

ARE YOU THE **ONE**—OR ONE OF THE **NINE**?

Most of you know that I have this “quirk” about **not liking to preach** sermons I’ve already preached before! But I will—on occasion—use **the introduction** of a previously preached sermon—and that’s what you are **getting today!** It was from 7 years ago, though, so a fair number of you weren’t here then. And for those of you that were, you probably forgot I shared this with you—just like I did!

So now that I’m done with the **intro to the intro**, here goes!

Did you ever hear about the **ungrateful lady** at the beach who had her little boy with her? They were both too close to the water, and a big wave came in. By the time the water went back into the sea, she realized her son was missing!

She looked all around for her little boy and cried out: “Melvin...Melvin...where are you, Melvin?” She realized he had been swept out to sea! So she prayed, “Oh, dear and merciful Father, please...please...take pity on me and return my beautiful child. I will promise eternal gratitude to you...I’ll never cheat on my income tax again. I’ll be kind to my mother-in-law. I’ll give up smoking...Anything...Anything... only please grant me this one favor and return my son.”

Just then the next wave washed in, and there he was, safe and sound! Then she looks up to God and says, “**But he had a hat!**” (“The Sin of Ingratitude,” Jerry Newcome, Christian Post, accessed 16 Nov 18). Although we laugh at **how ridiculous** that would be, all too often we are just like that woman—never quite satisfied with the blessings we have from God!

This morning, we are going to be looking at the familiar account of Jesus’ cleansing of the ten lepers as found in Luke 17. Please take your Bibles and turn there—and follow along as I read verses 11-19. The challenge and question for each of us today is found in the title (which comes from vs 17): “Are You the **One**—or One of the **Nine**?”

1. The picture

The picture isn’t overly complicated, is it? Ten men with leprosy meet Jesus and ask for healing. He **heals all ten**, but **only one** returns to Jesus to personally thank Him. And there you have it—the shortest sermon I have ever preached! I’m kidding, of course!

First, let’s consider... A. The disease

What is leprosy? Without getting too technical—or spending too much time on it—here’s a recap from **Dr. Alan Gillen** (quoted in “A Thanksgiving Parable,” Tom Pennington, Countryside Bible Church, accessed 20 Nov 25).

--Although it is commonly thought of as a disease of **the skin**, it is actually a disease of the **nervous system**.

--“Patients with leprosy experience disfigurement of the skin and bones, twisting of the limbs and curling of the fingers to form the characteristic claw hand. Facial changes include thickening of the outer ear and collapsing of the nose.”

--Because it attacks the nerves, people with leprosy lose their sense of feeling—which in turn often leads to them injuring themselves—and not even realizing it! (<https://countrysidebible.org/sermons/20221120a-128475>)

Next, B. The despair

What made leprosy—now called Hansen’s disease—so bad in Jesus’ time? It’s kind of like the dreaded “c” word—**cancer**—is in our day and age. But it **was worse** than cancer in two ways.

First, cancer in our day and age is **treatable**. There are various treatments for cancer—chemo, surgery, radiation—that in many cases can “knock-out” cancer and put it in remission for a number of years.

That was **not the case with leprosy** in Jesus’ day! It was **always incurable**; it **always** resulted in **death!**

The Jewish historian Josephus wrote that lepers were treated “as if they were, in effect, dead men, no different than a corpse.” (<https://countrysidebible.org/sermons/20221120a-128475>)

A **second** difference is this: cancer doesn’t require you to let your loved one **die alone**—but **leprosy did!** Listen as I read Leviticus 13:45-46 “And the leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put **a covering upon his upper lip**, and shall cry, Unclean, unclean. ⁴⁶ All the days wherein the plague shall be in him he shall be defiled; he is unclean: he **shall dwell alone; without the camp shall his habitation** be.”

What does it mean to “**put a covering upon his upper lip**”? Commentators differ as to the exact meaning, but it was a **sign of mourning**. They either shaved off their mustache...or put their hand over their mouths...or pulled up their outer robe to cover their mouth. Not only that, they had to yell: “Unclean, unclean” when anyone approached them!

And that is why—in Luke 17:12—it says that the lepers “stood afar off.” It also seems possible that at this time, lepers were living together in colonies—or several of them in one home. The last leper colony in the U.S. was in Hawaii—and it closed in 1969. Those of us who went to the Men’s Retreat in September heard quite a bit about it from our guest speaker who was from Hawaii and personally visited the place where the colony had been.

Now, C. The deliverance

In vs 13, we see them asking for mercy; in vs 14, Jesus says: “Go shew yourselves unto the priests.” **Why** did Jesus say that? Because at that time—according to the law of Moses—only priests could pronounce someone “clean” that had been “unclean.”

--Vs 14 again. “And it came to pass, that, **as they went**, they were cleansed.” In other words, they **weren’t cleansed first**—then hurried off to find the priests! They **believed** what Jesus said—and **obeyed** what Jesus said—**first**—and were healed **on the way!**

So there’s the picture; next let’s consider.... **2. The praise**

How many **were cleansed**? All ten, right?

How many **praised Jesus** for being healed? **Only one!** Ten are healed, but **only one** returns to **praise and thank Jesus** for his healing. Notice the characteristics of this man’s praise.

--It was **immediate!** Vs 15 – “And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back...”

--It was **unrestrained!** What does that mean? It means he **wasn’t bashful** about it!

The end of vs 15 says, “...and with **a loud voice** glorified God,”

--It was **humble!** Vs 16: “And fell down on his face at His [Jesus’] feet, giving Him thanks:” If that is not humility...and gratitude...and worship, I don’t know what is!

How long did this Samaritan’s humility and unrestrained thankfulness last? We don’t know because the Bible doesn’t say! But...it should have lasted the **rest of his life**, right?

My guess is that some of you have already noticed **some parallels** between Jesus’ “cleansing” of the ten lepers of their leprosy—and us being “cleansed” from the penalty of our sins! But there are also some **peculiarities**—some differences—and that is what we are going to look at next. Rather than look at them one at a time, though, we are going to consider both the similarities and differences together.

3. The parallels—and peculiarities—between the cleansing of the lepers and salvation

Once again, let’s start first with... A. The “disease”

1) Similarities. How was leprosy—in Jesus’ time—**similar to** the “disease” of sin that we have?

--It **could** affect **anyone**—and **everyone!** In other words, **no one was exempt!** Just like sin, leprosy wasn’t limited to a certain age...or education level...or gender...or income level...or social standing.

--A **second similarity** is this: In order to be **cured from** leprosy, you needed to recognize that **you had** leprosy! ‘But Pastor, I thought you said leprosy was **incurable?**’ It was incurable—by man and medicine!

But God **miraculously** cured it from time to time—just like He did here! No one, however, was cured from leprosy if they **wouldn't admit** they had it!

The same is true of salvation from the penalty of our sins! Can people be cleansed from their sins—can they have the penalty of their sins removed—if they **refuse to admit** they need to be cleansed and healed?

No, they can't! In order to be **forgiven by God**, we need to first understand that we have **sinned against God!**

2) Differences. In addition to the similarities between the disease of leprosy and the “disease” of sin, there are also some **major differences**.

--**Not everyone** had the disease of leprosy—but **everyone has** the “disease” of sin! Why? Because our **sin nature** is something we are **born with!** We have it—**no matter what**—because we inherit it from our parents!

--Along those same lines, the disease of leprosy could **be avoided**—but the “disease” of sin and our sin nature cannot! Not everyone **got leprosy**—but everyone **has sinned!**

--A **last** major difference between the two is this: people **couldn't deny—or forget**—that they had leprosy! You **couldn't forget** because you never got to see your loved ones—except **possibly at a distance**—and you **couldn't deny** it because it **was impossible not to notice** your hands and feet becoming more and more **deformed**—and more and more **useless!**

Do people **deny** they have sin? **A few do**—but most don't! Most people **will admit that they sin**—but they don't think their sin is that bad! **A leper would never say**, “It's only a **small blemish** on my skin! A small blotch won't **kill me**; I will soon get better!”

A sinner, however, often **does have** that mindset! “It is only a **small sin**—and I'm not a **bad sinner** compared to my friend, neighbor, or relative. “Not only that”—**they wrongly think**—“God only **sends the bad sinners** to hell—not a **'good' sinner** like me!”

Next, let's consider ... **B. The despair**

1) Similarities. How was the despair associated **with leprosy** similar to the despair associated **with sin?**

--Leprosy in Jesus' time required that you **leave your home**—and live away from your family. **Does sin tear** families apart? It does, doesn't it?

--Leprosy in Jesus' time required that you **separate from society**. You didn't have the freedom to go into **town and shop** at the market...or go to the **synagogue**...or be part of the crowd that sat on the hillside and **listened to Jesus teach!** Does sin—and the consequences of it—sometimes result in the loss of our freedom to do certain things in society? It does, doesn't it?

--The biggest reason for despair **for the leper**, of course, was his **certain death!** His disease was incurable; he was **going to die**—period! And the **same is true of sinners!** Every one of us will **physically** die someday—unless, of course, **Jesus comes back** and takes His born-again, blood bought children to heaven before the start of the seven-year Tribulation!

2) Differences. What are the **differences** between the despair associated with leprosy and the despair associated with being a sinner?

--The major difference between the two is this: leprosy could only kill **the body**—but sin “kills” both **the soul and body!** What do I mean by that? Notice what Jesus says in **Luke 12:4** “And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that **kill the body**, and after that have no more that they can do.”

What does that mean? That means the **worst thing** another person can do to you is **kill** your body! And the same was true of **leprosy**—it could only kill their **body!** Although leprosy brought about a physical separation from their family—and eventually **physical death**—it did not impact where the non-physical part of them—their soul—would spend eternity!

Notice now what Jesus says in **Luke 12:5** “But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear Him, which after He hath killed hath **power to cast into** hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear Him.”

Who does Jesus say we should fear? The One who determines where we will spend eternity and that, of course, is God!

Lastly, let's consider the similarities and differences when it comes to... C. Deliverance

1) Similarities. What are the similarities between being healed from leprosy—and being healed from the “disease” of sin? Here are three:

--It involved **a miracle!** I already touched on this, but here it is again: in Jesus' time, **only God** could heal leprosy! The only accounts of leprosy being healed in the Bible was when God—or God in the flesh, meaning Jesus—did it!

The same is true of our “disease” of sin—it takes a **supernatural act of God** for us to be cleansed! How is salvation a miracle? The better question is, **how is it not?!**

--Only God could make a way for the Eternal Creator—Jesus Christ—to take on the form of a human!

--Only God could place the punishment for **every sin of every person born**—and yet to be born—on Himself and pay the penalty that all of those countless people deserved to pay!

--Only God could destroy the power of death by raising from the dead in a body that cannot and will not die!

--Only God can convince hard-hearted—and pig-headed—sinners that they are a heart-beat away from hell!

--And only God can take away the **pain** of sin and **power** of sin and make us a brand-new person by **living inside of us!** How is all that **not a miracle of God!**

--Not only does healing from leprosy—and sin—involve **a miracle**, but it also involves **mercy**.

Notice again what it says in the middle of vs 13: “Jesus, Master, **have mercy** on us.”

Does **salvation** from the penalty of sin involve the **mercy** of God? It sure does—and I would argue **more mercy** than being saved from leprosy! Why do I say that? Because mercy is the **withholding** of judgment—and we **definitely deserve** judgment!

But sadly, many people don't understand how **deserving they are** of judgment!

--They don't understand—or agree with God—that their sin—**even one**—disqualifies them from heaven!

--They don't agree with God when God declares in Romans 6:23 “That the wages of sin is death”—the penalty we owe for our sin—is death—and that “death” does not just mean a cessation of life. “Death” in the Bible refers to separation—**eternal separation from God** in a place called hell!

--And—somehow—they think **they can decide** why God is going to let them into **His Heaven!**

But it obviously doesn't work that way! **God** sets the criteria for getting into **His Heaven**—not man!

What are the requirements for getting into Heaven? There is **only one**: you have to be **perfect!** But none of us are! **Romans 3:10** “As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:” **Romans 3:23** “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”

And that is where the **mercy of God** comes in! As already mentioned, the penalty of our sin was placed on Jesus—and Jesus the perfect One died as our substitute and paid our penalty for us!

Here's one more similarity between being cleansed from leprosy and being forgiven for our sins: **it involved faith and doing what Jesus said!** What were the lepers told to do? Vs 14 “Go shew yourselves unto the priests.” Would they have been healed had they **not obeyed?** No; they wouldn't have! But they also had to **have faith**, or they wouldn't have headed off to find the priests!

What is Jesus' message to those who want to be forgiven? I like to think of it as A, B, C. We need to first **admit** we are a sinner in need of mercy and that we cannot cleanse ourselves! We need to **believe** that Jesus died in our place and that He will save us if we put our trust in Him. And then—in child-like faith—we need to **call** upon Him. We need to ask Him to save us—and believe that He says “yes” when we do ask Him! **Romans 10:13** “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

Next, the **2) Differences.** What are the differences between being **healed from leprosy**—and being **saved from the punishment** of our sins?

--An obvious one is this—healing from leprosy was only **temporary!** They did not live forever; they **eventually died!** But...forgiveness of sin and being a child of God is **not temporary**—it is **permanent!** We are given **eternal** life—not temporary or probationary life!

Will these bodies die? Yes; but our soul—the immaterial part of us that lives forever—will be in heaven for all eternity!

--Here's one other difference. When a leper was cleansed of leprosy, it impacted **every area** of life—for **the rest** of his life! But what about us that have been forgiven of our sins—and have been given a new life in Christ? Shouldn't that affect **every area** of our life—for **the rest** of our life? It should, shouldn't it?

And that brings us to... **4. The perplexity**

What was Jesus perplexed about? What puzzled Him? The answer, of course, is in verse 17 “Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?”

--Jesus knew who He healed

--And Jesus knew who was grateful—and ungrateful!

How many did **Jesus expect** to be grateful? **All of them**, right? That's why He said, “where are the nine?”

And He **expects all of us** that have been given the wonderful gift of salvation to be grateful—**not just one** in ten! But that's not all! Look at verse 18: “There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger.”

What does it mean to **give glory** to God? It certainly means to acknowledge what God has done—and thank Him—the way the Samaritan leper did! But shouldn't it also mean that we should love Him...and try to do that which pleases Him...and tell others what He has done for us—and what He can do for them?

What about you? Have you been cleansed? Are you a child of God? If so, are you the **grateful** one—or one of the **nine?**

So what would God have us do in light of what we have heard this morning?

1. First and foremost, you have the “disease” of sin—and it is far worse than cancer or leprosy! Why?

--Because sin disqualifies you from heaven—and you cannot cleanse yourselves from your sin!

--Not only that, you are under the judgment of God because of your sin—and in desperate need of mercy from God. The good news is that God extends to us the gift of mercy—Jesus!

--What about you? Has there been a time in your life when you have done the A,B,C's that I referred to just a few moments ago?

--If not, why not do that today?

2. Second, if you have been cleansed and are a child of God, here again is the question I've asked a couple of times already: Are you the **grateful** one—or one of the **nine?**

3. What will being grateful look like?

--Expressing thanks to the One who loves you and died for you

--Striving to live for the One who loves you and died for you

--Telling others about the One who loves you and died for you

And let's not forget: God knows who He has healed—and who is grateful! And He expects all of us that have been healed to be grateful!