

Luke 17:11–19 Sermon Script | Trinity 14 9/25/11 -- Ascension, Batavia

SDG

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FOOTSTEPS OF FAITH FIND OUR SAVIOR

INI

What controls the steps you take each day? Do your feet make those decisions? If you decide to get up out of bed and get ready for work or to get ready for school, how is it that your feet know what to do? There is a mechanism inside you that is dictating what your body does, and it is called your brain. Well, what then is the mechanism inside us that dictates where our spiritual steps take us? How is it that the one leper in our text returned to glorify God? Our Scripture reading from Proverbs says, “my son, ... I have taught you in the way of wisdom, I have led you in right paths. When you walk your steps will not be hindered.” God has shown us the right path, God has set us upon solid ground, and God has placed in your heart the mechanism that dictates the right footsteps as you travel along life’s way – that mechanism is faith. **v.19 – The footsteps of faith find our Savior.**

1. In Repentance

This faith mechanism that God has created in your heart leads us to take steps of repentance that flee sin and fall at the foot of our Savior. Repentance begins where these ten began, **v.12,13**.

This fact that they “stood afar off” takes us back to OT ceremonial law in Leviticus 13. **Leviticus 13:45-46**. “Outside the camp” meant outside of the regular community of God’s people. This village that Jesus visits was probably an outcast leper colony. An effect of this law was that the lepers would find themselves externally separated from fellowship with God’s people. The lepers couldn’t visit the Temple in Jerusalem; they couldn’t join in the corporate worship of Israel.

This is why Jesus directs the lepers, **v.14**. You can read in Leviticus 13 and 14 how Old Testament ceremonial law had instituted the priests as a sort of health inspectors. A leper could only be pronounced unclean and outcast by the priest alone, so likewise, the leper could only be restored to the community and officially clean after an inspection by the priest. The priest then was more than just a physical health inspector, there was spiritual symbolism to his role of restoration.

This issue of fellowship and restoration brings much symbolism into our text. For Jesus to cleanse these lepers meant more than just a physical restoration. This truly showed Jesus’ power over sin. This showed Jesus ability to restore the sinner to fellowship with God. This cleansing meant these lepers sins were forgiven, that nothing was to separate them from being a part of God’s people and Temple worship.

This restoration, this healing was a fulfillment of the promises God had been making throughout the history of Israel. It was a restoration that centuries ago lepers with

saving faith could place their hope and faith in. And not just lepers: all who recognize the leprous effect of sin; all who recognize the uncleanness of our hearts before God – all of you are looking to the restoration that comes through Jesus the Messiah. This is an allusion by the psalmist David in Psalm 51 when he prayed, *“Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. ... Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence, And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, And uphold me by Your generous Spirit.”* (Psalm 51:7–12, NKJV)

This sounds like the prayer of a leper. It was in Leviticus 14 that the priest was directed to take the hyssop branch, dip it in blood, and sprinkle it seven times on him who is to be cleansed. Also the leper is then instructed to wash his clothes and himself before he can be pronounced clean. Hence David prays, *“Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.”* Hence David pleads, *“do not cast me away from your presence.”* The footsteps of faith walk in this repentance.

And yet the true essence of this restoration, the spiritual significance of it would only truly be known by one of the ten. Only one would know true repentance based on faith in Christ. All ten come to Jesus crying, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!” yet only one returned to the feet of Jesus.

2. In Thanksgiving

Only one had the footsteps of faith – the footsteps that come to our Savior in repentance and in thanksgiving.

What does this reveal of the other nine? It really reveals a failure to recognize the spiritual significance of what Jesus has done. It likewise reveals a failure to give Jesus the credit for what has just happened.

Perhaps the other nine did feel they were going to give thanks to God. After all, last we hear they were headed to the Temple, to the priest, to follow God’s command. The problem is it seems they don’t realize that God is Jesus and Jesus is God. Listen to the words of our text, **v.15,16**. The leper both “glorified God” and fell at Jesus’ feet. He both glorified God and gave thanks to Jesus. He gives the glory to God by giving thanks to Jesus. The footsteps of His faith were the confession of Martin Luther, “I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity and also true man, born of the virgin Mary is my Lord” (Luther’s expl. to the 2nd Art., Sydow ed.).

His footsteps gave all glory to God and showed His thankfulness for the spiritual cleansing he had received. Do our footsteps show thankfulness? Do they bow before Jesus as God? Do our footsteps show a faith that relies on grace alone? One of the underlying issues in our text is alluded to when Jesus says, **v.17,18**.

Where are the other nine? It is easy to forget about the thankfulness we should have for the forgiveness. It is easy to forget about the leprous disease of sin we have

contracted. It is easy to forget to be thankful. That is why it is so crucial to be made aware of the sins in our lives – the subtle ones and the blatant ones. The lustful thoughts and the lustful actions. The unforgiving bitterness and the angry words we have spoken. This reminder of sin in our lives part of giving God the glory He deserves. Because to minimize the spiritual leprosy we suffer from is to minimize the cleansing work of their Savior. To minimize sin is to minimize the glory of our Savior's death and resurrection. But by maximizing the reality of sin and how sick it is, we maximize the glorious work of our God and Savior.

"...the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:7–9, NKJV)

Footsteps of faith run to show ourselves before the High Priest. What is not said is that this Samaritan was actually showing himself to the Priest – the great High Priest. *"For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."* (Hebrews 4:14–16, NKJV) Jesus is the ultimate High Priest because His cleansing work has truly restored us to fellowship with God.

This is where the footsteps of faith find our Savior. This is where your footsteps return to your Savior with thanksgiving on your lips. This is where you fall down on your face, finally realizing how great this work of cleansing really is. This is where we shout with a great voice giving all glory to God both in the things we say and by the things we do.

3. In Clinging to Christ

"Salvation unto us has come
By God's free grace and favor;
Good works cannot avert our doom,
They help and save us never.
Faith looks to Jesus Christ alone,
Who did for all the world atone;
He is our one Redeemer."

Faith looks to Jesus Christ alone. **v.19**. The literal translation would be "your faith has saved you." Does this imply that this Samaritan is responsible for his own salvation? "Faith looks to Jesus Christ alone, who did for all the world atone; He is our one Redeemer." The reason why faith saves us, has nothing to do with what is in us. It has nothing to do with our will power or our decision to believe or our believing strongly enough. Rather, faith saves because of what it clings to. Faith saves because it clings to the cross for forgiveness. Faith saves because it clings to the imputed righteousness of Christ. Faith saves because it clings to Christ. As Ephesians 2 says, "it is a gift of God not of works."

This man came falling at Jesus' feet, giving all glory to Him, not looking to anything in himself, and trusting in Jesus' redemption. He was clinging to Christ. We cling to Christ. Sin will not go away in this world – it will continue try to lead you to dark paths, to shaky ground of doubt and despair. But we have a solid foundation: Jesus said, *“Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock.”* (Matthew 7:24, NKJV) Faith builds on that foundation of repentance and forgiveness. Faith clings to the Word of Christ – words of redemption; words of freedom from sin; words of true righteousness. “On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand.”

v.19, “Arise and go.” Every time your footsteps take to the feet of your Savior, you can imagine Him responding with these words. He sends you off with peace and purpose. The statement, “arise,” means you have peace, you have no need to continue in sorrow at the feet of your Savior. You have no need to continue despair over your sins. “Arise” means you are at peace with God. “And go.” In this, Jesus sends you off with purpose. You have a new found purpose to live free from sin and dedicated to what is right. You “go” without the plague of sin separating you from fellowship with God. You “go” in footsteps that clings to Christ – footsteps that cling so closely that you step in sync with Him. The Scripture reading from Galatians in one translation reads, “If we have been made alive by the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.” ... “Walk by the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh.” Cling to Christ. Therefore “those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.”

That mechanism for leading us in the right paths is faith, because the footsteps of faith find our Savior. They walk in repentance; they walk in thanksgiving; they walk in a constant clinging to Christ. “Faith looks to Jesus Christ alone, who did for all the world atone; He is our one redeemer.” Amen.