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## Questions Jesus Asked: Three Questions for the Health of Our Souls

**Luke 17:11-19**

On the way to Jerusalem he was passing along between Samaria and Galilee. And as he entered a village, he was met by ten lepers, who stood at a distance and lifted up their voices, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." When he saw them he said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they went they were cleansed. Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice; and he fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving him thanks. Now he was a Samaritan. Then Jesus answered, "Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" And he said to him, "Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well."

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This man is known as the Good Shepherd. He lived some 2,000 years ago, and He walked this earth and He did miraculous things. And He did something for humanity which humanity could not do for itself.

He's also known as the greatest leader of all time. He's the most written-about, talked-about, influential man in all of human history. I call Him the Shepherd of my soul, the One who leads me, as many down through history have claimed. Even the great King David said, "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want."

We are looking at some things this man said when He was here on the earth, specifically questions that He asked individuals while He was here.

Today we are looking at three rapid-fire rhetorical questions that this man asked of one man after a certain incident occurred in numerous people's lives.

Let's look at the text.

On His way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. This was a tense border. The Samaritans and the Galileans didn't get along. They would travel on the border here, and the Jewish people in Galilee did not think very fondly of the Samaritans. And so the border was guarded. It was actually an area where you crossed over. People knew the division that was there.

Jesus was going to Jerusalem, in Galilee there. Now, because the border is an area of tension, there would also be a place where people could sort of hide. People who wanted to play it safe and just sort of be calm would stay in the cities. They wouldn't often go to the border. But it was a safe place for people who needed quarantine or who were outcasts.

So as Jesus was walking along the border, He was going into a village. There were ten men who had leprosy that met Him. They stood at a distance because they understood the idea that some diseases might be transmitted by closeness. We talked a lot about this in 2020 here in our world today. Social distancing—it's nothing new. It's under trial, I guess, right now on how wisely we handled this.

But right now we're reading about this group of people who were socially distanced by the Jewish laws. They were to stay isolated by themselves, and if they were going into public, they were to cry out, "Unclean!" and announce their uncleanness.

So they stood at a distance from Jesus and cried out in a loud voice, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us. Have mercy on us." The outcasts, the sick.

When He saw them, Jesus said to them, "Go, show yourselves to the priests."

I want you to understand what's happening here. Jesus is inviting these ten lepers to be courageous and, in a sense, break the law, break the social norms, break the mores. Jesus is inviting them, in their desperation, to go into the city, into the temple, and stand before the priests. And they have a decision to make whether or not they're going to obey Jesus, whether they're going to play it safe and just say that's not an appropriate thing to do, or whether they're going to take Jesus at His word and just do what He says.

I don't know if you've ever been in a position like this, but sometimes God puts us in positions where He tests our obedience and our faithfulness to Him.

When He saw them, He said to them, "Go, show yourselves to the priests."

Well, they must have had a little group courage, group tenacity, group strength, because they got up and went, headed toward the city. And as they went, the Bible says they were cleansed. They were cleansed. Some translations say healed. They were healed. All ten of them touched by God.

One of the things I love about this text is that it shows us that God is no respecter of persons. You and I will never meet a person who is not made in the image of Almighty God. Even if they're an outcast, even if they're socially isolated, they are made in the Imago Dei.

He pours out His common grace. This God, who is no respecter of persons, pours out His common grace on all people everywhere through all time. He causes the sun to rise on the righteous and the unrighteous. He is hospitable to all. He gives all men life and breath and everything else. We have nothing without Him and His goodness and His kindness and His mercy for humanity.

All people He is hospitable to. In His goodness, God dispenses an amazing amount of common grace in the world. And for these ten, He shared some very specific grace, a healing grace, a touch from His hand.

I can imagine that they were stunned or shocked by this experience. But now we see a God who does math, a God who counts. He's, of course, the Creator of math, the greatest mathematician of all time. And He starts to do some counting for us.

The Spirit inspires Luke to write these words: "One of them."

One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back praising God in a loud voice. I wonder why the Spirit does math for us here. Basic math would say we're talking about 10%.

One of ten returned to give thanks, not only praising God in a loud voice, but it says he threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked Him.

"Thank You, Jesus. Thank You. You have poured out specific grace on me."

He was exuberant. It wasn't a diplomatic thank-you. He threw himself at Jesus' feet.

And listen: he was a Samaritan.

What's happening here is Jesus is acknowledging and healing one who was an outcast from the Jews. And he returns to give praise to Jesus. And Jesus is pointing it out for us because what He's doing is He's undergirding right here His tension with the spiritual leaders of the day. It was the Samaritan, the one whom the Jews looked down on, that did what was right here. He's the one who returned and gave thanks.

Certainly, God is no respecter of persons. But we also learn in this text that there is a deep propensity in the heart of humanity to take God's goodness toward us for granted. We have an ability to experience the goodness of God and take it like it's normal, like we deserve it, like this is our privilege, our right to have life, to be free to speak as we want.

But friends, these are gifts from Almighty God, and His grace to us is immeasurable. Here in this place, it's unbelievable—the freedoms we enjoy, the presence of God that we've tasted, the forgiveness of sins that many of us know. And yet sometimes we have a deep propensity to take it for granted, to be ho-hum.

So Jesus now asks three rhetorical questions.

Now again, questions are to get us to reflect on ourselves, to think. Rhetorical questions are especially to focus our minds on a specific topic so that we might dig a little deeper in our understanding of these things.

So Jesus, continuing with His mathematics, asks the first question:

"Were not all ten cleansed?"

Didn't I bless ten people? Didn't I pour out My grace on all of them?

"Where are the other nine?"

Where's the 90%?

"Has no one returned to give praise to God except this foreigner?"

The people in My own family not giving Me praise and thanks.

Why is He so concerned, friends, about the attitude of our hearts toward Him? Why?

God is no respecter of persons. He pours out His grace everywhere, on people we don't like even. There is a deep propensity in the human heart to take our blessings for granted and not give God thanks.

But we also learn this: God has a deep concern over the condition of our hearts. In this text, we learn this especially regarding our propensity toward ungratefulness and entitlement and ingratitude.

Why?

Because He cares for us. He loves us.

His encouraging gratitude in our hearts for all of His goodness, it's not for Him. It's for us. He doesn't need anything. But when you and I become ungrateful, it is toxic to our souls. Toxic.

That's why Paul wrote to the believers in Thessalonica:

"We urge you, brothers and sisters, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them. See that no one repays evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone. Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, and give thanks in all circumstances. For this is God's will for us in Christ Jesus. And do not quench the Spirit."

What happens if a person turns away from God and becomes entitled and ungrateful? It's happening all around our culture. It's described in Romans chapter 1.

Here's what happens. God backs up and His wrath is revealed. Passive wrath, where He just lets human beings go and does not restrain their fleshly natures.

When we do this, the passive wrath of God is revealed. And here's what happens: people who experience God's goodness, His kindness, and His mercy refuse to honor God or give thanks to Him.

And so He turns them over to their flesh, and their thinking becomes futile, crusty, catastrophic, negative, pessimistic, futile thinking. And then, because the thinking guides the hearts, their foolish hearts get darkened. And eventually they become ruled by their fleshly natures and even start to claim identities based on the lusts of their flesh.

And the Bible calls that insanity.

They exchange the glory of God for pursuing and idolizing and lusting after created things.

Friends, God in His mercy has asked us these questions:

"I've been good to all ten. Weren't all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Where is the thanks and praise and worship that should be due Me in the hearts of people that I've been so good to?"

God invites us to praise Him and thank Him and give Him honor for His goodness.

Enter His courts with thanksgiving.