

You remember, when you were a kid,
and someone did something nice for you—big or small—
your mom would lean in to you
and gave you the “mom” look, while saying,
“Now what do you say?” It wasn’t a suggestion.
If the words and the tone of voice didn’t give it away,
then the steel grip that was like
Mr Spock’s neck pinch told the story.
Now what do you say? Thank you.
That’s what you say.
Through gritted teeth, perhaps, but you say it. Right?

**Often, the focus of this story is on the Samaritan who,
after discovering he was healed,**
returned to give thanks for his healing.
We learn that a proper response to
God’s goodness and blessings are for us
to offer God our grateful thanks in praise.
To say thank you. That’s true.

But I believe that this story —
actually is intended to illustrate—
a response to the earlier request made by the disciples
that we talked about last week in Luke 17:5
and then Jesus’ response in verse 6.
The more I study these unique portraits in Luke
the more I am convinced that all of them are tied together.
In other words, taking into consideration the
context that surrounds the healing of these lepers
we get a complete picture of Jesus’ words about faith.

The disciples had said, "Lord increase our faith."
And Jesus had said, "**If you have faith as a mustard seed,
you can say to this mulberry tree,**
Be pulled up by the roots and be planted in the sea,
and it would obey you."

We talked about what we think,
If I had more faith! What great things could be done.
If I had more faith I wouldn’t be struggling
with my problems like today. I would have answers.
However, Jesus answered their request for more faith
by saying they didn’t need more faith, but instead
they needed to be more faithful with the faith they already had.

Jesus is saying, if you have faith as a mustard seed you can accomplish what appears to be impossible. So then what Jesus said left another question for the disciples and for us.

The question is, How much faith is enough faith to accomplish the impossible task?

And, do I have that faith? Do I have mustard seed faith?

And so we find ourselves with 10 nameless lepers in Luke 17:11-19.

In biblical times, the word Leprosy was often used to describe a variety of skin diseases, what doctors now call Hansen's Disease. The leprosy itself was not fatal, but more lepers died from other diseases they contracted because of their weakened condition.

Lepers were called "the walking dead,"

and were kicked out of their homes and villages and forced to live in colonies with other lepers. They couldn't work or worship at the temple. This healing is in many ways unlike any of the other healing events in the life and ministry of Jesus. Yes, Jesus had healed other lepers. But this was different for several reasons

11. Now it happened as He went to Jerusalem that He passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. 12. Then as He entered a certain village, there met Him ten men who were lepers, who stood afar off.

One difference.... These ten lepers did not get close to Jesus.

We understand why. The nature of their disease and their law prevented it. And they **they stood far off as was customary.**

13. And they lifted up their voices and said, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!"

Another difference.. This is interesting: they did not ask for healing.

They simply said, "Have mercy upon us."

Before Jesus can help us, folks, we must quit fooling ourselves and admit we have a problem, but that's not enough; you must cry out to Jesus. All the twelve-step programs agree that the first step for recovery is to admit that. And we all have hurts, habits, and hang-ups that are our leprosy.

But that's not enough, you must then seek help.

**14. So when He saw them, he said to them, "Go, show yourselves to the priests."
And so it was that as they went, they were cleansed.**

Another difference Jesus did not go to them and touch them and heal them.

And He did not sprinkle dirt on them; or water.

And He did not breathe on them.

He did not touch them in any way like before.

And Jesus did not speak a word of healing to them.

He did not say, Be healed! He simply said,

"Go, show yourselves to the priests in Jerusalem."

This was for the purpose of certifying their healing according to the commandment given by Moses.

All these ten had to do was go,

show yourselves to the priests in Jerusalem.

What is hard about that?

How difficult can that be?

Walk from here to Jerusalem, and present yourself to the priests at the Temple,

let them examine you and let them certify that you are indeed as free from leprosy as you claim.

It's a slam dunk. A done deal.

15. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned, and with a loud voice glorified God,

For nine of the ten leper guys, it would be a piece of cake.

A walk in the park. No sweat. No problem.

It would be an opportunity for them to visit the big city and walk among the crowds they had not walked among, possibly for years. Nine of these Jewish lepers could do this.

16. And fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks. And he was a Samaritan.

Now the really big difference: There is a Samaritan among them.

This fact adds a new dimension to this story and the thing that is really different.

It complicates things. Seriously complicates things.

Jesus said to them all: Go, show yourselves to the priest!

Nine of them could have heard that and instantly turned and began the walk to Jerusalem.

But what about the Samaritan?
He could have stood rooted in his tracks,
unable to believe what he has just heard from Jesus.

He could have answered back saying,
Who? Me? Show myself to the priest?
Me? A Samaritan outcast?
Go to Jerusalem and walk into the Temple court?
You've got to be kidding!
That's ok for my Jewish buddies, but not for me.
I know what is written on the front gate.
Any foreigner who goes beyond this wall will
have only himself to blame for his ensuing death."
If I go to Jerusalem and walk inside
the Temple Courtyard I'll die on the spot.
The only good Samaritan was a dead one.

17. So Jesus answered and said, "Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine?
18. "Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?

Why did the other 9 come back? Ungrateful?
It could be argued that it was an act of faith
for them to hightail it to the priests
before the cleansing happened.
It says healing happened on the way.
Their going was their response to Jesus—
an act of faith and perhaps gratitude.

Maybe that's why they didn't come back.
They were oozing gratitude as they arrived at the priest's door
and submitted themselves to the scrutiny that was required
and the proper document so they could go home to their families.
Maybe that was why they didn't take the time to come back to Jesus.
They might have been busy spreading the good news everywhere they went.
If we spent...

And we don't know why the Samaritan came back.
The priest might have turned him away
who didn't think he had authority over
an outsider to pronounce him clean.
Or maybe it didn't matter as much to him
since he lived outside the Jewish community.
These are just guesses.

We don't know the "whys" of the actions of the nine former lepers.
Were they properly grateful?
"Well," we think, "They weren't grateful enough to earn our help."
Jesus himself was put out that the nine ex-lepers weren't
grateful enough to come and say, "Thank you." So there.

Except, that might be going a bit too far.
There is no indication that Jesus got
his feelings hurt by the lack of response.
And it wasn't about whether Jesus deserved
thanks for this great gift; of course he did.
But there is no sign that he withdrew
his gift of healing to the ungrateful nine.
This doesn't seem to be about Jesus
as much as it is about the ones healed.

No, I think his concern was for wholeness on the part of those who were healed.
When the one returns, Jesus says, **"Were not ten made clean?"**
Notice the careful language - made clean.
It seems that for him, this was only
step one in the journey toward wellness.
That was his concern for the other nine;
they weren't done—or they weren't done as they could have been.
There was more to come for them and their
relationships with God and one another.
Jesus wanted them to be clean, certainly, to be within the law.
But he wanted more for them than that.
He wanted them to be well, to be whole.

19. And He said to him, "Arise, go your way. Your faith has made you well."

Concentrate on that last word;
it's the word sozo which means "saved."
The word means to "be made complete or whole."
Ten men were cleansed, but only one man became "whole."
Jesus wants to do more than just clean you up;
He wants to make you whole and complete.
Do you recall the cliché, **"even the longest journey begins with a single step."**

And here is what I think Jesus want you to see.
It doesn't take huge faith—great faith—giant faith—
Mt Everest size faith to see a miracle in your life.
It only takes one faithful step.
Rather than dwell on the one thing he could not do –
show himself to the priest in Jerusalem –

this outcast Samaritan concentrated
upon the one thing he could do.
He could go. Jesus had said, go.
When he went it made the rest unimportant.
He didn't have to show himself to the priest.
He was cleansed of his leprosy.
He was healed. But he had to take that first faithful step.

All ten of them headed off to see the priest.
And as they were going, they were healed.
But it wasn't until they stepped out in faith and
obeyed Jesus, that they experienced His healing power.
They didn't stand there and say,
"Well, after you heal me Jesus,
then I'll go show myself to the priest."

Jesus said **"Your faith has made you well,"**.
But if they showed faith in following
the command to go to the priests,
why didn't the others receive this blessing too?
What extra did the Samaritan do that moved
his being made clean into being made well?
Acknowledgment. Gratitude, yes, certainly, but directed gratitude.

This is what the Samaritan did. **Jesus said, go.**
The Samaritan said, I can do that.
--Don't let your "leprosy" stop you.
--Don't let what appears to be closed doors stop you.
--Don't let what other people think about who you are
stop you from making your plans.
--Stop saying, I don't know how it will turn out.

You can't know how it will turn out in the last step
until you take the first faithful step toward
making something turn out in the first place.
The Samaritan knew he could never set foot
inside the Temple at Jerusalem, but he knew
he could set foot on the dirt that was right in front of him.
that would be his first step in obedience to the words of Jesus.

Sometimes the hardest thing for us to do is take the first step.
Turn. Go. Turning and walking releases the power of healing.
Faith is walking on the Word of God.
Faith doesn't need any evidence; it simply obeys.

Our job is to step out in faith and simply obey God.

On writer said **"Faith is when you come to the edge of all the light you have known and are about to step out in the darkness, faith is knowing one of two things will happen...there will be something to stand on or you will be taught how to fly."**

Let's make it as practical as we can.

Turning to go may mean something like this:

--Send in that job application or submit that resume.

Don't say, "what if?" or "yes but" Go!

--Sign up for that adult education or college class.

Don't say, I can't because . . . I don't think, maybe Go!

-Take that trip. Take time off. Do something that will refresh your spirit, mind and body. No more excuses . . . Go!

--Take the first step to mend the broken relationship.

--Sign up as a volunteer.

--Begin writing that book or submitting what you wrote to a publisher.

Don't just stand there – GO! It will surprise you—delight you—
at the outcome that awaits your first step.

That's mustard seed faith. And you have it. So use it.

Go and be healed with the whole faith

That Jesus wants for you and me.