kingdom now. It is likely that those lepers had no idea that Jesus’ ministry was coming to a close. Like most of humanity, they assumed there was more time. This assumption often leads to a lack of thankfulness. If we knew that today was our last day, would we be more thankful? If we knew that we had to say goodbye to someone today, would we be more thankful? We ought to live everyday with the understanding that the time is short. Let’s not wait until tomorrow to show our thankfulness. What if tomorrow never comes? Be thankful now!

**Conclusion:** As Christians, we are commanded to be thankful. Yet, it really should not be that hard to be a thankful people. Certainly, we can all name many things that God has done for us. Most importantly, He has given us the gift of salvation. Let’s not allow the busyness of life to cause us to forget to be thankful. Let’s not assume that our works and faithfulness to church are effective means of communicating praise and thankfulness to God. Let’s never think that there is more time to be thankful later. We will be praising God forever in Heaven. Let’s start now.