

LUKE – CHAPTER 17

PRAY

Spend a few moments together in prayer asking that you would be open to God's voice speaking through his Word today.

READ

Take time to read through Luke chapter 17 together.

EXAMINE

For this study we will focus upon the story of the healing of the ten lepers. Leprosy, when it is used in Scripture, is used to describe any visual skin disease (not just Hansen's disease as we know it today). The visible nature of these disease, and concerns over them being contagious, drove carriers away from the crowds and towards each other. Note Luke's reference to Jesus' journey towards Jerusalem that started back in 9:51. Here, though, there is an additional geographical marker indicating Jesus travelled "along the border between Samaria and Galilee." This too emphasises the fact that this group of lepers were situated on the edge of society. They were in between lands and driven away from the crowds. Yet they are in the path of Jesus.

1. The lepers call out to Jesus to "have pity on us." In response Jesus tells them to "Go, show yourselves to the priests" (vs 14). They would most likely be used to people telling them to "Go away" but this time it includes the instruction to show themselves to the priests. What does their reaction demonstrate about these lepers?

*The lepers go **before** they are healed. They are faced with a faith predicament. They can stay and demand to be healed **first**. Or, go **in faith** trusting Jesus at his word. They chose the latter and are healed on the way.*

2. Luke tells us that one of them returns to Jesus "praising God in a loud voice." He throws himself at Jesus' feet in thanksgiving. Luke then adds the comment that "he was a Samaritan." Why?

Luke has been concerned to demonstrate the inclusion of all people throughout his gospel, particularly those on the margins. Here it is the Samaritan who goes above and beyond the instruction and returns to give praise to God because of his healing.

3. Consider the extravagance of the Samaritan's response. He's likely not been around any other people beside other lepers since his diagnosis, and here he is at the feet of Jesus. He is still a "Samaritan" yet worships Jesus, who is a Jew. What does his disregard for social rules, and even the command of Jesus to go to the priests, reveal about how this man's life is changed?

Technically, he disobeys Jesus' instruction to go to the priests for certification that he has been healed (which would allow him to re-enter society again). Instead he throws all "correct" behaviour aside to

demonstrate his love for God and his thankfulness to Jesus. His worship is extravagant and unashamed.

4. “Where are the other nine?” Jesus asks. Well, they were likely *obeying* Jesus’ command to go to priests for confirmation that they are healed. Think back to the story of Mary and Martha (10:38-42). Once again Luke is comparing a “good” choice with a “better” choice. Have you ever been faced with choices between “good” and “better”?

It’s important to acknowledge that the other nine were still faithful in their response. They did what Jesus commanded and were healed. The Samaritan leper’s response, though, went above and beyond the command and improvised what was better. Sometimes free-formed thankfulness trumps faithful obedience.

5. The encouragement to “Rise and go, your faith has made you well” has been said by Jesus to two other people in the gospel already (see 7:50 and 8:48). Compare the three people that Jesus said this to. What is similar about these people?

All three are people society would have rejected. All three are outcasts. All three are at the feet of Jesus. All three break societal rules to get there. All three receive these words as comfort from Jesus in response to their faithful response.

REFLECT

1. Who are the people who live “along the border” in our society?
2. Do we walk where Jesus walked – that is, along the borders where those on the fringe of society live?
3. Does your worship go beyond faithful obedience (which is good) and move into improvised thankfulness (which is better)?

IMAGINE

1. List three things that have really stood out from this study.
2. Without worrying about any restrictions, what would the church look like if those things were always present? You might like to consider this from a global or local perspective (or both).

PERFORM

1. What action can you take today (taking account of real world restrictions) that is a step towards that dream becoming a reality?

PRAY

Spend time in prayer for each other, particularly for the actions you've committed to.

For next week....

1. Long Slow Read (LSR). Read chapter 18 slowly over the course of week. You can do this as many times as you like.
2. Tempo Read – Read and reread Chapter 18 several times. Take note of verses/phrases/characters that stand out – e.g. Jesus, Holy Spirit, poor, women.
3. Repeats – Choose one verse to memorise. Repeat it many times throughout the day and over the course of a week or so. Meditate on the verse and pray it in and out. Repeat the verse many times throughout your day.