

Gratitude

letting others know you see how they've helped you

Jesus Heals Ten Men

Luke 17:11-19

MEMORY VERSE | 1 Thessalonians 5:18

Outside a village on the border between Samaria and Galilee lived ten lepers. We don't know their names or stories, but we know at least one of them was a Samaritan—a group that Jewish people distrusted. We'll call the Samaritan, "Joe." Perhaps the leprosy on his feet and legs was so bad he could barely walk!

Leprosy is a painful skin disease, and in Jesus' day there were no doctors or medicines to treat it. But even worse than the sores was the loneliness. Lepers weren't allowed to go near anyone healthy, even their own families. If Joe had a wife and kids, he hadn't seen them for as long as he'd been sick—maybe even for years.

"My baby girl, Judith. She's five now. Or six?" he may have wondered. "I bet she can ride a donkey by herself!"

"Yeah, well, you'll never know," said another leper sourly.

Joe tried to take a step on his sore feet, but nearly toppled over. He picked up the stick he used as a cane. "I'd give anything to see her . . ." he said longingly.

The ten lepers' lives seemed hopeless. All they could do was stand back from the road and shout at those who passed by:

"Stay away! Don't come close."

But all the same, they had to beg people to leave food, just so they could survive.

Then one day, news reached the lepers of travelers approaching along the border road.

“Big crowd. Think it’s that Jesus fella,” said one leper.

“The Teacher?” asked Joe, his heart pounding a little faster. “They say He makes sick people well.”

“Yeah, and I hear there’s gold buried under that willow tree by the creek, too,” scoffed another leper. “You’re a Samaritan. Why would He care about you?”

“I’ve got nothing to lose,” Joe pointed out. He hobbled toward the road, and the others straggled after him. They could see the crowd now, the dust kicked up by dozens of feet.

“People won’t like us standing so close,” worried one leper.

**“Jesus! Master!”
cried Joe.
“Have pity on us!”**

Joe stood his ground. “I’m not throwing away my shot.”

He could see faces now. Everyone seemed to group around one Man in the middle—a Man with a strong face and kind eyes.

“Jesus! Master!” cried Joe. *“Have pity on us!”*

To everyone’s surprise, Jesus stopped, right in the middle of the road. The other lepers quickly joined in with Joe.

“Jesus! Master! Have pity on us!”

Jesus stood firm as Joe and the other lepers dared to straggle closer, still calling out. But those in the crowd around backed away, whispering.

As the lepers neared Jesus, He took a long, clear look.

They fell silent. Joe could hardly breathe.

Then Jesus smiled. "Go," He said. "Show yourselves to the priests."

Joe gasped. The only way a leper could approach a priest was to confirm that he'd been healed. But as Joe looked down, his heart sank. His feet and legs were still shriveled and splotchy. His knees still ached.

Jesus moved on, and the crowd followed. The lepers stared at each other.

"Welp. That happened," said one.

"I don't get it," mumbled another.

Joe tightened his grip on his cane. "We should go to the priests. Like He told us."

The other lepers shrugged. "Guess it can't hurt. Any more than it already does."

Limping, the lepers headed out across the fields toward town. They hesitated as they reached the willow tree by the creek, then painfully clambered down the banks.

Joe's stick caught in the twisted roots of the willow tree. It went flying, and Joe tumbled to the ground. He cried out in pain. Instinctively, he jumped to his feet.

"How'd you just jump up like that?" exclaimed another leper.

"Like what?" Joe glanced down again. This time, he saw feet and legs strong and whole, the skin clear and healthy. "My legs . . . the leprosy is gone!" he said in amazement.

The other men glanced down at their own arms and legs and bodies. They, too, were healed!
The lepers danced and laughed until they cried, amazed at what Jesus had done.

“Gotta get to the priest!” cried one.

“Race you,” shouted another.

The lepers splashed across the creek, hurtling toward town. But Joe stopped at the water’s edge as the others ran ahead.

“I’ll get to see my baby Judith again!” he told himself.

But even as he imagined the joy in her eyes, another face flashed into his head. “Jesus!” Joe recalled. “He’s healed me. He’s the One who’s made me whole.”

The crowd parted quickly again as Joe headed straight for Jesus.

Turning back, Joe hurried toward the road. He ran fast, catching up to Jesus and the crowd as they reached the village.

“Jesus. Jesus!” he called out.

The crowd parted quickly again as Joe headed straight for Jesus.

“Praise God, I’m well!” shouted Joe as he threw himself down on the dusty road at Jesus’ feet.

“Thank You, Jesus. Thank You!”

As Joe lifted his face, the dust mixed with tears of joy.

Jesus smiled, but His eyes searched the road behind. *“Weren’t all ten healed? Where are the other nine?”*

As Joe shook his head, Jesus turned to the crowd. *“Didn’t anyone else return and give praise to God except this outsider?”*

Everyone was silent. It was clear Joe was the only one. Jesus smiled down at him.

“Get up and go. Your faith has healed you.”

Joe leapt to his feet and hurried on his way to see the priest. He had delayed his chance to see his family by a short time. But it was worth it to thank the Man who had given him back his life.



Let's Talk!

No matter how independent you like to be, no one can go it alone.

Whether it's your mom washing your laundry, your little sister taking your turn to load the dishwasher when you're sick, or the server at the restaurant who gave you free ice cream, you've got a lot of opportunities to be grateful. Together, list as many people as you can think of who have done something for you in the past few weeks. Now, make a plan to say "thank you" the next time you see those people. You might even write a thank you card! Pray for each other, that God will help you notice and say "thank you" in the moment any time someone does something for you.