

08222023 **Can anyone be too far gone for God to reach?** Well we will answer that question today as we examine the narrative given in Luke 17 about some really messed up people! Lets jump in The back story... Jesus had previously sent out 70 of his followers to the towns and villages he would visit on his way to his final destination the Cross in Jerusalem. Their commission was to heal the sick and say, and did so in Jesus' name, demonstrating the connection between Jesus and saying "The kingdom of God has come near you" (Luke 10:9).. So the people were expecting Jesus to come thru...

In Luke 17 we pick up Jesus traveling in the border area at the south of Galilee, entering the north end of the area called Samaria where the Samaritans lived. As he is getting closer and closer to the final destination The Cross in Jerusalem.

Lets pick up the story...

*NLT LK 17: <sup>11</sup> As Jesus continued on toward Jerusalem, he reached the border between Galilee and Samaria. <sup>12</sup> As he entered a village there, ten men with leprosy stood at a distance, <sup>13</sup> crying out, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!"* Accounts of the healing of a lepers is found in three of the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke) .

- As Jesus comes to this border village between Samaria and Galilee, he encounters ten leprous men.
- At the time, leprosy was a very horrible untreatable disease. The leprosy bacilli kills the nerves in the hands and feet. Causing their fingers, toes, hands and feet, legs and arms, to lose their sense of touch and feeling. They would damage themselves and not know it and nor treat wounds causing infection leading often times to gangrene and the loss of their appendages. Ultimately over time leading to systemic infection and waiting only the final release of death

- finally relief in death.
- From the time their skin disease was diagnosed, they were cut off from society, Called untouchables they lived outside the cities especially if they were walled. They were ostracized socially and religiously, forbidden any physical contact with another human being... forced to live on their own in caves or huts away from towns and usually with each-other.
- Rabbinic law mandated lepers keeping a certain distance from all healthy people usually at a minimum 50 feet..and yelling unclean...to keep all a safe distance from them.
- A fortunate few had relatives who would leave food for them, everyone got what they could. As They weren't allowed to close enough to beg for a living. Poor Ragged, thin, rejected. Lepers.
- They were the ultimate outcasts. Too far gone only a miracle from God could heal them...and it often appeared that He did not want them as healing very rarely happened in fact in all the OT ...I can only recall Naaman being healed. Yet leprosy was given a number of times as a punishment of God...one of the reasons this healing is recorded by three Gospel writers...
- **But that is not the only issue: The story does not reveal this yet...but at least one of the lepers is a Samaritan... potentially all were since they lived in that area...**The Bible mentions plenty of stories about Samaritans, and the hatred between Jews and Samaritans features prominently in the Gospels.

To explain the origins of this hate, we must go back to the days of the kings. After King Solomon ruled over the Israelites –his **son Rehoboam in the tenth century BC made a horrible decision which led to a split in**

which the kingdom was divided into the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah, each with its own king. Samaria was the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel. Jerusalem was the capital of Judea.. Both kingdoms devolved into corruption and sin, despite repeated warnings from prophets sent by God. Thus, God warned, they would be overtaken by conquerors. About two hundred years later

**In 721 B.C., the northern kingdom of Israel fell to the Assyrians. Many of the people of Israel were led off to Assyria as captives, but some remained in the land and intermarried with foreigners planted there by the Assyrians. **These half-Jewish, half-Gentile pagan people became known as the Samaritans.****

**135 years after that the southern kingdom of Judah fell to the Babylonian Empire the temple was destroyed, and the city walls torn down.** Later Babylon had fallen to the Persian Empire. Nehemiah, a Jew, was able to return to Jerusalem to rebuild. However, the Samaritans remaining in the land opposed the rebuilding efforts and caused problems for Nehemiah and his fellow workers (Nehemiah 6:1-14).

**This was the beginning of a long-lasting hatred between Jews and Samaritans. This led to further ill-will as the two sects were established in the land in opposition to one another religiously.**

**But it gets worse...The Samaritans, created a religion for themselves that the Jews considered heresy. They had their own version of the Torah, but rejected the writings of the prophets and Jewish traditions. **The Samaritans saw themselves as the true descendants of Israel and considered the Jerusalem temple and Levitical priesthood illegitimate.** They established as their center of worship a temple on Mount Gerizim, claiming it was where Moses had originally intended for the Israelites to worship.**

**To the Jews, a Samaritan was more revolting than a Gentile (pagan); they were half-breeds who defiled the true religion.**

**According to the Religious...a Samaritan was to far gone for even God....So These lepers were both diseased, ethnically mixed, heretics, hated by the Jews....and dserve nothing from God ...the ultimate outcasts...**

- **The point is that Jesus a Jew, is under no obligation to heal these ten lepers and they know it but they also Know their only hope is a miracle...and obviously they had heard of Jesus doing these things... but maybe Jesus will have mercy**
- **So they call out ...loudly...and he calls loudly back across the expanse between he and where the lepers stood.**

*NLT LK 17:14 <sup>14</sup> He looked at them and said, "Go show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were cleansed of their leprosy.*

- **Jesus sends them to the temple in Jerusalem as an outcast to show himself to those that hate them and the feeling is mutual...**
- **Thus making the lepers or at least one who is a Samaritan ...to go against all of Samaritan theology, cultural, social, religious upbringing while still diseased... an untouchable...if they had the faith to go**
- **\*\*\*\*Jesus was going to do much more than just heal diseased leper...though the lepers knew it not...he just had to obey...and being absolutely desperate... what the Heck! As they were already living in Hell!!**
- **They turned south and left...on the way they were cured...**

- **What they did not know theologically they did get who Jesus was right!...**
- **First**, they recognized Jesus as more than a mere man. they called Him **Master**, using a title which is usually used by disciples. **They saw Him as One who had the power to heal them.**
- **Second**, notice that their need drove him to Jesus. That is one of the reasons that the Lord allows bad things to come into our lives. It draws us to Himself...for more than we ask
- **Third**...they exhibited a degree of faith. Their faith was demonstrated by the fact that they believed Jesus could and possibly would have mercy on them ... their **faith**... was demonstrated that if they did ask something if he agreed it would be accomplished...
- **lastly**... they went after it...being decisive is the key..so many people find out where the answers are...but won't pull the trigger to go... But without initiative you are left with theoretical answers...only head knowledge

*Lets break this down...they did not know all Jesus was doing but he did...*

- **Jesus does not immediately heal these lepers. He is able to. He has already healed a number of people. But instead He gives them some instructions.** He tells them to "Go and show yourselves to the priests."
- **One of the duties of the priest was to act as the local health official. The priest was authorized to examine a person and to declare him either clean or unclean**
- **Jesus sends them while still unclean... to the Priest in Jerusalem who will verify the healing...(which could only be done by God)**

and offer the Sacrifices prescribed by Moses (trespass and sin offerings)... and the Priests will reinstate you into the community socially and religiously.

- Leviticus 13 and 14 gives some very explicit instructions as to the sacrifices and rituals that were to be invoked in the case of a leper that had been healed. But this was not a common occurrence. The last time that anyone could remember a leper being healed outside of Jesus, had been in the days of Elisha. But now Jesus was on the scene and He was healing lepers. They are told to go and to show themselves to the priests. For it would be a testimony to them that the Kingdom of God is near...mainly the King from there is here!!

Can you imagine the reaction of the priests? They have to go back to the Scriptures and look up Leviticus 14 to check and see what are the sacrifices and rituals to be used for a healed leper. This would not be a passage that they utilized on a regular basis. And the fact that they have to do so now is a mute testimony to the coming of Jesus.

if miraculously the leprosy healed...

*NLT LEV 14: 1 And the LORD said to Moses, <sup>2</sup> “The following instructions are for those seeking ceremonial purification from a skin disease.<sup>[a]</sup> Those who have been healed must be brought to the priest, <sup>3</sup> who will examine them at a place outside the camp. If the priest finds that someone has been healed of a serious skin disease,*

Jesus by healing them outside the camp...the village acted as the priest...then he sends them to the priests to verify the healing...thereby leaving a witness to them...

- **So the healing of the leper is a sign of what the mission of Jesus is about. Jesus admits the most outsider. Which will blow the mind of the most insider. Maybe the insider was the most outsider!!**

*NLT HEB 13: 12 So also Jesus suffered and died outside the city gates to make his people holy by means of his own blood. 13 So let us go out to him, outside the camp, and bear the disgrace he bore. 14 For this world is not our permanent home; we are looking forward to a home yet to come.*

- This is our sign. It tells us how Jesus has in fact come to live on the outside the outside of Heven...the earth... to find the outsider the earthling ...then brings the outsider inside of heaven... **The whole human race has lived 'outside the camp' since we were expelled from the paradise in which we were created.**
- He went outside to bring the outsiders in....may we be of the same mind.... Sometimes sad to see insiders those insdie the camp...church..afraid to go to those outside the camp!

- **One leper recognized this...he was outside but Jesus let him inside...he went back to thak him**

*NLT LK 17: 15 One of them, when he saw that he was healed, came back to Jesus, shouting, "Praise God!" 16 He fell to the ground at Jesus' feet, thanking him for what he had done. This man was a Samaritan. As the ten left to obey the injunction of Jesus, they were healed.*

- **They acted in obedience and they all received grace.** At this point, one of the ten stopped and turned back and returned to Jesus to give thanks. **He happened to be a Samaritan. He is not just acting out of obedience; he is acting out of belonging.**

- Why did not the other nine want that full healing?

NLT *LK 17*:<sup>17</sup> Jesus asked, “Didn’t I heal ten men? Where are the other nine? <sup>18</sup> Has no one returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?” <sup>19</sup> And Jesus said to the man, “Stand up and go. Your faith has healed you.<sup>[c]</sup>”

- **Where are the nine? again living their own lives! Did they go to the Temple as directed? ...did they not. Did they go on with their same old lost lives Except healed...but ultimately still diseased...? Did they share the Good news around town, Of what Jesus did for them ?**
- **I don’t know...but I know the answer to this question...who is better off ? A foreigner to God who has been physically healed as a gift of mercy, but still remains a foreigner to God? Or a foreigner who is healed and is no longer a foreigner to God?**
- **Or a foreigner to God who is not healed but is no longer a foreigner to God?**
- **Healings are awesome. ...but what about when Jesus chose not to heal..but you are not a foreigner to God? You still win!!**
- **Sometimes, Jesus lets the bad guys win....John the Baptist but you are not a foreigner to God... You Win**
- **What if my prayer is not answered like I want it to be? but you are not a foreigner to God... You Win**
- **sometimes Jesus lets you stay sick...and even die... but you are not a foreigner to God... You Win**

**this is the truth ...any miracle outside the miracle of salvation...has an expiration date...we all leave this place...the most important miracle is the miracle that Jesus wants us with him... a foreigner**



**the ultimate outcast...is no longer a foreigner...So is anyone to far gone to be saved? Jesus does not think so...**

Peter does not think so...

NLT ACTS 2:21 But everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'

Paul does not think so ....

NLT ROMANS 13 For "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

so if you are far away...today is the day to call out....

**end**