

THE TEN LEPERS // Luke 17:11-19

Message from the series, The Gospel of Luke

There are five accounts of miracles in this travel narrative section of Luke (11: 14-23, 13: 10-17, 14: 1-6, 17: 11-19, 18: 35-43). This particular miracle, the healing of ten lepers, comes just before a passage in which Jesus teaches about the kingdom of heaven, which is the rule and reign of Christ in the heart of his people. This juxtaposition points to the connection between the miracle and the teaching: this miracle is not just a common grace blessing on these lepers—it is a picture of how the kingdom of God operates.

Main Idea: The advancement of the kingdom of God is an inside job.

This miracle is not truly one miracle but two, one that changes external circumstances and one that changes that which is internal, in the very heart.

1. The First Miracle: Ten Lepers Healed (v. 11-14)

As Jesus is entering a village, a group of lepers who are forced to live outside the gates cry out to him. They don't cry "unclean"—they cry "mercy." They are desperate for Jesus' help, and, as is described elsewhere in the gospels, Jesus is moved to compassion. When he tells them to go show themselves to the priest, he is asking them to do something they cannot do. Just as in Luke 6, when he tells the man with the withered hand to stretch it out, he is commanding the impossible. A leper could not come before the priest because he was, by definition, unclean (Leviticus 13). But, as with the man with the withered hand, Jesus' command also comes with the power to obey—they cannot fulfill the command in their own power, but in his power they can. This gives us a picture of what happens when God saves the lost—he is calling to a graveyard, commanding the dead to repent and believe—something only possible because he has made it possible. The Spirit of God is commanding you to repent and believe.

2. The Second Miracle: One Man Saved (v. 15-19)

The real miracle is that one of these men saw, turned back, praised God, fell on his face, and gave thanks. Instead of continuing with the other lepers, he turned back to Jesus. Did he disobey the command to show himself to the priest? No, rather, he alone recognized that in Jesus he had just seen the priest, the true, great high priest (Hebrews 4: 14). The miracle is not just external, but internal also. In the English translation, Jesus tells him that his faith has made him "well," but the Greek word used here, *sōzō*, refers to salvation (Luke 7: 50, 8: 48, 18: 42). It is not just a wellness of the body, but a picture of the soul moving from light to darkness, death to life, lost to found. It would be easy to see this passage as merely another account of Jesus' compassion on the suffering, his miracle-working nature, and his bestowal of common-grace blessings. But the real story is the gospel—that Jesus came to seek and to save the lost, and that he will save his people from their sins (Matt 1: 21, Romans 5: 9).

Are we one-miracle people or two-miracle people? Has God given you eyes to see? Have you turned from sin to Jesus? Do you find yourself in a posture of clinging to the feet of Jesus? If so, how did that come to be? It was through the working of that second kind of miracle, the kind that calls sinners to salvation and empowers them to obey the call.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does this passage teach us about the advancement of the kingdom of heaven?
2. Why is it easier to see the first miracle in this passage than the second? Are our minds primarily focused on the external or the internal?
3. What would it mean to live our life clinging to the feet of Jesus?