

Faith and Thanks

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[0 : 00] It would be great if you could keep your Bibles open at that Luke reading. It's nice to be with you. I've spent most of my Sunday evenings down at Blackburn, so it's nice to come back and be with you tonight for Thanksgiving Sunday.

In our family of five people, we now have all five of us with a driver's license, which is a bit scary for me. Although two of my kids are on the learners, and one of the learners, not the one with us tonight, but the other one said to me recently, Dad, am I a good driver?

To which I replied, yeah, you're a great driver. And then they said, well, can I have a guy driving your car? To which I replied, mum's car is way better.

Here are the keys to her car. And the point of the story is my actions exposed my level of faith in their driving ability. And today we'll see that the actions of some lepers, like giving thanks or not giving thanks, today's Thanksgiving Sunday, expose their level of faith in Jesus, just like we heard from Naaman's actions, or lack of action exposing his faith in what he was told to do.

But first we're going to see Jesus' actions, which is point one in your outlines and verse 11 in your Bibles. And so we read, now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus travelled along the border between Samaria and Galilee.

[1 : 35] Here we are reminded that Jesus is, at this point in the gospel, on his way to Jerusalem. For those, I know you spent like four or five years going through Luke's gospel, a while ago.

Let me remind you that the turning point in Luke's gospel is chapter 9, verse 51, where it says that as the time approached for him to be taken up into heaven, Jesus resolutely, determinedly set out for Jerusalem.

Why is he determined to go to Jerusalem? Well, what has to happen before he's taken up to heaven? He has to die on a cross. That's why he's going to Jerusalem.

To die for us because this is how he would be our saviour, wouldn't he? Christmas is not many weeks away.

This year has flown by. Well, maybe not for you. But at Christmas time, one of the verses we often hear is this one earlier on in Luke's gospel, where the angel says to the shepherds, today in the town of David, a saviour has been born to you.

[2 : 41] And he is the Messiah, the Christ, or the King, the Lord. In other words, Jesus is King and saviour.

And the way this King would save us was by going to Jerusalem to pay for our sins at the cross. That is, to take our judgment, our punishment in our place.

That's why he's headed to Jerusalem. But he doesn't actually, in our passage, take the most direct route. And so, just above the word Samaria, you can see two little arrows.

That's about where he is with his disciples at this point of our reading tonight. The most direct way to Jerusalem is straight south, isn't it? To Jerusalem in the bottom.

But he's actually starting to travel east along the border between Galilee in the north and Samaria in the middle there. In fact, actually, back in chapter 10, he's already been down to Bethany, down the bottom, which is right next door to Jerusalem.

[3 : 47] And so, it's like Jesus is setting out for Melbourne City. He travels into Richmond. Then he goes back out to Croydon, down to Wonthorn, all on his way into the city.

It's a roundabout way, isn't it? Why is he doing this? Well, because he wanted to preach in as many towns as possible while he had the time before he died and was taken up into heaven.

And we know that earlier on in Luke's Gospel, like chapter 4, where he says, I must proclaim the good news of God's kingdom, that he is the king of the kingdom to other towns as well.

Or chapter 13, at the bottom of the screen there, after he set out resolutely for Jerusalem, it says that he's teaching along the way, as he's made his way to Jerusalem.

You see, for Jesus' death to be effective for people, they need to hear the good news about him and put their faith in him.

[4 : 46] I mean, we know that, don't we? Because it's only by faith in Jesus that his death becomes effective for us, that we are saved from sin's judgment.

And that's what the actions of the lepers in our passage now show us. A point to verse 12. Jesus is seen by these ten men with leprosy, and it's no surprise we meet these men on the border towns between Galilee and Samaria, on the fringes of society.

Because that's what sickness does, doesn't it? It isolates you from your friends, from your workplace or school or uni, from society.

I mean, if we are sick, we stay at home, don't we? We withdraw from community. Although for the Jews, the law actually demanded that they do this.

So in Leviticus, it says that whoever has a skin disease like leprosy, they shall remain unclean. As long as he has the disease, he is unclean.

[6 : 11] He shall live alone. His dwelling shall be outside the camp. Last weekend, I was meant to preach a sermon in the morning. Only the week before I copped COVID.

And so what I had to do was I had to record the sermon last Saturday in an empty church. And then come Sunday, I had to stay at home.

If I was a Jew, I would have had to go around with this sign that says unclean. Because that's what disease does, isn't it? It isolates you. It removes you from the camp, from the community.

And that's what it did for these men. Now the Old Testament law was given for the good of the community. It helped to make sure that leprosy didn't spread. But it was also a reminder, if you remember from the series in Leviticus, that nothing impure could come near God who is pure.

Not people who had been touched by the effects of a sinful world like disease or death. And certainly not people who were sinful themselves.

[7 : 20] Unless, of course, they are cleansed and forgiven. And so this law explains why these ten lepers lived on the fringes of society, on these border towns, away from their community, and away from God at the temple.

And it explains why they didn't come near to Jesus, but stood at a distance, did you realize? As the text says. It seems they've heard, though, of Jesus, and so they call out to him.

They've heard that he's healed others and believed he could heal them. And so they cry out for pity or mercy from him. They're desperate, aren't they? We would be too, wouldn't we?

Desperate to be healed and cleansed so we can have life in community and with God again. And God wants this for them, which is why Jesus gives it to them.

Verse 14. When he saw them, he said, go, show yourselves to the priest. As they went, they were cleansed.

[8 : 25] As they went, they were cleansed. No more sign that said unclean. They went, of course, to the priest because the law said the priests were the ones that had to declare them clean.

But notice they were cleansed as they went. You see the end of verse 14 there? As they went, they were cleansed. In other words, they obeyed Jesus and went even before they were healed by Jesus.

Which suggests by their actions that they did have some faith in Jesus. You know, to trust him and go even before they were cleansed.

Indeed, they even call Jesus master, don't they? But it seems their faith in Jesus was only as a master of healing. Like a professor of cardiology or something.

You know how you've got these specialists today that are experts in their field, their medical field? But it doesn't seem they quite believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the King.

[9 : 30] Who was born to save us, our Saviour. It was rather a superficial faith rather than a saving faith. Because their lack of any further action is now contrasted with the Samaritan.

Point three, verse 15. One of them, when he saw that he was healed, came back praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him.

And he was a Samaritan. One of the ten comes back praising God. In other words, recognizing that Jesus is the one that God has used to give him healing.

Such that he can now come near to Jesus. Notice, he doesn't have to stand at a distance anymore, does he? But he does more than that. He then falls at Jesus' feet and thanks Jesus, doesn't he? These actions show that he believes Jesus is much more than a master of healing. Much more than a professor of leprosy. But he's the Messiah.

[10:40] The King who saves. And Luke adds, this man was a Samaritan. Which would have shocked Luke's Jewish readers. You see, Galilee in the north was Jewish.

Judea in the south was Jewish. But Samaria in the middle, well, it was made up of Jews who over centuries had intermarried with other nationalities.

And they became half-breeds. In fact, that's what the pure-breeds Jews considered them. They despised them as half-breeds, actually.

And so for us, think, I don't know, think Queensland in the north is pure. Victoria in the south is pure. And New South Wales in the middle, half-breeds. I can say that.

I'm from New South Wales. It's okay. But the point is, this mention of the Samaritan at the end of verse 16 would have shocked Luke's Jewish readers.

[11:41] Perhaps to provoke them not to be outdone by this Samaritan of all people. And to realise if this Samaritan did this, then how much more so should they?

For this Samaritan is our model to follow. And Jesus confirms this by what he says next. Verse 17. Jesus asked, Were not all ten cleansed?

Where are the other nine? Has no one returned to give praise to God except this foreigner? Then he said to him, Rise and go. Your faith has made you well.

You see, by saying, Where are the other nine? Jesus implies that that one got it right. He is our model to follow. But Jesus says more than that.

For this Samaritan's actions expose not a superficial faith, but a saving faith. Verse 19 literally says, Rise and go. Your faith has saved you.

[12:45] And that's what the original word literally means. Has saved you. In other words, this Samaritan has a saving faith, doesn't he? Such that he's not just cleansed from leprosy, but saved from sin, whether he realised it or not at this point.

He's able to rise forgiven and right with God. For his actions of falling at Jesus' feet and thanking Jesus. And not just the right response to Jesus, but also a recognition of Jesus, of who he is, as the Messiah, the King who saves.

It's a bit like when my son was little, he would jump from a step or from a trampoline or anything high into my arms without hesitation that I would catch him. Now that he's 20, he thankfully no longer does this, because I don't think I could catch him anymore.

But his actions showed he had faith in me as someone strong enough to catch him. And this Samaritan's actions show his faith in Jesus as the Messiah who is strong enough to save him. This is what Jesus affirms by saying, your faith has saved you. Interestingly, Jesus also calls him not Samaritan, but foreigner, doesn't he?

[14:08] Perhaps to show that this saving faith is possible, not just for Jews or Samaritans, but all people, you know, foreigners like us here in Melbourne. And so the question for us this evening is, are we like the Samaritan?

At one level we already are actually, because we all need not cleansing from leprosy, but saving from sin, don't we? Saving from the eternal judgment caused by our sin, that is from hell.

But we know more than the Samaritan did. We know that Jesus did make it to Jerusalem. Jesus did die on the cross. He did take the judgment for our sins.

And so by his blood, we can be forgiven, saved. We can spiritually rise and be right with God and part of the community of God.

If we rightly recognize Jesus for who he is. And so have you done that? Have you rightly recognized Jesus as the one God has sent to pay for your sins at the cross?

[15:19] Simply put, have you put your faith in Jesus as your King and Savior? And for us who have already done so, then we are also to be like the Samaritan who rightly responded to Jesus, you know, by falling at his feet, not literally, of course, but metaphorically, in our lives, by, you know, bowing our lives to him as our King, living his way, following his commands, you know, commands like loving one another, like meeting together Sunday by Sunday, Sunday by regularly, or putting him and pleasing him above all others.

Are we responding like the Samaritan by falling at Jesus' feet in our lives? And secondly, are we responding like the Samaritan who praised God and thanked Jesus for life?

Now, do we thank Jesus for being born in this messed up world, for dying on a cross and suffering hell in our place, for sticking through life's ups and downs with us, do we praise God for Jesus and everything else he's given us?

Will we thank God tonight? And so the application, will we be like the Samaritan who rightly responds to Jesus falling at his feet in life and giving thanks to him for life?

In fact, the order of events in this passage highlights how our actions expose the kind of faith we have, doesn't it? Remember in the passage, the Samaritan fell at Jesus' feet and thanked Jesus first, then based on those actions, Jesus said, go, your faith has saved you.

[17:17] You see, this passage highlights how the actions, falling and thanking, expose the kind of faith the Samaritan and we have.

And so to put the application another way, it's what do our actions show about our faith? My actions with one of my kids wanting to drive my car, it exposed the level of my faith in their driving ability. I still gave them the keys to my wife's car, so I had some faith in their driving ability. But if I had complete faith, you know, a saving faith, so to speak, I would have given them the keys to my car, wouldn't I?

Well, in a similar way, do our actions suggest a faith that is superficial, you know, like the other nine? Do we perhaps only give Jesus the keys to parts of our life and not others?

Or do we perhaps, you know, thank God on Sundays and then forget God all the other days? Or do our actions show that we do have a saving faith like the Samaritan, where we fall at Jesus' feet, giving him the keys to our whole lives and continuing to thank him every day for life?

[18:43] What do our actions show about our faith? Let's pray that would show our faith is a saving one. Let's pray. Our gracious Father, we thank you for this reminder tonight of who Jesus is, the King, the Messiah who saves.

Help us, we pray, to respond rightly to him by falling at his feet in life and by thanking him each day for life.

Help us in this, we pray, in his name. Amen. Well, let's stand and sing our next song. Thanks for listening, bye.

Thank you. They're here. Bye. See you next time. Bye.

Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye.