

## Luke 17B

- As we ended chapter 16 last week, Jesus was rebuking his disciples
  - Jesus had just taught them to be watchful for false teaching
  - More specifically, to be willing to rebuke a brother over his sin, including the sin of false teaching
    - If he repented, he must be forgiven
    - If he sins over and over again, but repents at each turn, then forgiveness must follow
    - For Jesus is trying to distinguish between the false teacher,
      - who never repents in the face of correction
    - And the brother or sister
      - who merely teaches incorrectly or lives a life of habitual sin and requires instruction
    - The former is to be shut out while the latter is to be forgiven
      - And forgiveness must be available without limit
- And to that command, the disciples responded, somewhat flippantly, that they needed Jesus to increase their faith before they might hope to obey that instruction
  - And Jesus corrected the disciples by teaching that the problem wasn't the amount of faith
    - Rather the problem was their willingness to do what they were told
    - In other words, faith is the prerequisite to living a life of obedience
      - But obedience is an expectation of God, and it does not depend on the degree of faith
      - It should come merely as a matter of course for every believer

- In the verses we study today, Luke offers a simple illustration of Jesus' point

[Luke 17:11](#) ¶ While He was on the way to Jerusalem, He was passing between Samaria and Galilee.

[Luke 17:12](#) As He entered a village, ten leprous men who stood at a distance met Him;

[Luke 17:13](#) and they raised their voices, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!"

[Luke 17:14](#) When He saw them, He said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they were going, they were cleansed.

[Luke 17:15](#) Now one of them, when he saw that he had been healed, turned back, glorifying God with a loud voice,

[Luke 17:16](#) and he fell on his face at His feet, giving thanks to Him. And he was a Samaritan.

[Luke 17:17](#) Then Jesus answered and said, "Were there not ten cleansed? But the nine—where are they?"

[Luke 17:18](#) "Was no one found who returned to give glory to God, except this foreigner?"

[Luke 17:19](#) And He said to him, "Stand up and go; your faith has made you well."

- Back in Chapter 9, we're told by Luke that Jesus had set his mind on going to Jerusalem for His ascension
  - And as we studied that trip, we learned that Jesus would need to travel southward from the Galilee and through Samaria to reach His destination
  - And we also learned that the Samaritans were a despised group of imposters
    - A group of people of who had long ago departed from the true Jewish heritage
    - They had set up a competing temple while abandoning the Torah and many Jewish beliefs
    - They regarding themselves as the true descents of Abraham
  - And of course, the Samaritans hated the Jews as well
- And we hear of a group of 10 lepers who ask Jesus for mercy
  - As we learn later, the group consists of 9 Jews and one Samaritan
  - But for now the primary description of them is that they are lepers
    - Lepers as we've taught before outcasts

- Partly because they were usually unclean under the Law
- And partly because the disease was contagious and greatly feared
  - And this would also explain why they are standing at a distance and not approaching close to Jesus
    - Society insisted that they maintain a distance for the sake of others
- As the call out for mercy, they use the term “master”
  - They say Jesus, Master, have mercy
  - At first glance, we have to assume that all ten were believing in Jesus as Messiah, which is why they call Him Master
  - The Greek word for Master is “epi-sta-tes” and in all the Bible, only Luke uses this term as a title for Jesus
    - It means commander or chief, and Luke occasionally shows the disciples using this term to address Jesus
- Curiously, one of those occasions is in chapter 5 when Jesus finds Peter on his fishing boat after a night of unsuccessful fishing
  - If you remember, He instructs Peter to lower his net again
  - Peter is bemused by this request, but complies nonetheless
  - And as he does he says, “**Master**, we worked hard all night and caught nothing, but I will do as You say *and* let down the nets.”
  - But then the net comes up full of fish, at which point Peter falls at Jesus’ feet and says, “Go away from me **Lord**, for I am a sinful man, Oh Lord.”
  - First it was Master, then it became Lord
    - And more importantly, the first title was used in a moment when Peter’s trust in Christ was somewhat in doubt
    - But his use of the term Lord came as part of a moment of obvious repentance and worship of Jesus as God
- In this example we learn a useful insight we can apply to the circumstances of Luke 17

- The lepers call Jesus Master
- And the word Master can have a wide range of meaning,
  - The disciples occasionally used it to refer to their Lord
  - But it can also be used more generally as a simple term of respect for anyone on authority
- In other words, calling Jesus Master doesn't necessarily mean that the person has a true faith in Him as the Messiah
  - After all, even Jesus Himself says in Matt 7:22 that on the day of judgment, there will be those who called Jesus "Lord, Lord"
  - And yet Jesus says He never knew them
- So just because we use a title, doesn't mean we believe all that it suggests about Jesus
- So the lepers call out Master
  - Jesus' response to them is that they should go present themselves before the priests
    - Why would Jesus make this request?
    - Well, this was in accordance with the Law
      - In Lev 13, the Law provides instructions on how lepers were to be dealt with Jewish society
      - Lepers could be considered clean under certain circumstances
        - Namely when their skin was free from open sores
        - During this time, they could be certified clean by the priests
        - It was a temporary certification, of course, because inevitably the sores returned
        - And when they did, the leper was again unclean for as long as the outbreak lasted

- As the disease progresses, the sores are more persistent and the individual eventually becomes perpetually unclean
- So, Jesus' command to them to present themselves before the priest carried with it an implied promise to heal them
  - The only reason for them to go before the priest was to be certified as clean
  - Since they were standing at a distance when they cried out to Jesus, it's obvious that they weren't clean in this moment
  - So, when Jesus says go present yourselves before the priest, He's essentially promising that they will be healed by the time they reach the priest
- Sure enough, in verse 14 we're told that as they went to the priests, they were made well
  - At this point, one of the ten, a man Jesus calls a foreigner, turns back to give Glory to God
    - So the Samaritan comes back but the other nine Jewish lepers never return
    - The man that did return, we're told is worshipping God, and he does so by falling at Jesus' feet and giving Jesus thanks
    - And while this scene is going on, Jesus asks rhetorically, where are the other nine?
      - That's an interesting question, really
      - He asks the question in such a way that suggests that coming back to give thank was a test of sorts
      - Jess adds insult to injury by asking are only foreigners willing to give God glory?
    - The word for foreigner is interesting (allogenes), in that this is the only time it's used in the Gospels
      - In fact, as has been the case over and over again lately, this story is only found in Luke's gospel

- The word means one of another race
- In other words, Jesus is emphasizing his surprise that God would receive glory from someone outside the very nation He came to
- This scene is interesting for another very important reason
  - Remember the scene of Peter on the boat
    - One moment he's calling Jesus master, but doing so in a rather dismissive way
    - After Jesus performs a miracles, Peter quickly changes his tune and falls before Jesus calling Him lord and acknowledging Him as Lord
  - In other words, whatever Peter may have thought of Jesus before that, once the truth was revealed clearly, Peter knew how to respond
    - He let all pretense drop and He acknowledged Jesus as God
- Now we have 10 men who are following a similar pattern
  - Yet only one returns and praises Jesus and gives him the honor reserved for God
  - It's apparent that this man is faithfully acknowledging Jesus as God
  - And I would suggest that it's equally obvious that the other nine are not
    - Look at Jesus' comment to the man who returned
    - In verse 19, Jesus says your faith has made you well
      - This statement makes no sense if Jesus merely means that his faith has made him physically well
      - Because that healing has already taken place
      - That's why the guy returned
    - No, I believe this statement is a spiritual healing
      - Just as Jesus tells men and women, your sin is forgiven, go and sin no more.

- Likewise, here I believe Jesus is saying your faith has healed you spiritually
- Your faith has saved you, in other words
- A foreigner willing to receive the Messiah while the Jews reject Jesus
- And the best evidence of this difference is found in Jesus command to the group
  - Jesus said go and present yourselves to the priests
    - The act of presenting yourself before the priests in Leviticus was a symbolic appeal to God for atonement
    - Although it concerned an earthly illness and ceremonial cleanliness,
      - it was symbolic of coming before God with a spiritual disease called sin
      - And seeking a spiritual cleansing from God, through an intercessor, the priest
  - And so where do the nine Jews go after having been cleansed?
    - To the temple we presume to present themselves before the Levi priests who mediated the Law of Moses
    - And they worshipped there, because they didn't recognize that their God, their Messiah had arrived in their midst
    - So they persisted in following the old way, oblivious to the new way in their midst
  - On the other hand, the Samaritan, having been cleansed, says why do I need to go before a bunch of men who intercede on behalf of a God who has arrived in person?
    - Why do I need them to call me clean, when I know I have been cleansed truly?
    - I why worship in a temple when the living temple of God is present in our midst?

- Now I don't know whether this man understood the finer nuances of this situation, but he didn't have to understand in order for God to use the situation to educate you and I
  - Jesus is clearly making a point to the Pharisees and disciples through this man's circumstances
    - The King has arrived, and the kingdom is in their midst
    - Yet the ones intended to receive that kingdom have turned their back on the King
    - They are persisting in following a dead Law that was given in the first place that men might know their Messiah and receive Him
    - But the Jews have missed the big picture
      - Yet a nation of foreigners, of tax collectors, of sinners are embracing their Lord
      - The beginning of a Gentile church emerging out of the rejection of Israel
- From this brief lessons, the Pharisees, we're told, begin to question Jesus about the coming Kingdom

[Luke 17:20](#) ¶ Now 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;

[Luke 17:21](#) nor will they say, 'Look, here *it is!*' or, 'There *it is!*' For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst."

[Luke 17:22](#) ¶ And He said to the disciples, "The days will come when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it.

[Luke 17:23](#) "They will say to you, 'Look there! Look here!' Do not go away, and do not run after *them*.

[Luke 17:24](#) "For just like the lightning, when it flashes out of one part of the sky, shines to the other part of the sky, so will the Son of Man be in His day.

[Luke 17:25](#) "But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.

- It's natural for the Pharisees to have jumped on the topic of the kingdom for several reasons
  - First, Jesus Himself has mentioned the kingdom on a number of occasions, so the topic is out their in their minds



- Secondly, the situation they just witnessed with the lepers might have triggered the question, simply because the leper is praising and worshipping Jesus as the Messiah
- So the Pharisees throw out the question to Jesus asking when will the kingdom come
  - I expect their question was more of a test than an honest desire to know what Jesus thought
  - And you can see that in how Jesus answered them
- He basically dismisses their question without giving them an answer
  - He says to the Pharisees that the kingdom isn't going to come like they expect or assume
    - No one will say, Look there it is!, meaning it won't come in such an obvious way that you will see it coming from a distance
    - It won't appear in a way to draws attention to itself initially
    - Its initial appearing will be more subtle - under the radar
  - Then Jesus makes the point that the leper himself was basically witnessing to earlier
    - The kingdom is already in their midst
    - How ironic
      - They ask when will it come
      - And Jesus says too late, it's already here
    - Let me tell you folks, if you're asking how will I know when the kingdom comes, and God responds by saying it's already here, then you missed it
      - And the Pharisees had obviously missed it
      - Which is all that Jesus had to say to them on the subject
- But then we're told Jesus begins to teach the disciples further on the kingdom
  - Jesus tells them in an ominous way that there will come a day when they will long to see the very thing that was in their midst in that moment

- The Son of Man
- The Messiah
- This is the latest attempt by Jesus to clue them in on his coming death and departure
  - He's given clues about this already, particularly in Chap 9:22 when he said

“The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed and be raised up on the third day.”

- Here again, Jesus tries to educate them on the necessity of Jesus' rejection and death
- When those days come, the disciples will wish they could have Jesus back in their presence
  - But there is a danger in that desire
    - When you want something bad enough, your desire can turn into impatience
    - And impatience can become the motivator to follow after the wrong things
  - So knowing He would depart and knowing He would not return for a while, Jesus gives the disciples the logical warning
    - When you are wishing I was still here and others tell you that there He is, don't believe them
    - Because the Son of Man will have His day, and that day will be obvious
      - It will be like lightning coming out of the sky
      - Bright, brilliant, attention grabbing, obvious
      - You won't need to worry about looking closely to see the Son of Man in that day because His return will be so obvious

- So meanwhile, don't fall for someone who tries to convince you that Jesus has returned
- Now doesn't that sound a bit contradictory?
  - One moment he's telling the Pharisees that the kingdom will not come in obvious ways, and in fact it's already here
  - The next moment he's telling the disciples that they need not worry about missing the Son of Man when he comes in His day because it will be so obvious
    - The answer here should be easy for us all to appreciate
      - To the Pharisees, Jesus was talking about the establishment of God's kingdom in its early stages
      - The kingdom as it is established in Jesus' first coming
      - The kingdom of believers that began with the apostles and grew to cover the earth with believers
    - That is the form of the kingdom we know today
      - It is no less a kingdom, because a kingdom is two things
      - It is land and it is subjects
      - A kingdom has subjects and a kingdom occupies land
      - As we speak, God is building his kingdom one believer at a time – God's subjects for his kingdom
    - But on a time to come, the second part of the kingdom will be established
      - The Lord will return to earth to occupy the Land on earth that was promised to Him
      - The borders of Israel promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob
      - The nation of Israel elevated above all other nations
      - Jesus ruling the world from Jerusalem
      - Jesus, the King, with His kingdom, both subjects and Land

- And when Jesus comes in that day, there will be no mistaking His arrival
  - Rev 19 describes it this way:

[Rev. 19:11](#) ¶ And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war.

[Rev. 19:12](#) His eyes *are* a flame of fire, and on His head *are* many diadems; and He has a name written *on Him* which no one knows except Himself.

[Rev. 19:13](#) *He is* clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God.

[Rev. 19:14](#) And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white *and* clean, were following Him on white horses.

[Rev. 19:15](#) From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty.

[Rev. 19:16](#) And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, “KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.”

- There will be no mistaking that day
      - So when Jesus address the Pharisees, he tells them the kingdom has already come, and you missed it
      - Yet to the disciples he says though you will want to see me, don't fall prey to imitators – my day will be easy to know and recognize
      - To the Pharisees, Jesus was speaking of His first coming
      - And to the disciples, Jesus was talking about His second coming
- And then in verse 25, Jesus brings it together to give the disciples yet another prediction of His coming death
  - In other words, Jesus continues to try and prepare the disciples for the unimaginable
    - Jesus' first coming doesn't result in the full establishment of His kingdom
    - Just the beginnings of it
    - The kingdom's subjects will be established
    - And in the coming generations, many will wish to see Jesus in His day, but His day will not come until the appointed time

- But when it comes, it will be glorious
- What a hard message to accept when you are expecting the whole enchilada at once
- Two lessons for us here
  - Don't allow our desire to see Jesus return and to see His kingdom established lead us to believer foolish things
    - We must remain prepared to see the kingdom appear in any moment, but we cannot force the day
    - And though we live every day expecting His return that day, we must be prepared to wait a lifetime and even beyond this life until the day comes
  - Secondly, if we are now subjects of the king, waiting for the future arrival of the king's land
    - Then we are still obligated to live under the rules and expectations of the king and of His kingdom regardless of where we live
      - And as it happens, we live in a world that is not the kingdom
      - We are strangers, wanderers in a foreign land waiting for the chance to go home to our kingdom
      - What kind of subject are we for our king? Are we ready for His return tonight perhaps?