Title: “What I Experienced”

Chris Ryan	Luke 17:11-19	11/25/2026

Service Readings: Deut. 8:1-10; 1 Tim 2:1-4; Luke 17:11-19
First person sermon from the perspective of the Samaritan who was cleansed and returned to worship Jesus.

Message:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

In the Gospel passage you just heard, I was the Samaritan who returned to worship Jesus after I was healed. Tonight, I want to talk to you about my experience. Here is how Luke records the encounter:

> 11 On the way to Jerusalem [Jesus] was passing along between Samaria and Galilee. 12 And as he
> entered a village, he was met by ten lepers, who stood at a distance 13 and lifted up their voices,
> saying, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.” 14 When he saw them he said to them, “Go and show
> yourselves to the priests.” And as they went they were cleansed. 15 Then one of them, when he saw
> that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice; 16 and he fell on his face at Jesus'
> feet, giving him thanks. Now he was a Samaritan. 17 Then Jesus answered, “Were not ten cleansed?
> Where are the nine? 18 Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?”
> 19 And he said to him, “Rise journey; your faith has saved you.”

I knew what it was like to keep my distance. I had learned where I was supposed to stand. I knew my boundaries. I knew what people thought of me. I was a leper. I was a Samaritan. All of those things defined me in the eyes of the world. And over time, I believe those same things defined me in my own eyes. I was who the world said that I was.

Perhaps you can relate to me. Society hasn’t cast you out, but it has labeled you as a widow, or widower. Maybe you are the one whose marriage has ended; or maybe the one whose children no longer speak to you. Or maybe the people you cared for no longer need you and you are left separated, isolated, feeling alone and even purposeless. You see, my physical ailments don’t have to be yours for us to relate to each other.

This is how I felt the day I met Jesus. I was with other people, people that also felt separated from the rest of the world. Our common ailment united us to one another, but *only* to each other. The world seemed to have no use for us. So, when I met Jesus, I continued to keep my distance. In my mind, my place in this world hadn’t changed just because he was present. I stayed back, away from the crowd. But I called out for I knew that my voice could do what my body could not: it could come close to the one who could show mercy to me. “Jesus, Master,” I cried! “Have mercy on us!” In that moment I wish I could tell you that I understood what I was asking. I wish I could tell you that I was calling out to God for more than just physical healing. But I wasn’t. I was asking for healing so that I could find my way back into the world. I sought belonging, inclusion with everyone else, but it required physical healing.

And Jesus saw me. He knew what I was. He knew where I came from. He knew all the reasons I stood at a distance. And yet, even knowing all of this, he replied to me. He said, “Go and show yourselves to the priests.” You see, in that moment Jesus didn’t call me close. I wasn’t immediately healed like other miracles I

had heard about. In that moment, I was still separated from him and the world. All I had was his command to go to the temple.

Perhaps you can also relate to this. You call out to Jesus for mercy; you lay before him the things in your life that cause you to feel isolated and alone. And the response you hear is not that you are immediately healed, that the situation in your life has been resolved. Instead, it is a call to continue to go to God, even in the midst of all that is going on.

For me, as I journeyed on to Jerusalem, to the temple, I did so with faith. I wasn't sure what would happen, or when it might, but I knew that Jesus had the power to heal and had given me a command, so I obeyed. And on the way, I was healed. In that moment, I decided that I couldn't continue to the temple for my God, my healer, was on the road behind me; and so I returned. Not to simply thank him for what he had done, but to worship him because of who he was. I didn't fully understand all of this, I didn't fully understand that Jesus was full God and full man, but that didn't matter. I had called to him for mercy and he had poured it out on me. I was overflowing with thanksgiving and so I returned to worship.

But as I stand before you, I also understand that not all suffering is immediately healed by our calls to Jesus. Regardless of how we plead, our Lord will probably not immediately raise our loved one from the dead; he may not even heal the broken relationships of our marriages or families. But this type of healing was never the point. Jesus didn't enter into his creation to perform that work. He came for something much deeper, something far worse than the physical situations we find ourselves in. And it is this that I would like to talk to you about this evening.

I told you that in my leprosy I felt isolated from the rest of the world. In my leprosy, I found union with others who were just like me. This common ailment united us to each other. And I thought that union with the world was what I was missing. But I was wrong. What I was missing was union with God, through Jesus the Christ. And actually, in that way the entire world was united to each other – for all had sinned and were isolated from God.

It is for this reason that God entered his creation, through Jesus. He came to rectify this isolation. On the cross, he gave his body as a sacrifice. His blood, poured out, offered us forgiveness for our sins. But, you see, this act of mercy didn't just satisfy this judgement, it did so much more. It connected us to him. No longer were we separate from God, we were now united; we again belonged. And through his resurrection, this union was displayed.

His broken body; his shed blood; his death; his resurrection. What he accomplished for us was a healing that is so much richer than anything we experience on this earth. Our separation from God was healed. We no longer were isolated, but now united. We now belong, not to the world, but to him.

After my healing, I still struggled. I too had broken relationships – relationships that were severed when I became sick but never fully restored after I was healed. I had problems with finances, struggled to earn a living. But what I realized was that it through these struggles Jesus was with me. I was united to him and that meant that when I struggled, he did too. He was with me in everything I experienced. But no longer did I view my life in isolation or compare it with society. I held close the reality that I would never be alone – Christ was with me in a way so intimate I will may fully understand it.

And for you? He is with you, too. How do I know? Because he offers you himself each week. Every Sunday you gather around his table where he shares with you his very body and blood, not just for the forgiveness of your sins, but also as a reminder that he is with you in every moment of your life. Every experience is his experience, too. He is with you when in your mourning. He is with you in your frustrations. And just because

he doesn't resolve these situations, he speaks to you: he has given himself for you and he will never leave or forsake you. And he promises that you will forever be united. And he promises that the pain you experience will not have the final word. For one day all things will be made new; one day he will wipe away your tears. One day you will see him face to face. And on that day you will know the fullness of his union to you. But until then, continue to call out to him for mercy, and know that he hears every plea. And more than that, he experiences everything you experience. You are surely not alone, for he is with you… always.

Please pray with me.

Heavenly Father, we give You thanks for the mercy You have shown us in Your Son, Jesus Christ. When we feel separated, alone, or burdened by the troubles of this world, remind us that we belong to Him. Thank You for uniting us to Christ through His death and resurrection, and for giving us His very body and blood as the assurance of Your forgiveness and presence. Keep us steadfast in faith, overflowing with thanksgiving, and confident in the promise that one day all things will be made new. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen.