

The Thankful Leper

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By Dave Havir

BIG SANDY, Texas—You probably heard the story about the thankful leper. While Bible students often review the story around the national holiday called Thanksgiving, we should appreciate this story every day of the year.

Let's review the story found in Luke 17:11-19.

Lepers asked for healing

As Jesus was making His Way to Jerusalem, He passed through Samaria and Galilee (verse 11).

As He entered a village in that area, He saw 10 lepers who were keeping their distance from the crowd (verse 12).

There are a number of verses in the Bible that show that lepers kept themselves isolated from the general populace.

Leviticus 13:46—"He shall be unclean. All the days he has the sore he shall be unclean. He is unclean, and he shall dwell alone; his dwelling shall be outside the camp."

Numbers 5:2-4—"Command the children of Israel that they put out of the camp every leper, everyone who has a discharge, and whoever becomes defiled by a corpse. You shall put out both male and female; you shall put them outside the camp, that they may not defile their camps in the midst of which I dwell.' And the children of Israel did so, and put them outside the camp; as the Lord spoke to Moses, so the children of Israel did."

When the lepers saw Jesus, they asked Him to help them (Luke 17:13).

To the priest

The response that Jesus gave to the lepers makes more sense when people look at a little history.

Jesus responded by instructing the lepers to go to the priest (verse 14).

Why did they have to go to the priest?

Let's go back to Luke 5.

Jesus came upon a man who was "full of leprosy" (verse 12). When the man asked Jesus if He would heal him, the Messiah replied: "I will" (verse 13). And immediately the leprosy departed from him (also verse 13).

At that moment, Jesus gave two instructions to the man (verse 14).

- "Don't tell anyone about this."
- "Show yourself to the priest. Offer a gift as Moses commanded, and he will acknowledge that you have been healed."

Leviticus 14:2-3—"This shall be the law of the leper for the day of his cleansing: He shall be brought to the priest. And the priest shall go out of the camp, and the priest shall examine him . . . "

If the leprosy was healed, the rest of the chapter (Leviticus 14:4-57) gave explicit details.

Thankful Samaritan

Back to the story in Luke 17, we see that verse 14 tells us that "as they went, they were cleansed."

One of the 10 healed lepers turned back toward Christ and glorified God with a loud voice (verse 15).

But he did more than that. He fell down at Christ's feet and gave thanks (verse 16).

It is interesting to note that this thankful leper was a Samaritan (also verse 16).

As you might remember, it was not common for Jewish people and Samaritans to have dealings with each other (John 4:9).

At that point (in verse 17) Christ asked: "Where are the other nine?" Only this Samaritan returned to give glory to God (verse 18).

