

# OpenTheo

## 10 Lepers, Day of the Lord (Part 1)



### **The Life and Teachings of Christ** - Steve Gregg

In this discussion, Steve Gregg reflects on the story of the ten lepers healed by Jesus in the Bible. He explains that the term "leper" was used somewhat loosely in biblical times and did not always refer to a specific skin disease. Gregg notes that the racial differences between the lepers were eclipsed by their common suffering, and they were all equally ostracized from their homes and communities. He also highlights the importance of gratitude and thanksgiving in faith, reminding listeners that while faith accesses the power of healing, it is not the power itself. Lastly, Gregg discusses Jesus' response to the Pharisees' question about the coming of the kingdom of God and cautions his listeners to remember the lessons of Lot's wife.

### **Transcript**

Let's look at Luke chapter 17. In our last session, we covered the first 10 verses, and now we come to really the rest of this chapter we want to cover. Depending on how time permits, we may go to another passage elsewhere in the Gospel, which we have the liberty either to take or not to take in this session.

We'll just judge that by how much time we have left when we finish this passage. There's essentially two parts of the material in Luke 17 that we want to cover today. There is what is probably a familiar story to you.

It's familiar to me. I've heard it since my growing up in Sunday school. Sometimes things I think are generally familiar may not be, but it's the story of how Jesus healed 10 lepers.

We have only two times in the Gospels where Jesus encounters and heals lepers, at least where it actually describes his healing of them. This is one of those, and we've already encountered a previous one in Matthew chapter 8, which has a parallel in Luke 5. There is another leper also whom Jesus probably healed. We don't know much about it, but we read in one of the Gospels that Jesus had a meal in the house of a friend whose name is Simon the leper.

Now, it's not likely that this leper was still a leper at the time that Jesus and his disciples ate with him, since if he were an unhealed leper, if he was still suffering from leprosy, he

would not be permitted to live in a village at all. He wouldn't be living in a house. He'd be living out in the wilderness or in a leper colony.

But we are probably to assume that Simon the leper was a former leper that Jesus had healed, but we're not told anything specific about that. Leprosy was a disease that really, it was hard to define. Today we have a modern disease called Hansen's disease, which is called leprosy also.

And when modern people speak about leprosy, I think they're usually referring to Hansen's disease, but in biblical times they didn't have quite the scientific and exact ways of diagnosing skin problems. Some skin problems that would arise would possibly look like leprosy and yet just be some other kind of flaky skin or something else, and they wouldn't have any exact way of diagnosing. And that is why in Leviticus, chapters 13 and 14, there were laws given that if a leprosy or a spot of some irregularity on the skin would arise on a person, they would go and be examined by the priest.

And the priest would be the one trained to, as best anyone could be trained in those days, to recognize whether it was a contagious or dangerous kind of a disease or not. Usually he'd be put into, the person with the spot would be put into isolation and quarantine for a week, and he'd be examined again at the end of the week. And if nothing had changed or if it had gotten worse, he'd be, let me take this back, I think if nothing had changed, he'd be on quarantine for another week.

And if it had gotten worse, he'd be declared a leper. If at any point in that time it got better, he would be taken off quarantine and declared not a leper. But there were also laws in Leviticus that prescribed what a leper should do if he found himself healed.

Now what we call leprosy today, Hansen's disease, is not curable. They don't yet have a way of curing it. And it certainly wasn't a curable disease in any former times either.

Therefore, it's not likely that very many people with Hansen's disease ever got cured, although some may have. We are told of course of a case in the book of Numbers where Miriam was stricken with leprosy by God, briefly, but Moses interceded for her and God healed her. We also know the story of course of Naaman the Syrian, who was a leper, and through the counsel of Elisha the prophet, he dipped himself seven times in the river Jordan, and on the seventh time he found himself totally cleansed of his leprosy.

Now these are rare, rare situations in Old Testament times, and we of course recognize those as true miracles. Almost certainly what these people had, Miriam and Naaman, was real leprosy as we think of it now. But in the Old Testament times, there were no doubt people who had stuff that they didn't know if it was leprosy or not, and that is why there was some provision made for a person who had been declared a leper if he found himself later to be clean.

In other words, if he found out that it wasn't really leprosy at all, his skin disease turned out to be something less permanent or whatever, then he could be restored to society through the process of offering certain prescribed sacrifices and a certain ritual that was followed for the restoration of a leper back into ordinary fellowship with the rest of the community. Now, having said all of that, and I'm not at all trying to suggest that Jesus in this case or in the other case where he healed a leper, that these lepers were not what we call lepers. I have no problem believing they were.

Obviously I believe Jesus raised the dead, he healed all kinds of sickness, and I have no difficulty believing these were lepers as we now use that term. What I'm saying is the term was used somewhat less precisely in the Bible, sometimes applying to any kind of skin, boil or rough skin or dead skin that didn't get better right away, the person would be pronounced a leper, and of course we know that that kind of condition, I mean even a bad case of dandruff conceivably, could have been considered leprosy over a period of time. But here we have a case, only one of two that are specifically mentioned in the New Testament, where Jesus actually healed people who were lepers.

And we read in verses 11 through 19, Now it happened as he went to Jerusalem that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. Then as he entered a certain village, there met him ten men who were lepers, who stood afar off, as they were required of course by law to do. They weren't allowed to come near to ordinary people, and since they were all banished from village life, they probably grouped together in unofficial and unorganized colonies.

There were ten of them in this particular cluster of isolated lepers. And they lifted up their voices and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. 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. That is, they found themselves to have leprosy no longer. Now one of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned and with a loud voice glorified God and fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks, and he was a Samaritan.

So Jesus answered and said, Were there not ten cleansed, but where are the nine? Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except for this foreigner? And he said to him, Arise, go your way, your faith has made you well. Now we are told in verse 11 that this happened while Jesus was passing through the midst of Samaria and Galilee on his way to Jerusalem. Where he was before he made this journey, we don't know.

In some of the previous stories, he had been in Korea on the other side of Jordan, though he wouldn't have to pass through Galilee or Samaria to get to Jerusalem from there. Last we read in the Gospel of John, after a bit of a confrontation over Lazarus, raising Lazarus from the dead in John 11, it says Jesus went to another place and remained a while. And that other place, if this is the next chronological story, it was probably up in northern

Galilee somewhere, so that a return to Jerusalem would necessitate that he pass through parts of Galilee, and if he chose not to avoid it, Samaria as well.

Of course, many Jews did avoid going through Samaria, but Jesus didn't have their prejudices, and so he took the more direct route and just went right on through Samaria. Now that may be significant in view of the fact that one of these lepers was a Samaritan. However, if this particular story occurred in Samaria, you would think that more than 1% of the lepers that Jesus met on this occasion would be Samaritans.

In fact, it's hard to know why a Jewish leper would go and take up residence in Samaria since Jews didn't like to go there anyway. It seems very possible that this occurred in Galilee, perhaps near the border of Galilee and Samaria. We just don't know which village it was.

But it's interesting that leprosy, the common disaster that had come upon all Tinnitus men, had apparently removed any of their racial prejudices that they probably would have formerly felt. In good health, this Samaritan would have probably had no company with the other nine guys who were not Samaritans, who were no doubt Jews. But when they shared in the common suffering of leprosy, it's quite obvious that that which they had in common totally eclipsed whatever racial differences might otherwise have been permitted to separate them and cause them to have nothing to do with each other.

And there are often things like that where God has to correct our pettiness and our prejudicial thinking by the imposition of some tragedy. I remember Richard Wurmbandt, the Romanian pastor who suffered for 14 years in communist prisons, saying that the underground church in Romania and in Russia was a church without denominational barriers. He said there were Roman Catholics and Methodists and Pentecostals and Baptists and Lutherans and so forth that all met together in the underground church and they never talked about their denominationalism.

It was not a factor, not an issue. But that wasn't so before the persecution arose. When there was no persecution, these people had the luxury of dividing and having petty differences among themselves and so forth.

Yet the experience of a common disaster, persecution in that case, caused them to see how ridiculous it was for them to major on minors and to separate from each other over things that didn't matter. Likewise, these people have sort of a similar experience. They've all contracted leprosy.

As such, they are all equally ostracized from their homes and their communities and therefore their racial differences no longer are considered to be significant enough to even consider. And so they group together as a small band of leprous men. All of them, however, when they heard that Jesus was coming, stood afar off respectfully as it would have been quite disrespectful for them to approach Jesus as lepers.

They weren't allowed to do that. But instead of crying out, unclean, unclean, which no doubt was their typical way of crying out when people came near, they said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. And when he saw them, he told them, go show yourselves to the priest.

Now, the other occasion where Jesus healed a leper was in Matthew 8 and a parallel in Luke 5, that same story. Luke 5 and Matthew 8 both tell of Jesus encountering a leper who came to him and said, Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean. And Jesus said, I am willing to be clean.

And he touched him and he was healed. And Jesus then said to him, go and show yourself to the priest and offered there the sacrifices which Moses commanded to be offered. On this occasion, Jesus dealing with these men is less personal, less direct, and his instructions less elaborate.

For one thing, he doesn't touch them here. As far as we know, from beginning to end, they remain in the distance and he simply speaks to them. Now, that might be for no other reason than that there were ten of them and he didn't have ten hands.

When he was confronted with one leper, touching him was not a logistic problem. But since there were ten of them and Jesus certainly didn't need to touch someone to heal him, he just sent them as he sent the other after he laid hands on him. Now, sending them to the priest, you know, it's an interesting thing.

Because for these men to go to the priest would suggest that they're going to have to go through the ritual prescribed in Leviticus 13 and 14. And in Matthew 8, where Jesus healed the one leper, he specifically instructed him to go through that ritual, to offer those sacrifices commanded by Moses. Which shows that Jesus, you know, did not come to abolish in his lifetime the law.

Now, I want to say that Jesus, we remember, was still living under the Old Testament economy. The coming of John the Baptist and Jesus to Israel marked a transitional phase in God's dealing with that nation. But the law was not totally abolished during the lifetime of Jesus, even though the new order was already beginning to break in.

In fact, before the end of this chapter, Jesus is going to announce the kingdom of God has already come. It's already in your midst. Suggesting that the new order has already begun to break in upon Israel, but the old order obviously is not completely gone because Jesus is still requiring people to honor the law.

When Jesus spoke to the scribes and Pharisees and criticized them in Matthew 23, 23 for paying their tithes, it meant, and it's incumbent, but neglecting the weightier matters of the law. After he mentioned what the weightier matters of the law is, that these you ought to have done and not leave the other undone. In other words, he indicated that

they should pay their tithes as well as observe the weightier matters of the law.

That, of course, does not translate into a command from Jesus to his disciples now to pay tithes any more than his command to this leper to go show himself to the priest and offer the sacrifices, the ritual sacrifices at the temple associated with that would translate into a similar or like duty for modern Christians. Even in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says, if you bring your gift to the altar and remember there that your brother has something against you, leave your gift at the altar and go make peace with your brother. You know the passage, it's in Matthew 5. But many Christians have not paused to reflect on the fact that Jesus is talking about temple ritual.

Bringing your gift to the altar is simply a reference, most likely, to a lamb or a goat being brought to the altar at the temple to be sacrificed. And Jesus said, leave your gift there, go make peace with your brother, then come and offer your gift. So even in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus advocates the offering of sacrifice under the right conditions.

But it's clear that these kinds of instructions from Jesus were not intended to reflect a permanent endorsement of an ongoing validity to the temple system or to Judaism in general. But he lives still under it. As it says in Galatians 4.4, he was born of woman, born under the law.

He lived under the law and he observed the law. And he never tried to abolish the law, but he did come to fulfill it. And much of the instructions he gave to these Jewish people would be applicable in his time, but would not be applicable in quite the same sense in ours.

Now when Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, said, if you are at the altar and you remember that someone has something to give to you, that teaching would, of course, the principle would be applicable in our new situation in terms of our modern, more spiritual forms of worship. We don't bring animals to an altar to be sacrificed, but we offer the sacrifice of praise or whatever. We present ourselves as living sacrifices.

And no doubt in principle there's no difference in his teaching to us. But I would point out to you that in his lifetime, though Jesus, by his death, did away with the validity of all the ceremonial ritual practices of the temple, and then did away with the practices themselves when Jerusalem was destroyed 40 years later, yet in his lifetime he affirmed them. He never undermined Moses or the things that Moses had established.

If he healed a leper, he told that leper to go through the ritual that was necessary for restoration to society. Now, here's something to point out, too. We can see that many times in Jesus' ministry he did over, I'll let you say, override ritual requirements of Judaism.

He indicated that since he was the Lord of the Sabbath, for example, he and his disciples

were entitled to break the Sabbath if they were going about the Lord's business. And we explain this on the basis that Jesus was there basically to preempt the ceremonial system. However, showing themselves to the priest, as Jesus instructed lepers to do, was part of the ceremonial, not the moral law.

Yet Jesus affirms it. But I guess my thoughts on that would be that while Jesus is not trying to say that ritual observances are themselves essential concerns of God in the new order, yet these Jews could never be restored to society publicly unless they went through this public ritual. And while, no doubt, if the social circumstances were otherwise, Jesus could have allowed them to forego a trip to the temple to make these sacrifices and so forth, things being as they were, there was no way for these men to rejoin their families, for them to be accepted back into society unless the priests who had declared them lepers likewise gave them a clean bill of health, which would require them to go, show themselves to the priest and go through the ritual of cleansing so that they might be, you know, have any stigma, any social stigma of having been lepers or have it formally lifted.

Anyway, that's what Jesus does. He sends them off. Now, as they go, as they're obeying Jesus, they find that their leprosy disappears.

And one of these guys, when he saw that he was healed, returned and came and glorified God. He praised the Lord. He thanked Jesus for his healing and fell at Jesus' feet.

A note is given in verse 16 that he was a Samaritan. Now, the other nine, I think we are to understand, were probably not Samaritans, since the point is made that this one was, and the others were apparently Jewish. And, you know, when you think about it, this Samaritan, we might wonder, why did this Samaritan come back and the Jews didn't? It may be that he was just a more virtuous guy.

That is a possibility. Jesus, in the story of the Good Samaritan, pointed out that, at least in the story, the Samaritan was more virtuous than a couple of Jews, a Levite and a priest who passed up the robbed man. And it was Jesus' intention to point out that a man, even of a despised race, a man who is not Jewish, a man who has an unimpressive pedigree, as far as the Jews are concerned, can be better in the sight of God than a Jew with a great pedigree, but whose heart is wrong.

And no doubt the story of the Good Samaritan is partially there to teach that lesson, as well as some other points. This story, no doubt, is recorded for the same reason, too, because Jesus mentions specifically that this man was a foreigner when he says in verse 18, were there not found among these ten any who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner? Jesus makes a point of saying that this man was a foreigner. It's not unlike Jesus to point out on other occasions that Gentiles and other non-pedigreed people, people who are not Jewish, exhibited better behavior spiritually than many of the Jews.

In fact, Jesus seemed to always make this point whenever there was an occasion to make it, and he made it here, too. Now, I will say this. I don't know to what degree this man was entirely virtuous in coming back.

That is, more virtuous than the others. Jesus does complain that the others didn't come back, but he didn't necessarily commend this man himself. In fact, that's one of the more remarkable things, maybe, about the story.

He didn't say, boy, I'm so happy to see that you wanted to thank me for what I did. You really stand out in the crowd. These other guys didn't do it, but you did, and I just wanted to commend you for that.

Jesus doesn't give the guy any commendation at all. He just complains, of course, the other nine. Now, I personally don't want to run the guy down.

I'm sure that he was, you know, he came back glorifying God. I'm sure his heart was thankful and so forth. It may be that the other nine were thankful, too, maybe not to the degree that he was.

It's hard to imagine how a person who had endured this stigma of being a leper, and had been separated from his wife and children, if he had any, or from his parents, if he had them, or whatever, from all society and friendships except for with other lepers, how that man finding himself relieved and his entire life changed, how that person wouldn't be so exuberant that he would have to come running back to thank Jesus. These nine apparently never did. If they did later than this, I don't think the story would have been preserved.

One thing to consider, though, is that the Samaritan, though he was sent with the rest of them to the temple, he was of another religion. His people worshipped at a different place than the temple. They worshipped at Mount Gerizim.

And it might have seemed a little bit awkward to him to accompany his Jewish fellow lepers to the Jewish temple to do the Jewish ritual, which was contrary to his own religion. On the other hand, of course, he attempted to do so. He began to go that way in obedience to Jesus, and no doubt he would have changed religions to become a Jew, if that's what he felt Jesus wanted him to do.

In any case, it probably was more of a relief for him to find an occasion to discontinue that errand, to come back and thank Jesus rather than to go to the Jewish temple. He probably did go to the Jewish temple after this. But maybe he didn't.

I don't know. Maybe Jesus said, OK, your faith has made you well, and maybe Jesus' declaration of his cleanness would suffice in place of the priests. After all, a declaration from a Jewish priest in Jerusalem that this Samaritan was clean would hardly affect his social life.

He would never be considered clean by the Jewish society, because he was a Samaritan. They'd never have anything to do with him. And as far as his Samaritan society that he was excluded from, a declaration from a Jewish priest probably wouldn't impress them.

So it's hard to say. Maybe at this point Jesus just said, I declare you clean. You don't have to worry about going back to the temple.

It would have been, as I say, almost the wrong place for a Samaritan to go anyway. The other nine went there. Anyway, I'm just kind of speculating about some things that aren't too central to the story, just some random thoughts.

But I will say that there's at least three lessons in this story that I'm sure are the reason that the story is here. One is the need to be thankful, the fact that Jesus expects people to thank him. He doesn't commend them when they thank him.

He thinks it's strange that people don't thank him more. If someone says thank you to Jesus, he doesn't say, you just made my day. I really like being thanked.

You're special, you know. But if someone doesn't thank him, he says, what's wrong with those people? Why aren't they thanking me? Where are those nine who owe me their thanks and don't come with me? Is there none to give glory to God except this foreigner here? Where are my own people who should be exhibiting this trait? Now I want to say, I don't want to go off into a little homily about thankfulness or anything like that, but unthankfulness is a greater sin than we often give it credit for. And I think unthankfulness is very often a symptom of being spoiled.

Children who are poor and raised poor are extremely thankful, as a rule, for the simplest extraordinary blessings, that is, out of the ordinary blessings. But kids who are accustomed to having everything they want as soon as they ask for it and so forth, and they whine when they don't get it and all that, these children, generally speaking, if a child is what we usually call a spoiled child, has lost the capacity to really be grateful for anything. They have come to expect a great deal.

When a person has been given so much on a regular basis, and they've never known any deprivation of any kind, it is a natural step in the way people think, from saying, I have always had these things, to the point of saying, I deserve to have these things. This is normal for me to have these things. Any depriving of these things is an injustice against me.

This is the way minds work. I'm not trying to be a psychologist here. I don't think it takes one.

I think everybody in hearing this knows that this is true. If a person begins to be pampered and have everything given to them, instead of becoming perpetually thankful, the tendency of human nature is to just take it for granted, and then begin to interpret

normalcy in terms of gratification and having all that one wants and never being deprived of anything, and that's considered then to be normal. And then, if they are ever deprived of anything, or have to wait for something, it becomes an intolerable injustice in their thoughts.

This is unfair. And when a person is in this state of mind, or to the degree that a person is, they are what we usually call, when it's in children, we say they're spoiled. When it's in adults, I don't know if we have a corresponding word for it, but let's just say, biblically, to the degree that they've assumed this attitude, they are not capable of being adequately thankful.

Now, I'm not saying that these nine Jewish lepers were not capable of being thankful. The Bible doesn't tell us why they didn't come back. Jesus himself was surprised that they didn't.

But I want to say this, that our pampered lifestyles that we have known from birth, all of us, as Westerners living in the 20th century, we have luxuries, we don't have to wait for anything, everything is tailored for our convenience. We lose the ability to be spontaneously thankful, to a certain extent. Now, I'm not saying that we aren't ever thankful.

But because we come to take for granted so many things, our good health, our comforts, our prosperity and so forth, we come to think that somehow something is wrong, something is very wrong, if we get sick or if we don't prosper, if there's something we aren't allowed to have. I think Eve exhibited this in the garden, and Adam also, that God gave them everything free of it. And all they could think about is that one thing he didn't give them.

That just seems so unfair. They were so spoiled. And American Christians, I think, are perhaps in danger more than the Christians of most parts of the world and probably of most times previously in history of being spoiled and unthankful, and maybe even incapable of being spontaneously thankful.

And because of that, we don't... Of course, unthankfulness is the norm. Unthankfulness is so common that we don't think of it as a great sin. And what I'm saying is this, the attitude of Jesus here indicates that he thinks it's quite an injustice against him.

If people for whom he has done something do not ever thank him for it. Now, we should be thankful people to the extent that we quite naturally recognize the kindness that anyone does to us and are quick to make sure that we express our gratitude, but especially with God. The Bible indicates that thanksgiving is part of the sacrifice of our lips that we offer to God.

It says that in Hebrews 13, in verse 15, Hebrews 13, 15 says, Therefore by him let us

continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name. So, one of the sacrifices we are to offer God, the fruit of our lips, is the giving of thanks to his name. In Philippians, where we have a generic statement about prayer, in Philippians 4, and verse 6, Paul says, Be anxious or worried for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.

In everything that you pray about, it is supposed to be with thanksgiving. You don't just come to God asking for more blessings. Make sure that when you pray and make your request to God, you also come with thanksgiving for what he has already given, or even for the privilege of asking him for anything, since he owes us nothing.

And, you know, there is a sense in which we have received so much from God and have come to take it so much for granted that we forget to be thankful for anything in particular. And yet our prayers are supposed to be spiced with an attitude of thanksgiving. When we come, it's much more natural, at least for some people, to only pray when they want something and never to come and pray to thank God for what he has already given them.

In Romans chapter 1, you know the Apostle Paul describes the downward spiral of degeneration and corruption that human society experiences when they have known God and yet put him out of their mind. And in that description, beginning at Romans 1.18, it says, For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness. Because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them.

But then it says, in verse 21, Because although they knew God, they did not glorify him as God, nor were thankful. But they became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. And then it got worse from there.

It just went downhill from there. Now, it started out with them knowing who God was. And it ended up with their hearts being darkened, their thoughts becoming futile, and of course, eventually, them being given over to a reprobate mind, if you read far enough down in the passage.

Now, how did all this begin? Well, it starts with them knowing God, but though they knew him, they didn't glorify him, and they weren't thankful. It's interesting that a small little thing like that, being unthankful, would be the first step down a road that leads to a reprobate mind, eventually, if you don't turn off that road at some point. Unthankfulness.

It's heinous. Persons like ourselves, creation, worthy of damnation, who have not only received life and many pleasures in life, but also forgiveness of sins, and eternal life, and the grace of God. These are things that, you know, I think young Christians often are more exuberant than older Christians, just because it's so new, it's so easy to appreciate,

you know, those things which seem extraordinary at the beginning of Christian life, but after a while you take that for granted.

God's favor, you know, the fact that you're saved, you're going to heaven. And it's easy to lose your first love just by ceasing to be thankful. But one of the ways that we can keep our relationship and our love aflame for God is by continuously thinking of things for which we should be thankful, and that may come naturally to you, depending on your frame of mind, or it may be not too natural for you, but you don't have to think very long to think of things you should be thankful for.

I mean, things you take for granted every day. The fact that you can look in this direction and see me here. Not that seeing me is such a privilege, but that you can see anything.

That your eyes function. Some people's eyes don't function. That you can walk.

Some people can't walk. That you can breathe. Some people are in an iron lung.

I mean, that you have parents. Some people have never known their parents. That you have a Bible.

There are Christians who don't have Bibles. I mean, there are people who give everything they own for one thing that you possess and take for granted all the time, maybe. This is important.

You know the saying, I complained that I had no shoes until I met a man who had no feet. And it expresses, of course, the typical unthankfulness of our nature, that we complain about what we don't have until something draws our attention to the fact that we have far more than some people do. And anyway, like I said, I didn't want to get off on a little homily about thankfulness, and some of this isn't directly related to the story, but the fact is that Jesus was not exuberant that this man came back thankful.

He was disappointed that the other nine didn't, and that was his complaint. So that's one of the lessons that this story, no doubt, is here to get across to us, that God expects us to be thankful. There is every reason that we should be.

Another point, of course, as I've already pointed out, is that this man who was thankful was a foreigner. And a contrast is drawn by Jesus between the foreigner and the Jews, both who are not foreigners. I don't need to say much about this, because I commented a moment ago about it, that the Gospels frequently point out cases, if they can, where a Samaritan or a foreigner, a Gentile, exhibits better behavior or better faith or better something, better thankfulness in this case, than Jews did.

And of course, the underlying message is God's not a respecter of persons. Being a Jew doesn't make you closer to God. It's rather spiritual consideration that determines whether a person is pleasing to God or not.

It has nothing to do with their nationality or race. And of course, the last point in the story is that Jesus said, Your faith has made you well. Now, Jesus said this on other occasions as well.

He said this to the woman with the issue of blood who touched him in his garment. After the story was told, he said, Your faith has made you well. This is not a strange thing for Jesus to say.

He didn't say this man's thankfulness had made him well, although that was... that just wasn't true. There were nine unthankful people whose faith made them well, too, apparently. But really, we need to be careful about this because some people have taken words like this and made it sound like faith itself is the power that heals.

And that is a misunderstanding of what Jesus was saying. Obviously, the Bible says faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. And if there had been no word from God, there would have been no faith.

There would have been nothing for them to put their faith in, to trust in the word of God. Now, some might say, but the woman with the issue of blood didn't have any word from God. She snuck up behind Jesus and touched him.

He is the word of God, and she believed in him. To put your faith in Jesus Christ is what heals. True, the faith is that which accesses his power and his healing, but it is he, not the faith, that is the power to heal.

Faith is simply the posture of the soul looking expectantly for Christ to do something. He is the one who really, actually makes you well. It's like, well, how should I put it? If you go to a doctor with a headache and the doctor says, listen, if you take this medication every four hours, it will relieve your headache.

And so you do so. And when you report back to him, he says, well, your obedience has made you well. Your obeying has done it.

Well, of course, the medication may in fact be what made them well, but they wouldn't have had the effects of the medication if they hadn't obeyed either. And to say your faith has made you well is really a shorter way, perhaps even less exactly, of saying that I have made you well because of your faith. But obviously, without faith, you wouldn't have been made well.

I just want to clarify that, because some people use these kinds of verses to act like faith is something other than the Bible says it is, something kind of a mystical power source or something, whereas faith is really just trusting in someone who is the source of the power to heal, and that's God himself. Now, verse 20, the story takes a turn. The chapter takes a turn.

Now, when he was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God does not come with observation, nor will they say, See here, or see there. For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you, which can also be translated as among you or in your midst. Then he said to the disciples, The days will come when you will desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it.

And they will say to you, Look here or look there. Do not go after them or follow them. For as the lightning that flashes out of one part under heaven shines unto the other part under heaven, so also the Son of Man will be in his days.

But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation. And as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be in the days of the Son of Man. They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage until the day that Noah entered the ark and the flood came and destroyed them all, likewise as it was also in the days of Lot.

They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built. But on that day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed.

In that day, he who is on the housetop and his goods are in the house, let him not come down and take them away. And likewise, the one who is in the field, let him not turn back. Remember Lot's wife.

Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it and whoever loses his life will preserve it. I tell you, in that night, there will be two men in one bed. One will be taken and the other will be left.

Two women will be grinding together. The one will be taken and the other left. Two men will be in the field.

One will be taken and the other left. And they answered and said to him, Where, Lord? So he said to them, Wherever the body is, there the eagles will be gathered together. Now, some of these verses are familiar, probably, due to the fact that on a previous occasion in a topical study, we looked at the Olivet Discourse.

Now, these verses aren't really part of the Olivet Discourse. Obviously, Jesus was not on the Mount of Olives when he said these words. But Matthew combines this discourse here in Luke 17 with what Matthew records in the Olivet Discourse.

And what I mean by that is that the Olivet Discourse is that discourse that Jesus spoke to his disciples privately on the Mount of Olives sometime during the last week of his earthly career, probably on Thursday of that week, and maybe Wednesday. That is recorded in Luke chapter 21. It's also recorded in Mark 13 and Matthew 24.

But in Matthew's recording of that account on the Mount of Olives, he takes verses from this discourse in Luke 17 and adds them to the discourse. Although Matthew does not record this discourse anywhere else. So it would appear that what Matthew has done is take the Olivet Discourse, which Luke records in Luke 21, and this discourse here in Luke 17 and has combined them to make what would appear, in the result of it, to be a single discourse in Matthew 24.

Now, I only say that because that's telling you why we've already talked about some of these verses. We have talked about Matthew 24 and I pointed out at that time that a fair number of the verses in that chapter come from this portion of Scripture. But this was not the Olivet Discourse.

Luke 17 does not record that same discourse, nor, in my opinion, is it about the same subject, as is the Olivet Discourse. The Olivet Discourse in Luke 21 was occasioned by Jesus predicting the destruction of the Temple and the fact that not one stone would be left standing on another in Luke 21. And the disciples came to Jesus after he made this statement and said, When will these things be and what will be the sign that these things are about to take place? And then he gave this discourse on the Mount of Olives.

Now, according to Luke 21, the only question they asked about was when will these things be and what will be the sign that these things are about to take place? Mark 13, the parallel, also agrees that this was the question of the disciples. And these things, in the context, could mean nothing else but the destruction of the Temple. Therefore, we should not be surprised that the answer Jesus gave in Luke 21 and Mark 13 applied to the destruction of the Temple.

The question the disciples asked was about when will that happen and when will we know it's about to happen. And in that discourse, Jesus' answer included this remark, This generation will not pass before all these things are fulfilled. So, there can be little doubt that what Jesus said on the Mount of Olives to the disciples in response to their question was all about what happened in 70 A.D. But, this discourse, I think, is about something else.

And what makes the Olivet Discourse so confusing in Matthew and Mark, for instance, is that they do combine both discourses. What Jesus said to the disciples on the Mount of Olives was, I believe, about 70 A.D. This discourse, however, I think, is talking about the second coming of Christ. Now, this is just an example of where I don't go completely with others in the area of preterism.

That isn't seen. Everything is about 70 A.D. I don't do that because I do know of authors who understand this passage to be about 70 A.D. also. I've read authors who believe that when Jesus talks about the days of the Son of Man and in verse 30, when the Son of Man is revealed, they don't believe that's about the second coming of Christ.

They believe it's about the destruction of Jerusalem and, therefore, they have no problem with Matthew combining this one with the other material and they feel it's all about 70 A.D. I have not yet been able to come to a place where I follow them in this opinion. There are too many things in this discourse that, to my mind, speak of Jesus' immediate presence at his second coming. Now, let's talk about these verses.

In verse 20, Jesus was asked by Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come. To them, the kingdom of God had connotations of politics and a Davidic-type rule. It had to do with overthrowing Roman rule and instituting a global kingdom under the reign of a Jewish king and Israel's supremacy over the nations.

All those things were part of the kingdom of God concept from the Old Testament passages on the subject. And since Jesus was proclaimed, at least by some, to be the son of David, the Messiah, and he had been announcing himself that the kingdom of God was at hand, as did John the Baptist before him, but such a kingdom as they expected had not arrived yet. In fact, not only had it not arrived, Jesus had made no effort to bring it about.

John the Baptist himself was confused about that because Jesus wasn't doing what he thought the Messiah would do to bring in the kingdom. And the Pharisees were perhaps needling him a little bit about this. It's probable that his popularity was waning a bit at this point and that they might have been suggesting, well, you know, back in your heyday, you talked about the kingdom of God being at hand.

You talked as if you might be the Messiah, but now look at things. Now where is the kingdom of God? When is it going to appear now? And it's very possible that the context in terms of Jesus' popularity was that it seemed much less likely at this point that he had any hopes of claiming to be the Messiah or bringing the kingdom in. It occurs to me that the Pharisees were here mocking him, saying, well, where's this kingdom you talked about? It doesn't look like it's coming, does it? It doesn't look like it's any closer today than it was when you started announcing it a year and a half ago or whatever.

And Jesus said, well, you guys just have the wrong context about the kingdom. The kingdom of God is not going to come the way you think. It won't be observable.

It's not going to come with observation. They're not going to say, here it is or there it is. In other words, they won't be able to point to it and say, oh, there it is, it's finally come.

That's the kind of kingdom that the Pharisees were expecting, one that they could immediately spot, they could observe it, they could, you know, in the natural point of view and say, there's the kingdom. But Jesus said, that's not what it's going to be. It's not going to be observable.

You won't be able to point here or there and see where it is. He said the kingdom of God

is, and the way it's rendered here, within you. Now, the word within is not a bad translation, although as the margin of the New King James shows and many other Bibles will show this too, the same Greek word can mean in your midst.