

Learning From Lepers

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: 15 September 2019

Preacher: Mr Scott Macleod

[0 : 00] Can we turn again to the passage we read together in the second book of Kings chapter 7? And can we take us a text, verse 9?

Then they said to one another, We are not doing right. This day is a day of good news. If we are silent and waiting till the morning light, punishment will overtake us.

Now therefore come, let us go and tell the king's household. So since we are just dropping in on this chapter, we'll just briefly set the scene a wee bit and look at Elisha and the words that he said and where he came from.

So the prophet Elijah came to him first in the first book of Kings to take him away to be a prophet in his place.

For when Elijah was taken up to heaven in chariots of fire and descends as they descended to escort him to eternity.

[1 : 21] And Elisha, he sees this scene of Elijah being taken away in these chariots. And so his request to receive a double portion of Elijah's spirit, it seems to have been fulfilled.

Enabling Elisha to follow in the footsteps of his teacher and become a prophet on earth for the God of heaven. And although Elijah seems to be more well known, Elisha didn't loudly carry out any great power of showing God's sovereignty by calling down fire from heaven.

Elisha's works, they seem more modest. He seems to provide for people's needs with unassuming methods for a man that has such powerful and almighty authority bestowed upon him.

He even meets the people's smallest concerns, like when he retrieves the lost axe head for the man that had borrowed the axe.

He takes it from the water for the man. And probably one of his most extensive prophecies is here, where he is enabled to tell the king that there will be an abundance of food for the whole city of Samaria, which seems unreal as they are being sieged under siege by the Syrians.

[3 : 00] But the grain that would be most desired, which reads as if it were non-existent or they had completely run out, that it would be in abundance and sold for a cheap price all within the time frame of a day.

And Elisha himself doesn't stand before the city and deliver the food, like Elijah calling down fire from heaven.

Elisha stays in the background. He gives the word of the Lord to the ones that require to hear it and then waits for the Lord to work.

He speaks only in the chapter in the first sentence and a word of rebuke to the king's captain. And is that not why we gather today, that we would hear even just one word from the Lord?

Of all the words that are spoken in the entirety of the day, one word direct from the Lord may be the one in which we need to hear. But can we today focus for a while on the leper and the message that they provided for the people that the prophet foretold, the message that allowed them to eat, and can we split it up into the points of admit, taste, and enjoy, an acronym of eight for applying our thoughts today.

[4 : 41] So let us begin with that note. As we look at the lepers, we see them, they've been discussing at the gates of Samaria. They're weighing things up.

They're wondering, what shall we do with our lives? Why are we sitting here waiting till we die? And maybe we could say that these four men are the most heart-searching men of all the city of Samaria.

Because they have been cast out because of their ailments from the city, they have been rejected by their own people, and so, as the ones that remain within the city will have a reliance upon the walls that are surrounding and guarding them from the enemy.

And maybe they even have a pride in the walls that maybe even their own hands built. So they will not consider things as the lepers who have absolutely nothing to rely on.

These four did at once remain within the walls, but now that there is no worth on the inside either for them, they reason amongst themselves and say inside they shall also die.

[6 : 02] So being on the outside and standing back, it gives them a different perspective because they're without any reliance on anything. These men, they are outcasts.

They're feeling like they are. They are saying, we will die today or tomorrow. I mean, we will die at some point, and maybe you three that are left are the only ones that will notice.

Feeling like they are worthless. Feeling maybe like they have nothing really to live for because they are poor and they are sick and they are empty inside.

And the city that they once hoped in, well, it's kind of falling apart inside. As far as they are concerned, the city that they knew so well, as they look at things that they were hanging on to, they realize there isn't any satisfaction there to be found.

And one commendable thing about them, they know there is a problem looming. They are honest enough to say, I need help.

[7 : 14] As simple as it sounds, that's what each other must say. And as far as the situation is concerned, their only hope is to go to the Syrians, to go to the enemy, to go maybe to the ones they hated.

It sounds silly, but they are desperate for food and it is their only option. They are knowing their need and they are admitting that they need an answer.

And if we could imagine that we, each of us here, we were our own, we had our own city and we had our own city walls and all that we had done was inside our own city and we would look and we would see our house and our city and all that we own and all that we love within the walls of our own city.

And we would look at it and ask what's inside it and what would be the best thing within my own city? What am I holding on to?

What do I desire? And what do I rely upon within my own city? And there will be hundreds of distractions in there. If we looked around, there would be so many things that we could see that would distract us.

[8 : 34] But maybe what we need to do is to walk outside our own city walls and have a look back in to get a different perspective on things and ask what's inside that's going to satisfy me.

What is going to give me hope? And ask, will I die relying on the walls that I have built? Maybe it's time that we take a walk outside of our own city.

Because it says, what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his soul? In order to put a clearer perspective on our life, it is good just to take a step back and not get too engrossed in the things that aren't all that important.

That you would consider what is of real value and weigh up your situation before God. Are you knowing your need?

A need that will draw you closer to the very place where you might think it is ridiculous to go to. Like the lepers approaching the Syrians.

[9 : 58] And if we can use another image, if we could say that maybe maybe one of your best friends has developed this problem where they can't feel hunger.

And so they don't get hungry. And you you should say to them that really you should eat. You're going to need to eat. You will die.

But he replies, I don't feel hungry. I'm not hungry. Why do I need to eat? And no matter what you say to him, he is completely convinced that he doesn't need to eat anything because he doesn't feel this need to eat.

And you can only reply, well, the fact of the matter is if you don't eat, you will die. if he doesn't feel his need, he's not going to seek a solution.

And if you don't see your need for a saviour, why would you need one? Why would you seek one? I can stand here all day and say you need Christ, pleading with you that you must have Christ as your saviour.

[11 : 16] And that the fact of the matter is if you don't, you shall die. Maybe what we can say to your friend, we can maybe find a photo of him and show it to him.

Maybe from months ago and compare it. Say, look how much thinner you have become. Look how much weaker you are. Because there is a truth there to compare to.

And if you were to hold up a photo of each one of us maybe 10, 20, 30 years ago, and you look at the difference, it's not going to be like a game of spot the difference.

It's going to be the image is going to be completely different. You can see that you are ageing and you are changing. And the fact of the matter is that as much as we don't want to admit it, we are slowly dying.

And so rather than the photo, if we hold up the word of God against our lives, it becomes glaringly obvious that we fall short because of all the evil that is in us and all the things that we say wrong and all the things that we do wrong.

[12:40] As we start at the Bible, we can go to Exodus and see ourselves failing by the Ten Commandments. or maybe we see ourselves even failing at the temptation of the devil which we all fall foul of in Genesis.

We don't need to go far to know that we are in need of a saviour. And so if we are full of sin, we cannot be presented before God who is sinless.

But if you don't believe and trust your life to Christ, then you are bad enough to go to hell. And if you're a good person, you're bad enough to go to hell.

The only entrance requirement into heaven is that you believe and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ as your saviour because he has borne your sin on that cross in order that you may be presented with no sin.

He has paid the price for you. So I ask you all, do you see your need? Do we reason like the leper and do we weigh up our options?

[14:03] There is a set point to your life that shall mark the end. The problem being that no one knows for sure when we shall reach that point or when that point shall meet you.

So the lepers decide they must go to their only hope. because they have no other option. So do you have any other option?

Really your only one is to go to Christ and would you not come to the camp that Christ has provided for you? So let us move on to our second point.

Taste. Our lepers, they have come to the city and camp and what do they find? It says, behold, there was no one there.

It's reading as if they've kind of walked up to this camp just at the very edge and stuck their heads in, found a tent.

[15:11] There's no one here. Let's grab some food as quickly as possible and maybe they see some gold or silver. Let's take that as well and run back.

And you can imagine them just sitting on top of a hill maybe watching, holding this treasure, being satisfied with what they've ate and being in amazement that they have possession of such a thing. But then realising that, hey, there's no one at that camp still. And so they go back and they take more and they hide it again.

The provision that is made is so great that their conscience is ashamed. They realise when the daylight comes they are going to be noted as missing by the gatekeeper or having had found food somewhere and kept it for themselves.

So before we go any further, here there is a great challenge for the believers amongst us. Would we not say that we have been given and have received an abundance of good things from the Lord?

[16:33] Has he not supplied us with great things? And do you not sit and wonder at the treasures that you have received as the lepers were satisfied with the food and as they held treasures that they possessed?

Do we not wonder at what we hold on to that we have in Christ Jesus? And hopefully you answer yes to all these things.

But are you telling people about it? You see the lepers, they seen that the city that they came from was in a great need of a mighty provision.

They realised when the light of day came that punishment would overtake them. They are feeling guilty that they have possession of so much that satisfies their needs while the rest of the city they don't have any.

And that's the point here. Christian, are you feeling guilty about the gospel that you have received? Are you holding the gospel message in your own heart and not sharing it with those around you? [17:52] Are you not seeing the great need of those that are within our city? Are you realising in your mind like the leper?

we are not doing right. Today is a day of good news and we have good news, do we know.

We have an answer for the needs of men, the news of hope and salvation of our risen Saviour. We have food from our Father in heaven.

He provides all that we need in Christ Jesus. And I know sharing the gospel is hard and I speak to myself when I say this. And if people don't want to have or hear the gospel message that you share with them, then we can share the love that Christ has put in our hearts.

If the man wouldn't want to eat the food that you give him, then let him see the nourishment that you receive from digesting the word of God.

[19:03] God. And if the leper don't share the good news, they see that they expect some form of punishment for withholding, they realise they are being greedy, and it is their instinctive nature of man to grab what he can for himself.

C.H. Spurgeon writes in his book A Neglected Duty, you cannot do your friend a greater kindness than to admonish him in the Lord, nor can you wish your enemy a greater injury than to go unrebuked.

God. And is that not a thought for us this day, that we would not withhold the gospel message, and that our sins of omission wouldn't be great.

for when we see the morning light that Christ brings, when the light of Christ comes in judgment, will you be able to say that I did all that I could?

Luke 12 verse 48, those who received much, much will be asked. And so let us move on to our final point, enjoy.

[20:31] the leper's words are validated by the return of the horsemen. They brought good news for the people as they returned, news that was affirmed to be true by the other men who had seen the same miraculous abandonment of the Syrian's camp.

And are you sitting here today and saying to yourself that the gospel is indeed the greatest message that has been given to me. Thankful for the message that came to you by the spirit, showing you your need and sending and sending you out to find and seek your Christ.

And you can confirm once you yourself had seen and tasted the blessings that the report of other believers it was correct.

You can't argue with them for what they told you. and maybe we have some skeptics amongst us.

And are you questioning yourself like the king?

Can this be true? I can only endear you to listen to each believer's own experience.

[22:03] Ask them, why are you a Christian? Why do you find satisfaction in this Christ? And ask them where they find their joy.

Maybe even ask them why they left their own city and didn't rely on what they had built up themselves. And a note in passing, that there is no mention of the leper after.

They're not even praised nor commended for the sharing of their treasure. They have gone with the good news to the people and they have received every benefit of it.

And that's how it should be that we as believers should go with the gospel message. And we are not looking for praise nor even a mention. We are here solely like the leper to share the good news to you, to give the gospel message and to show men where they can find nourishment and satisfaction for their souls.

But do we as Christians not proclaim this in all that we do? Do we not show the love of our Saviour to people as we go about our daily duties?

[23:28] even those that help in the smallest of tasks, those that are helping in creche, those that help in Sunday school, help in different committees and those that go and visit someone.

And all the other behind the scene tasks that are required to be fulfilled. We don't want any praise, but we desire that in all things that God would be glorified.

that we would help each other and support one another. And although we don't look for any thanks, it is important to thank each other.

And I appreciate what each one does. And to remember to thank our God as well for each other.

That we would give of ourselves cheerfully and enjoy what the Lord has provided for us.

J.C. Ryle writes in one of his books, *Believer*, if you would have an increase of happiness in Christ's service, labour every year to do more good.

[24 : 44] Look around the circle in which your lot is cast, and lay yourself out to be useful. Strive to be of the same character of God.

God. He is not only good, but doeth good. The lepers, although not mentioned, were no doubt gladdened in their hearts to see their own people having their needs met, to see the city being satisfied.

and what greater joy is it for men, for us as believers, to see men and women confess that Christ is their Saviour.

But if you have not tasted yet what Christ has provided, if you have had ever any experience of tasting this food, there is a great provision made for you, the invitation extends for you to come. Would you leave your own city that you have built, your own city that you are relying on, see that there is no satisfaction to be found within its walls, and you will find freedom from yourself.

[26 : 10] so if the Christ sets you free, you will be free indeed. And who knows what will await you as you come?

Who knows what the Lord shall do with you? But I can tell you, they are at his table. You will find food that will satisfy your every need.

you will see and possess things that are of the greatest value. It will be a place where your heart will be content, and your heart will be full.

He will so fill your heart as he filled the belly of the leper. The love of Christ will overflow your cup that you are compelled to say, today is a day of good news.

And what is it I say to each of you today? if you haven't tasted the goodness of Christ, as it says in the passage, let us go and see.

[27 : 29] I say to you, go and see. Go and taste what Christ has provided for you. Because we bring with us the good news, and it is for the king's household.

before I finish, I'll just read a verse from Isaiah 35. Everlasting joy will be upon their heads.

They shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sin shall flee away. May I leave these thoughts with you, and may they be blessed to assisting yourself wait for us,