

✠ Luke 17:11-19 ✠

IN NOMINE IESU

On Jesus' way to Jerusalem, where He would be betrayed, condemned, beaten, and killed at the hands of sinners, where He would receive the blows meant for us and die on the cursed tree for our sin and the sin of the whole world, on His way to Jerusalem, Jesus stopped and healed ten lepers. Nine of them went to the temple as He had said, showing themselves to the priest for the ritual cleansing. One of them, a foreigner, halfway to the temple realized with the others that he was clean and turned back and returned to the true High Priest, falling at Jesus' feet, worshiping and praising God in thanksgiving.

The rituals of the Old Testament were shadows and types of the One to come. They were meant to point the people to the coming Messiah. The proof of this is here in the healing of the ten lepers. It was Jesus, the God-man, who healed the lepers, not the cleansing ritual done at the temple, which itself was a type of Christ. It is always God who heals, who cleanses, who makes alive, who restores the sick. The rituals of the temple were given by God to the people as a witness to the healing. The job of the Levitical priesthood was simply to declare what God had done or not done; to declare clean or unclean. They did not heal or cleanse. It is God who heals and who cleanses. So the priest that met these nine former lepers at the temple simply declared what God had done, that He had healed them of their leprosy. And so it was God, not the priest that gave them back to their family and friends.

So it is with all the rituals of the Old Testament. They are all types, pointing to Christ and His work and salvation. When you read the Old Testament, you are reading the introduction to the New Covenant made with Jesus' blood. Thus when He died and rose again, all types ended. No longer do the rituals of the Old Testament mean anything. They were types and now we have the One they typified. They were shadows of the light we now have and see in Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Something greater than Moses stood before those ten lepers. Something greater than the Law told them to go and show themselves to the priest. Something greater than the temple to which they were sent housed the presence and name of God. God Himself stood before these ten lepers and God Himself healed them. Therefore it is not acceptable that they did not return to God to give thanks, no matter how well intentioned they were in going to the temple in Jerusalem. It was not enough to go to the type and remain there when the real Temple was between Samaria and Galilee. God built for Himself a new Temple. Not one of brick, but a body He prepared. The Temple is no longer in Jerusalem, not because it was destroyed by the Romans, but because the true Temple sits at the right hand of God.

The nine were blind. That is, they did not have eyes of faith. In them we see the Christian who looks like they obey God, reading their Bible and coming to church and being kind to everyone, yet in their hearts they are without faith, thinking that they are healed, that they are saved from sin and death because they look and behave like a good Christian should look and behave. They are not wicked outwardly. They obey the Ten Commandments as best they can, they know Bible verses and the good 'ol hymns. They devote much time and energy to their church. Everyone would call them good Christians. But in truth, their eyes do not see the One who stands before them for who He is. When they see Jesus their eyes behold only a cog in the machine, not the Creator and Sustainer of the machine. They have good intentions but their faith is lifeless.

Many people are baptized. Many people have tasted and seen that the Lord is good, that He shows mercy; forgiving and loving the sinner. Yet few of them return and give thanks to Christ for the healing He has given them. Just look around. How many do you know that have received the blessing of Baptism, have been welcomed into the kingdom and family of God, yet who rarely if ever set foot into a church to hear God's Word and rejoice in His salvation by singing psalms and hymns and feasting at the celebratory Feast of Victory? Their faith has not made them well.

This miracle and word of Jesus is a prophecy. By it Jesus prophesies that most of those for whom He went up to Jerusalem for, most of those for whom He was betrayed and beaten, most of those He healed by the spilling of His blood and the death of His body have false faith and are thankless and remain in darkness even if they think themselves to be good Christians. Very few will have faith and render Him thanks for His salvation and mercy. Therefore, though we should always warn people about unbelief and that they ought to fear, love, and trust in God above all things, we should not be surprised that most of them do not listen but remain in their unbelief.

It was the foreigner who could see and who truly obeyed Jesus' words by going to the true Temple and showing Himself to the true High Priest, who not only declared the former leper clean but actually cleansed him from his leprosy and sin. This former leper had eyes that could see and ears to hear. He saw more than a prophet and good moral teacher who could show him the way; with eyes of faith He saw the source of life and restoration. Thus his faith made him well. The temple in Jerusalem would do him no good when He had the One who filled the temple right before him. The nine believed they were obeying God, they thought they were doing the right thing, but because they did not worship the Son, because their faith did not lead them to Christ, they had no part in His kingdom. The proverb is true: "The road to hell is paved with good intentions."

Without faith there is no pleasing God. So also, faith without works is dead. It is not enough to look the part like the nine lepers, yet neither is it enough to say, "I believe" and do nothing. It is true that God judges the heart, yet it is when the former leper returns to Jesus that Jesus sees faith and blesses him.

The faithful return to Jesus to give Him thanks and praise for the salvation accomplished by Him on the cross. The faithful do not waste their time with types and shadows, thinking that they do good works and so are received by God. The faithful come to the house of the Lord and fall down at His feet and praise and worship Him by listening to Him and receiving what He offers. In this way, dear Christian, you return with your brother, the former leper, to Jesus. Not as some obligation or rule you must obey, but because you believe that He died for your sins and rose again, purifying you before the Father. You believe and so you sing praises to God, chanting the psalms to the drumbeat of heaven. You believe and so you eat and drink bread and wine made the fountain of life by Jesus' words, "Take eat; this is My body. Take drink; this is My blood shed for you for the forgiveness of all your sins." You believe and so you confess and you forgive.

Rise and go your way, your faith has made you well.

In the name of the FATHER and of the ✠ SON and of the HOLY SPIRIT.

✠ AMEN ✠