

Become a Citizen of God's Kingdom

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 31 August 2014

Preacher: Jim Masters

[0:00] I apologize. Luke 17, 11-21, and read, and then we'll begin our study. And it came about that while Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem, that he was passing between Samaria and Galilee.

And as he entered a certain village, ten leprous men who stood at a distance met him. And they raised their voices saying, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. And when he saw them, he said to them, go and show yourselves to the priests.

And it came about that as they were going, they were cleansed. Now one of them, when he saw that he had been healed, turned back, glorifying God with a loud voice, and he fell on his face at his feet, giving thanks to him.

And he was a Samaritan. And Jesus answered and said, were there not ten cleansed? But the nine, where are they? Was no one found who turned back to give glory to God, except this foreigner? And he said to him, rise and go your way. Your faith has saved you. Now, had it been questioned by the Pharisees as to when the kingdom of God was coming, he answered them and said, the kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed.

[1:21] Nor would they say, look here or there. For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst. Kingdom. What do you think of?

You think of the word kingdom. What comes to your mind? Maybe you think of the time of the dark ages, the knights, chivalry and castles. I had, I even spent time finding all these castle pictures for you.

And I went, oh, the castle pictures, they were so cool. Different ones come to your mind. And then I had, the last picture was a picture of, of course, the castle at Walt Disney World, of course.

Maybe you guys think of that type of castle, or that type of kingdom. But when we think of kingdom, we think of the knights and chivalry. We think of something with glory and power, splendor, such grandeur.

Long flowing robes. Kings. Knights. Noblemen. Armies with thousands upon thousands of soldiers.

[2:32] Servants. Gold. Fine dining. Wine. You think of a king who's rugged, who's handsome, who's buff, right?

Who's got his big sword, he's muscular. You think of Aragorn. Lord of the Rings, of course. That's the first thing that can't allow me. But not a simple looking, ordinary, dresses like everybody else guy, who hangs around outcasts, losers, who reaches out to nobodies.

Kind of looks like a nobody himself. And he heals lepers. With a dozen men with him, who look more like peasants than warriors.

That's pathetic. But that's the kingdom of God. Jesus says, come follow me and you'll find forgiveness of your sins.

Follow me. I'm the guy who's simple looking, ordinary, dresses like everybody else, but I'm the son of man. I am the Lord. I am the Messiah. I'm God's servant. Follow me.

[4:06] You'll find forgiveness of your sins. And what we'll see in our text this morning is this become a citizen of God's kingdom.

Become a citizen of God's kingdom. Unfortunately, this is the only slide you get, people. Sorry. This is all you get. That's all I had time to do. In our text this morning, you see many of Luke's themes in these historical events.

Jesus' journey to Jerusalem. He has mercy on outcasts. He follows the law for lepers. His healing brings praise and thanks to God. God extends His grace to all people, not just to Jews.

faith is called upon because the kingdom is here, now. Jesus acts in mercy and calls people to trust Him.

And the ones that end up coming to trust Him, they're not the religious leaders. They're not the up and up of society. They're not the really cool people. It's the outcasts.

[5:20] The ones we would least expect. The losers. Or, like this Samaritan leper. There's one strike against these lepers.

They're lepers. There's two strikes against this one leper, though. Not only was he a leper, he was a Samaritan. Lepers were despised and shunned by Jews society, but even more were Samaritans. Jesus actively gave mercy to these who cried for mercy and those who truly trust Jesus will find true salvation. He'd become a part of the kingdom.

A citizen. See, it's those who truly put little faith in Jesus who will receive the King and His kingdom, even if she or he is a foreigner or an outcast.

This is a big deal. Because these two verses in 20 and 21, which we'll look at soon, the Pharisees were asking Jesus about the kingdom, but they didn't get it.

[6:32] These least expected, they're the ones who would get it. I mean, who would have thought that a hated foreigner would give praise and display gratitude for God's mercy to Jesus?

Who would have thought? But these Jewish leaders, I mean, you would think that they would do it. They had no gratitude. They were blind. They doubted. Rejected Jesus. We will see how these nine lepers experienced a short-term benefit for being exposed to Jesus.

But this one leper, he experienced a long-term value of responding to Jesus in true, genuine, saving faith. He was different. See, there's a difference between wonder-working faith and salvific faith.

That's what we will see. As well as no faith with the Pharisees. The nine lepers had the former, the wonder-working faith. That one leper, he had salvific faith.

One writer puts it, the response of faith to God's grace leads to salvation. salvation. So, become a citizen of God's kingdom.

[7:46] How do you do that? So, here, all you members, you're used to taking notes and having me up there. The visitors are kind of like, well, we're not used to that, maybe. All you members, you've got to, now you've really got to listen. Or just sleep.

Become a citizen of God's kingdom. How? How do you do that? Through saving faith in Jesus.

There's two points. Point number one. True faith is the mean. Second, Jesus is the focus.

True faith is the means to salvation. True faith is the means. Second, Jesus is the focus. How do you become a citizen of God's kingdom?

Through saving faith in Jesus. True faith is the means. Verses 11 through 19. True faith is the means. And then this is how it begins. It came about while he was on his way to Jerusalem, passing through, passing between Samaria and Galilee.

Well, that's odd. How do you do that? If you go to Jerusalem, you go this way. How do you go through Samaria and Galilee? You're going the opposite direction. That's because Jesus' journey to Jerusalem was not a straight line.

[8:55] He was set to go to Jerusalem, but his journey took him in and out of certain regions. He was moving closer and closer and closer to what he had to do, which is die. And notice verse 12.

And as he entered a certain village, ten leprous men who stood at a distance met him. These ten lepers lived in an anonymous village on the outskirts of the city.

They had to call out to him, we'll see, from a distance, because they were cast out of society.

There's a fear of contagion of leprosy. We've talked about this before, but let me remind you about this disease during the first century.

Now, when you see the term leprosy, it's actually a broad term for a whole series of skin diseases. Not just what's now known as Hansen's disease, which comes in various forms.

It creates lesions or swollen areas of the skin and attacks the nerves. But the term leprosy here in our text, it could refer to a number of different things like psoriasis, lupus, ringworm, phabbis.

[10:11] Whatever it was, it wasn't good. But Hansen's disease, let's focus in on Hansen's disease. What is this? If it was Hansen's disease that these men had, disfigurement would come to them not because of the disease per se, but because the body's warning system about pain was destroyed.

See, Hansen's disease, it attacks the nerves. Numbness comes through the extremities. Ears, ears, eyes, nose, fingertips.

So what happens, vermin, rats would chew on sleeping lepers and they didn't know it.

Ew. They would not be able to feel. They would hurt themselves. They had no idea they were hurting themselves because they couldn't feel. The nerves on those endings were gone. So their body would be mutilated. There would be a foul, rotting smell. And it was coming from them and they would know that. Yet sometimes they wouldn't know that because they wouldn't have a nose to smell.

[11 : 25] Ew. So the ancient world, their only defense was to quarantine them. The person was ostracized, which was difficult to deal with, but needed because the condition was contagious or so they thought.

They were treated as if they were dead men. See, for a leper to be healed, it was likened to getting resurrected from the dead.

It was virtually impossible. And the person would be unclean and thus, the disease became associated with some great sin.

The person had no hope of returning to normal life. There's no way to earn a living. There's no such thing as social security. There was total dependence on charity.

And she or he would die like this. All lepers lived and died together. Jews were Gentiles. Didn't matter. And the person had to cry out, unclean, unclean, as a warning to others to stay away.

[12 : 43] A possible comparison today would be like someone who has AIDS. But even then, I mean, there's no fear of contagion by touching.

As in the first century, I mean, they stayed away. And people kept them away. So here are these ten men. They're decaying. Their clothing was worn out.

Their heads were uncovered. Lesions could be seen on their heads. Just body parts were gone.

This is a sad state. Jesus was their only hope.

So from a distance, verse 13, they raised their voices saying, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. Obviously, they knew something about Jesus' ministry.

They wanted his help. They knew that, these lepers knew he was in a superior position. So they cried out to him for mercy. They were urgently requesting that he would heal them.

[13 : 45] So they cried out to Jesus to get his attention. They called the Master. Have mercy. We've heard about your healing ministry.

We've heard about what you've done. You were only hope. Verse 14. And when he saw them, he said to them, Go and show yourselves to the priest.

He was the only hope and compassion and grace and mercy. He would show, but not the way they may have expected. Go show yourselves to the priest.

Time out. We have leprosy, so we can't really do that. Go show yourselves to the priest. That was what a leper was commanded to do in Leviticus chapter 14.

When it seemed like they were cleansed. The priest would be the inspector of the skin. So Jesus told them to go before the healing had come.

[14 : 48] So notice they had to respond in faith. Jesus acted as they turned to obey his command to go. Notice.

And it came about that as they were going, they were cleansed. They were immediately healed. See, they had to act as if they were already healed. And then, they were healed.

I mean, now, I mean, can you imagine what would happen? Now life was normal. These were back to their wives, their children, their siblings, their parents, their families, what joy, what gladness. And some, maybe, some commentators talk about, maybe their limbs grew back. Well, that'd be weird. Or maybe just the leper, she left.

Whatever happened, they knew they were healed. But, verse 15, now one of them, when he saw that he had been healed, turned back, glorifying God with a loud voice, and he fell on his face, at his feet, giving thanks to him.

[16 : 05] But, when one saw that he was healed, notice, he returned and expressed himself, in three different ways. He glorified God with a loud voice.

He fell on his face, at Jesus' feet. Third, he gave thanks to Jesus. First, glorified God with a loud voice.

He was screaming for joy, at the top of his lungs. The two great words, it's actually where we get the one word, megaphone.

I'll turn the microphone off. What you normally do at football games, right?

I was working at the, rec center this past week, on Thursday, the Cardinals game was on, and, I did just clean something, and I stood up, just kind of, catch my breath, and the, Samuel Chargers, they were about to score a touchdown, excuse me, they were close to the end zone, he threw the ball, the Cardinal quarterback, intercepted the ball, and ran to like, the 50 yard line.

[17:26] Oh, people went nuts. Oh, yeah! Right? That's exactly what this guy did. Megaphone. He's screaming at the top of his lungs, he's stoked, he gave a bold, spontaneous reaction of faith.

Jesus didn't demand gratitude. He freely offered it to Jesus. He knew God was at work through Jesus.

As one writer puts it, it was pro-faith. And then second, he fell before Jesus at his feet, like a slave to a king.

Thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you. He's screaming at the top of his voice. He falls at Jesus' feet, he's saying, thank you, thank you, thank you. He acted in humility, prostrated himself, thanking Jesus.

Obviously, this man knew Jesus was more than just a mere man. Based upon what Jesus would say to him later, this man was displaying true saving faith.

[18:35] How do you enter the kingdom? Through saving faith. Faith is the only means. This is God's Messiah.

Oh, but wait. There's one more thing. And he was a Samaritan. The one to show such great faith was an outsider, despised by Jews.

Being distant from the covenants of promise, as far as the Jews were concerned, he was the only one to show great thanks for his healing. Who would give God glory for healing him?

Not the ones you would expect. The least expected. The outsiders. The losers.

Do you think you're a loser today? You are. And you are exactly where you need to be. Because you know what?

[19:55] God loves to love on losers who admit that they need him. Isn't that great? God loves to love on losers who admit, I need you.

I'm a loser. I need you. Thank you. Thank you for showing grace to me. And he does. Come to Jesus to save you this morning.

If you're not a Christian, you're not a follower of Jesus, cry out to God for mercy. You deserve his judgment. You deserve righteous judgment from God. And he gives you a mercy to you in Jesus who lived where you failed, who died for sinners and was resurrected.

That's the gospel. Repent and put your trust in Jesus. Come and become a citizen of God's kingdom. Put your trust in Jesus alone.

Verse 17. And Jesus answered and said, Um, were there not ten cleansed? But the nine, where are they? Was no one found who turned back to give glory to God except this foreigner?

[21:08] Jesus' response, three questions. Rhetorical questions, maybe. But definitely reflective type questions. Were there not ten cleansed? I reached out to all ten. I always preached God's grace.

God showed them all mercy. So Jesus expected all ten to return to give thanks to God. But, he says, the nine, where are they?

Shouldn't all of you be here? Why aren't all praising God and giving thanks? Where is the recognition of Jesus? One writer says, this is a stinging observation from Jesus.

These nine, they missed it big time. Was no one found? Turn back to give glory to God except this foreigner.

Only this outcast responded with gratitude. Only this outcast understands who I am. You know, it's interesting.

[22:15] In the Greek translation of the Old Testament, this term that Jesus uses, foreigner, it's used in the Greek translation of the Old Testament to denote someone who's a pagan, who's a heathen.

As a matter of fact, in the first century, this same Greek word that Jesus uses, foreigner, it was posted on the different places in the temple that would prohibit Gentiles, pagans, heathens, you can only go this far, you can go no farther.

That's the word that Jesus used. This guy is the only one who gives me thanks. This guy is the only one who gives glory to God.

So, Jesus' statement suggests something. Even Luke making mention that this one was a Samaritan, but Jesus' statement further gives oomph to the suggestion that these other nine were Jewish.

They were Jews. One would think they would return to give thanks to Jesus, right? Nope. This Samaritan was more spiritually sensitive to God than the Jews.

[23 : 40] See, friends, it's the ones you least expect who respond to the saving knowledge of Jesus. It's the ones you never had thought to follow Jesus.

They follow Jesus. As you give the gospel to others, be faithful. Don't give up. Maybe some of you have been praying for a certain person for two, three, ten, fifteen, twenty years, twenty-five years, and you're thinking there's just no way.

Don't give up. Be faithful. Do not underestimate God and His power. He can save. notice Jesus' response to the Samaritan leper who's now healed.

He said to him, rise, go your way. Your faith, and from the Greek text, is, has saved you. Sozo. is best for us to see that Jesus was saying His faith has saved him.

His faith had delivered him. Full, saving faith. He received what the others didn't receive. this man. This man was not just healed externally.

[25 : 01] He was healed internally. Because this man knew that God was working through Jesus as the Messiah, he gained a relationship with God through Jesus.

In King Jesus, he received forgiveness, reconciliation, and eternal life, and was transformed to live a righteous life before God. He became a citizen of God's kingdom.

And the way to do that is faith. Faith is the only means. Again, those who embrace Jesus in faith are many times the ones we will least expect.

One writer says this, grace works in surprising places. God's grace to respond to the gospel, it goes on to all.

to everyone. Anyone and everyone can come to Christ. But only some initial respond to God's goodness. One must fully trust Christ.

[26 : 05] That is the means. This tells us something. This healing that took place with Jesus, it tells us something.

It tells us one may gain through God's general grace, but still not be saved. these nine lepers, they gained God's grace, but they still were saved. They tasted of the heavenly gift.

They had an experience of God's grace, of His mercy, but they never responded. Because the response doesn't move from receiving kindness to exercising true trust in Jesus alone.

see, true faith responds to God's goodness in Jesus, and this one publicly acknowledges Him as Lord.

It's what's called, what's known as common grace given to all versus special grace given to only some. See, again, God's grace has appeared bringing salvation to all men, Titus chapter 2.

[27 : 10] anyone and everyone is called to respond to the gospel. The gospel goes out to everyone, repents, and trusts in Christ, but only some receive the gift of salvation through Jesus, through trusting in Jesus alone.

There's another key point I want to bring up before we move to the next point, Jesus is the focus.

Another point I want to bring up, how is our thankful gauge this man was so thankful, runs to Jesus, plops himself in front of him like a slave and says, thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you.

How is our thankful gauge? Are we thankful for where God has us right now? Where God has you in your job, in your ministry, your family, relationships, or are we bitter and angry?

We lust over other things because we do not have thankful hearts. Learn from the leper. Be thankful. Be grateful. It's so important for us as Christians to be a people who give thanks, no matter our circumstances.

It's vitally important that our community sees and knows us to be a people who give thanks. They say, wow, those people, they're so thankful. They're thankful to God for this and for that, even though they're struggling with this and they're dealing with that and they're having a hard time with this and they're really just going through such crises over here.

[28 : 44] They're thankful. It's important for them to see us pray that we have grateful, thankful hearts and attitude of thanks. faith. So, first point, faith is the only means.

Again, become a citizen of God's kingdom. How? By saving faith through Jesus alone. First, faith is the only means. Second point, Jesus is the focus, verses 20 through 21.

Jesus is the focus, 20 through 21. He was questioned by the Pharisees when the kingdom was coming. why is this right after the healing of the ten lepers?

That's kind of weird. It's because these Pharisees can't miss what just happened in front of their eyes, in front of their faces.

Jesus healed a group of lepers. Guess what? The kingdom's here. remember, for someone to be healed of leprosy was like what?

[29 : 49] Being resurrected from the dead. It was virtually impossible. Jesus just did it with his words. He didn't say be healed.

He just said go show yourselves to the priest. They're healed. the kingdom is here. What do we mean by God's kingdom though?

What is meant when we say God's kingdom? One writer puts it like this. Kingdom is God's people in God's place under God's rule. What are you putting? Kingdom.

God's people in God's place under God's rule. See, it began in the garden, but it was lost at the fall. But God gave hope in the promise of the coming one.

There in Genesis chapter 3. And then more promises came to Abraham than to Moses and then to David. David, the kingdom is tied to the Davidic throne and to the land of Israel.

[30 : 52] But it's not simply the land of Israel, but also about forgiveness and grace and mercy, reconciliation righteousness. Relationship with God is restored from what was lost at the fall in Genesis chapter 3.

See, there's spiritual and physical aspects to the kingdom. And what was the tie of bringing near the kingdom of God? Jesus.

He's the focus. He's the central aspect. The good news of Jesus. When Jesus came, he brought one portion of the kingdom to fulfillment. The other portion would come later.

So notice verse 20 again. Having been questioned by the Pharisees as to when the kingdom of God was coming, he answered them and said, the kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed. Notice verse 21.

No, but they say, look here or there. The Pharisees were expecting certain signs to take place that would tell them that the kingdom was here. But Jesus said, just heal these lepers who were blind to God's worth.

[32 : 00] And see God's working through Jesus. The healing was the sign of the eschaton, of the last things. The kingdom is here. Jesus said, you don't hunt for the kingdom.

Look here. Or look there. It's linked to the person and work of Jesus. Notice the next part of verse 21. And not say, look here or there.

For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst. You see in Jesus the arrival of God's kingdom. The kingdom has been come with certain eschatological signs to be observed.

The sun turns black. The moon turns to blood. The stars fall. Bam! There's lightning and thunder and something powerfully spectacular Eragon comes running out like with a sword.

Right? No, it's not like that. Praise Lord of the Rings. That's not how it goes. Because you have this ministry of Jesus with a sword.

[33 : 04] Yeah. It's humble, quiet, reserved. He heals. He does miracles and he tells people, don't tell anybody.

What? But that doesn't mess the glorious survival picture of God's kingdom. There's supposed to be power, there's supposed to be glory, armies, Aragorn, there's supposed to be those types of things.

No. Jesus says the kingdom is in your midst. He says, you want a sign? It's me.

Not me, Jim. Jesus says it's me. I'm the sign. They're gone. Where? Right here.

It's me. Which, by the way, is a better translation. Some of you might have the translation in your presence or even the kingdom of God is before you. I think NIV might have within you, which is terrible because Jesus is speaking to the Pharisees, and he says the kingdom is within you.

[34 : 19] Within the Pharisees? Are you crazy? They hated Jesus. They rejected Jesus. And he says the kingdom is in you. Yeah, that makes a lot of sense. A better translation is in your presence or in your midst or before you.

I'm right here. It's me, Jesus says. Jesus had brought this up before.

chapter 11, verse 20 of Luke. Jesus says, if I cast out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. It's interesting too, when Jesus says this here in verse 21 of

chapter 17, the kingdom of God is in your midst.

The phrase and the structure in the Greek is emphasized the kingdom and the time that's coming. It's here, now, man, right now. The essence of the kingdom is Jesus, the Messiah.

It centers upon him alone. No, it will not be by certain apocalyptic, spectacular, eschatological signs. It's related to the very presence of Jesus himself.

[35 : 35] The Pharisees ignored what was happening before their eyes. They were missing how God was working through Jesus. Jesus says, you want to see the kingdom? Look to me.

And what do I offer? What does Jesus offer? Forgiveness, mercy, compassion, grace, the central figure of the kingdom is right before their eyes.

Jesus warned them. Back in chapter 12, verse 54, Jesus says, you see a cloud rising in the west, you say, here's showers coming. And that's how it turns out.

You see a south wind blowing, you say, it's going to be a hot day, and that's how it turns out.

Hypocrites. You know how to analyze the appearance of the earth and the sky, why do you not analyze this present time?

Why can you not see what's going on before your very eyes? They were blind. Jesus' very presence represents the arrival of God's kingdom.

[36 : 42] Learned the lesson from the Samaritan leper. As one writer puts it, quote, the way to God's kingdom is Jesus. He represents his presence and power.

But mind you, to recognize Jesus as God's Messiah, it took inner revelation, insight from God himself. And then one will certainly respond to Jesus in repentant faith.

In chapter 10, verse 21 of Luke, it says Jesus rejoiced greatly in the spirit. He said, I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you hid these things from the wise and intelligent.

From the up and open society, from the big awesome people, and you revealed it to babes. Yes, Father, for thus it was well-pleasing in your sight.

I'll put it a different way. It takes an act of God for you to see God. It takes an act of God for you to see God in all that he is.

[37 : 49] But wait, is there a future kingdom? Yes, there is. God's kingdom has two stages, a present, now, and a future, not yet.

Already, not yet. We are already in the kingdom, but there's still an aspect of the kingdom that's yet to come when Jesus returns at his second coming, but they're part of his kingdom right now because Jesus brings forgiveness and he brings the Holy Spirit, which is a major promise because Jesus promised to bestow the Holy Spirit as a token of the king's presence.

And not just of his presence, but also of his future coming. So, in essence, we as the church, we manifest God's kingdom here on earth.

He is active, through Jesus in us, displaying his transforming power, bringing salvation to his people. God is working in us now.

And the spirit of God is overcoming the enemy and the forces of evil, but we are a living, organic reflection of Jesus' message, the reflection of what the kingdom will be like in the future.

[39 : 11] Understand though, the kingdom is not merely the church, it's not just here, it's not just this, this is not just the kingdom. We are a small window of what it's going to be like in the future when Jesus returns, a small portion of what it's going to be like in all this glory, where there will be glory, there will be power, there will be a great king, not Aragorn, but Jesus.

I think he's greater than Aragorn. The kingdom will come in all its fullness. But yet, until then, what's the kingdom like?

You look at the church. When we are caring for each other, giving thanks to God, building our relationships with each other, rebuking and forgiving each other, ministering to each other, reaching out to the down and out with the gospel and proclaiming the gospel, people, we're displaying the kingdom.

We're displaying the kingdom. Turn to this kingdom, to become a part of this kingdom, one must respond to Jesus. So this means that God's kingdom is made up of people who responded to the eternal son, sharing the benefits he offers.

We're citizens of the kingdom when we turn and come to him. Faith is the means, Jesus is the focus. And now we're a community, a new community who reflect God's love by the way we live our lives.

[40 : 51] We're a new community who reflect the power of the kingdom by the way we live, how we love God, how we love others. We are reflecting this kingdom to others. This is what the kingdom of

God is like. The kingdom is here in Christ who offers forgiveness.

The kingdom is here in Christ and in the faith community he is the fulfillment of the promised Old Testament. There's hope in him. Outcasts become citizens of God's kingdom.

There's nothing glamorous about it per se. It's only in Jesus you find true salvation through faith alone. Jesus is the focus. Faith is the means.

What we like to do after I go through the passage and we study it, I could give you a few moments to reflect and ponder. So we're going to have a few moments of silence for you to think about and to ponder what we've seen in God's word here in Luke chapter 17.

A few moments for you to think about and to ponder what we've seen in his word and his scriptures. prayers. And then we'll do our time of giving and then we'll sing our last two songs and then we'll have our closing prayer.

[42 : 05] Thank you.