

THE LESSON ON NEED AND GRATITUDE

LUKE 17:11–19

Introduction

This passage teaches two powerful lessons, one on how to have needs met and the other on gratitude.

- I. Jesus went toward Jerusalem (v. 11).
- II. The lesson on need: ten lepers are healed (vv. 12-14).
- III. The lesson on gratitude (vv. 15-19).

I. *Luke 17:11 The Call and Mission of Jesus Christ*

Jesus went toward Jerusalem. His face was set to fulfill His purpose on earth: to die for man (See *Ascension of Jesus Christ*, Lk. 9:51). As He travelled along, He taught wherever He was. He kept on doing what God sent Him to do, not slacking off nor forgetting His call and mission. Whether he was in a large city or a small village, it did not matter. He reached out to as many as He could reach (Lk. 9:22).

LUKE 09:51 THE ASCENSION OF JESUS CHRIST

*As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem. **Luke 09:51***

The words *taken up* (analempseos) mean received. They refer to the ascension of Christ (see *analambano*, Acts 1:2, 11, 22; 1 Tim. 3:16). Salvation was to be secured by the ascension of Christ. How? The Ascended Lord means at least four things.

1. It means *the Risen Lord*. The ascension means that Christ arose from the dead. If He had remained in the grave, He would still be there in the form of dust. He could not have ascended. If He were to be “taken up,” He had to be *raised up — quickened — made alive — taken up*. No one can be *taken up* without first being raised up. Therefore, to speak of the ascension is to mean that Christ is risen. Death is conquered; man can now be saved from death.

1 Cor 15:12-24 But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins.

Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men. But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own turn: Christ, the first fruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power.

Phil 2:7-9 *But made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death — even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name.*

Rom 4:23-25 *The words “it was credited to him” were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness — for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.*

2. It means *the Advocate or Representative Lord*. On earth Christ lived a perfect life; He was without sin (2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15; 1 Pet. 1:19; 2:22; Jn. 8:46). He was “obedient to death, even death on a cross. Therefore God exalted Him” (Phil. 2:8-9). He is “seated at the right hand of God” (Col. 3:1). He is “Jesus Christ the Righteous One,” therefore, He is our “advocate with the Father,” the “One who speaks to the Father in our defence” (1 Jn. 2:1). He is able to represent us before God because He has lived upon earth and secured a perfect righteousness. He is the Ideal Man (Mt. 5:17-18), our advocate, the One who is qualified to plead our case before God and see to it that we are saved.

Heb 7:25 *Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.*

3. It means *the Priestly or Intercessory Lord*. Every man suffers while on earth: suffers pain, trial, need, want, temptation, loss, illness, and eventually death. We are incapable of even knowing how to pray as we ought in order to secure the help we need. But Christ knows and understands. He has been to earth and suffered just as we suffer. Therefore, He knows how to intercede for us and how to deliver us.

Heb 4:14-16 *Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are — yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.*

Heb 2:16-18 *For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants. For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.*

Rom 8:33-34 *Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died — more than that, who was raised to life — is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.*

4. It means *the exalted Lord*. Christ has ascended to be exalted, to rule and reign over the universe for God. There is a great day of judgment coming upon the world, a day when all men shall bow the knee and acknowledge that Jesus is Lord, the Son of the living God.

Phil 2:9-11 *Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

Eph 1:19-23 *And his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.*

1 Cor 15:24-26 *Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. □*

II. **Luke 17:12–14** *The Lesson on Meeting One's Need*

The lesson on need — ten lepers are healed. (See *Leperosy*, Lk. 17:12-14.) There were five things that led to their need's being met.

1. There was desperation. The men had leprosy, the most feared disease of that day. They met Jesus as He was entering the city, coming in from a long journey. The lepers had no idea where He was going: He could have been heading for an important meeting, or He could have been tired and exhausted, or He could have had no time for interruptions; but the lepers did not care. They were so desperate they would interrupt Him no matter what.

Thought 1. One thing is basic to having a need met: a sense of desperation. When we sense a need so desperately that nothing can stop us from reaching Jesus, our needs will be met.

Psa 105:4 *Look to the Lord and his strength; seek his face always.*

Amos 5:4 *This is what the Lord says to the house of Israel: "Seek me and live."*

Isa 55:6 *Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near.*

2. There was humility. Note: they "stood at a distance." They respected the law which demanded they stand at least six feet away from a person. These lepers were, of course, many yards away from Jesus because of the large crowd's following Him. They showed a great respect for the law by remaining on the outskirts of the crowd. On other occasions those seeking healing had ignored the law, bursting through crowds and running up to Jesus. Jesus was bound to note their humility and their acknowledgment of being unclean.

Thought 1. Every man must recognize his uncleanness in approaching Jesus. He must come in humility....

=> *confessing unworthiness* to approach One so holy.

James 4:10 *Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.*

Psa 34:18 *The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.*

Isa 57:15 *For this is what the high and lofty One says — he who lives forever, whose name is holy: "I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite."*

=> *confessing need for the cleansing touch of the Holy One of God, even the Lord Jesus Christ.*

3. There was a cry for mercy. Note two things.
 - a. They called Jesus "Master." The Greek word for "Master" is not *Rabbi*, the Teacher; but it is *epistata*, which means the Chief, the Commander, the Overseer, the One who has the power to meet needs. Note: the need is not for instruction (Rabbi) but for healing. By healing, they meant both the cleansing of their physical bodies and the spiritual sin which had caused their disease. The Jews always connected leprosy with sin, so this is definitely what they meant. They recognized Jesus to be the Master who could cleanse both the body and spirit, who could give them both healing and forgiveness of sins.
 - b. They cried out for mercy. They did not ask only for physical healing; they asked for spiritual healing, for the forgiveness of sins as well. They cried out for mercy upon all of their being.

Heb 4:15-16 *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are — yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.*

Psa 6:1-2 *O Lord, do not rebuke me in your anger or discipline me in your wrath. Be merciful to me, Lord, for I am faint; O Lord, heal me, for my bones are in agony.*

Psa 27:7 *Hear my voice when I call, O Lord; be merciful to me and answer me.*

Psa 34:6 *This poor man called, and the Lord heard him; he saved him out of all his troubles.*

Psa 51:1 *Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions.*

Psa 85:7 *Show us your unfailing love, O Lord, and grant us your salvation.*

Psa 89:28 *I will maintain my love to him forever, and my covenant with him will never fail.*

Psa 103:8 *The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love.*

Psa 103:17 *But from everlasting to everlasting the Lord's love is with those who fear him, and his righteousness with their children's children.*

Psa 119:77 *Let your compassion come to me that I may live, for your law is my delight.*

Psa 123:2 *As the eyes of slaves look to the hand of their master, as the eyes of a maid look to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look to the Lord our God, till he shows us his mercy.*

Psa 123:3-4 *Have mercy on us, O Lord, have mercy on us, for we have endured much contempt. We have endured much ridicule from the proud, much contempt from the arrogant.*

Isa 55:7 *Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.*

4. There was perseverance. Jesus did not notice them immediately. He ignored their cry in order to test them. They needed to cry and cry for mercy in order to show their sincerity and to build up their sense of need. These two things are important to note. God does not always answer our prayers immediately. Sometimes we need to learn to trust Him more or to build up a greater sense of need and desperation. Forcing us to seek and knock and persevere does both. Once God answers our prayer, we learn to trust Him more. There is another crucial matter as well. Forcing us to stay on our knees and to persevere in prayer day after day keeps us in His presence. Deep concentrated prayer provides some of the sweetest communion and fellowship ever experienced, and such communion and fellowship is what God is after.

Luke 11:9 “So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.”

Deu 4:29 But if from there you seek the Lord your God, you will find him if you look for him with all your heart and with all your soul.

Jer 29:13 You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

5. There was *believing and obeying*. Jesus did not heal the lepers immediately. There were things they had to do, instructions that had to be obeyed, to have their needs met. They were to obey the law, go to the priest and report that they had been cleansed. If they obeyed the law and believed the Lord’s Word (promise of cleansing), they would be cleansed. Now note: they were cleansed “as they went.” This was a great legacy of faith to leave for succeeding generations (see Heb. 11:7f). Think about the great belief they had in Jesus’ word and power!

They had to strike out for the temple to be inspected and pronounced cleansed — and they were not even healed yet! While they were obeying the Jewish law of cleansing, they were to be healed (Lev. 14:1f).

John 4:50 Jesus replied, “You may go. Your son will live.” The man took Jesus at his word and departed.

Heb 5:9 And, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him.

Heb 11:6 And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

Psa 31:19 How great is your goodness, which you have stored up for those who fear you, which you bestow in the sight of men on those who take refuge in you.

Psa 34:22 The Lord redeems his servants; no one will be condemned who takes refuge in him.

Psa 37:5 Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him and he will do this.

LUKE 17:12–14 LEPROSY

Leprosy was the most terrible disease in the day of Jesus; it was greatly feared. It was disfiguring and sometimes fatal. In the Bible, leprosy is a type of sin.

1. The leper himself was considered *utterly unclean* — physically and spiritually. He could not approach within six feet of any person including family members. “The person with such an infectious disease must wear torn clothes, let his hair be unkempt, cover the lower part of his face and cry out, ‘Unclean! Unclean!’” (Lev. 13:45)

2. He was judged to be *dead – the living dead*. He had to wear a black garment so he could be recognized as from among the dead.
3. He was banished as an outcast, totally ostracized from society – earthly and heavenly. “As long as he has the infection he remains unclean. He must live alone; he must live outside the camp” (Lev. 13:46). He could not live within the walls of any city; his dwelling had to be outside the city gates.
4. He was thought to be polluted, incurable by any human means whatsoever. Leprosy could be cured by God and His power alone. (Note how Jesus proved His Messiahship and deity by healing the leper.)

Imagine the anguish and heartbreak of the leper, being completely cut off from family and friends and society. Imagine the emotional and mental pain. There are other recorded instances of lepers’ being healed (see Lk. 7:22; Mt. 8:1; 10:8; 11:5; Mk. 1:40; and perhaps Mt. 26:6; see Mk. 14:3). □

III. *Luke 17:15–19 The Lesson on Gratitude*

There are five points to note on the lesson of gratitude.

1. All the lepers were blessed and should have been thankful. This was true of the ten lepers, and it should be true of every man. Every one of the ten should have turned back and given thanks. They had all been blessed by Christ. Note they had all...
 - recognized their need
 - shown humility
 - cried for mercy
 - persevered
 - believed and obeyed

Their need had been met: they had all been healed. They now needed to turn back to give thanks and show appreciation.

Mat 5:16 “In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.”

Rom 15:6 So that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Cor 6:20 You were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your body.

Heb 13:15 Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise - the fruit of lips that confess his name.

Psa 9:11 Sing praises to the Lord, enthroned in Zion; proclaim among the nations what he has done.

Psa 35:28 My tongue will speak of your righteousness and of your praises all day long.

Psa 67:3 May the peoples praise you, O God; may all the peoples praise you.

2. One did give thanks. He was a Samaritan, the most despised and rejected of the men. (See *Samaritan*, Lk. 10:33.) Note what he did.
 - a. He praised God immediately. He shouted at the top of his lungs with the loudest voice possible. He *witnessed* for God. God had cleansed him and he wanted all to know the great mercy and love of God.
 - b. He worshipped Jesus. Note that he fell down on his face at the feet of Jesus. This was both humility and recognition of the power of God in Christ, two essentials for true spiritual cleansing (salvation, v. 19).
3. Most did not give thanks. They kept going about their business at hand. They did not stop what they were doing nor return to the Lord to give thanks. But note something: they did return to their former world, the lives they used to live.

Thought 1. There is a lesson in the behaviour of the Lepers. Christ expects us to return to Him continually, to return, glorify, and worship Him as the Source of our power and strength for life.

2 Tim 3:2 *People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy.*

Rom 1:21 *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.*

Deu 32:6 *Is this the way you repay the Lord, O foolish and unwise people? Is he not your Father, your Creator, who made you and formed you?*

4. The most rejected was the most thankful. Note the word foreigner (allogenes, v. 18). It means that he was a *foreigner* “to the covenants of promise, without hope, and without God in the world” (Eph. 2:12). He had felt his need more keenly and deeply. He knew he needed to be saved, genuinely saved — spiritually as well as physically. Despite the fact that he had never known the real promises of God and that he had been without God in this world, he now knew God. His heart just broke forth to give glory to God. Jesus had saved him from so much.

Col 1:12 *Giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.*

1 Pet 2:9 *But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.*

1 Th 5:18 *Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.*

5. The thankful man shall be the one truly saved — spiritually. The verb *made well* (sesoken) is literally “has saved you.” The man was clearly whole in body. This could be easily

seen, but one could not see the spiritual and inward cleansing. Jesus was telling the man that his sins were forgiven; He was giving the man the assurance of salvation.

Now note an important question. Had the nine been spiritually cleansed as well as physically cleansed? Or was it lack of being spiritually cleansed that kept them from returning to give thanks? Or was Jesus just giving this man a strong assurance of salvation?

We are not told, but one crucial factor is known. This man, the grateful and thankful leper, was the man who received *assurance of being cleansed and of having his sins forgiven*. The others did not. They failed to be grateful and thankful.

Another important fact to note is this: gratitude and praise bring assurance to the heart. They stir Christ to speak to the human heart; giving assurance of acceptance and cleansing.

2 Cor 5:17 *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!*

Titus 3:5 *He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.*

1 Pet 1:23 *For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.*

Psa 41:4 *I said, "O Lord, have mercy on me; heal me, for I have sinned against you."*

Isa 53:5 *But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. ■*

LUKE 10:33 SAMARITANS

Samaria was the central part of Palestine. Palestine was a small country, reaching only one hundred twenty miles north to south. The country was divided into three sections:

=> Judea, the southern section

=> Galilee, the northern section

=> Samaria, the central section, lying right between the two

There was bitter hatred between the Jews and the Samaritans. Two things in particular caused this hatred.

1. The Samaritans were mongrel or half-Jews, a mixed breed by birth. What had happened was this. Centuries before (about 720 BC) the King of Assyria had captured the ten tribes of Israel and deported a large number of the people,

scattering them throughout Media (see 2 Kng. 17:6-41). He then took people from all over the Assyrian empire and transplanted them into Samaria to repopulate the land. The result was only natural. Intermarriage took place and the people became a mixed breed, a breed including...

- The transplanted people
- The weak of the land who had been left behind
- The outcast and irreligious who had intermarried with the original Samaritans

The fact of a mixed breed, of course, infuriated the strict Jews who held to a pure race.

2. The Samaritans were mongrel or half-Jews, a mixed breed by religion as well as by birth. The transplanted heathen, of course, brought their gods with them. The God of Israel eventually won out, but the religion of the Samaritans never became pure Judaism. Three things happened to cause this.
 - a. When Ezra led the Jews back from exile in Babylon, the first thing the Jews did was to start rebuilding their temple. The Samaritans offered to help them but the Jews rejected their help, declaring that the Samaritans, through intermarriage and worship of false gods, had lost their purity and forfeited their right to worship the only true God. This severe denunciation, of course, embittered the Samaritans against the Jews in Jerusalem.
 - b. The Samaritans built a rival temple on Mount Gerizim to stand in competition with the Jewish temple at Jerusalem (see Jn. 4:20-21).
 - c. The Samaritans twisted both the Scripture and history to favour their own people and nation.
 - => They twisted Scripture by accepting only the first five books of the Bible, the Pentateuch. Just imagine! They missed all the richness and depth of the Psalms and prophets.
 - => They twisted history by claiming that three great events took place on Mt. Gerizim, events that set it apart as a place of worship. It was the place where Abraham offered Isaac, where Melchizedek met Abraham, and where Moses built his first altar after leading Israel out of Egyptian bondage. □