

Unchained and Unstoppable

Luke 17:11-19

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Have you ever written a Thank You note? Were you trained as a young person to always write a note when someone gave you something special, and in that note, were you taught to name the gift and say something about how it made you feel or how much you are enjoying using it? Thanksgiving is a month away, and we will take the National time-out to remember all of our blessings as a free country, hopefully remembering we are one nation, under God and on that day hopefully we will give thanks thanks for our bounty, our country, our families and our friends. The idea of Thanksgiving is a lot older than we like to think. There is even a thanksgiving text in the Bible, one often used on Thanksgiving to bring our focus to being thankful. It's in Luke 17:11-19 and we will read it today, but today I want us to pass through the gratitude part to focus on a hidden gem in the text—the power of God's word. Let's listen for God to speak to us through Luke,.

Read Luke 17:11-19

The Word Of The Lord!

This story of ten lepers being healed, when they believed enough to begin to go to the priests, is a story of gratitude and ingratitude.

One came back, a foreigner; nine did not.

One came back to say thank you and in doing so he received a second blessing—he was "sesoke," as it is written in the Greek. Not just healed—that had already happened, but made well, whole, saved! And he was a foreigner, a Samaritan, an outsider, not one of the "chosen"—as Israel understood the word then.

Sermons have been preached here about what it means to be chosen and that Christ came to reach out to the whole world. I have preached that understanding of this Scripture here using other texts, but today I want us to consider a second truth the Holy Spirit is revealing in these words.

It is the power of God's word.

Jesus heard the cry of the lepers for him to have pity on them, to be compassionate toward them, to address the certain death that was coming because of the leprosy they had. Leprosy was a skin disease caused by bacteria, which was infectious and was capable of being transmitted to others. Slowly, if you got it, the disease spread, skin, and then organs, were infected, and in time, the disease took the life of its host. Jesus heard them at a distance. We don't know what he said or did. All we know is that he told them to go show the priests their skin and as they were went, they were healed. The disease was gone!

They heard; they believed that what Jesus said was true, and they went, even before they were healed. Jesus, from a distance, had said some appropriate word, and when they believed and started for the priests, they were healed.

God's word is so powerful, yet this is a truth we often let pass. We don't pay attention to God's word or maybe not enough attention. These lepers heard just the word: GO, and they went. Just think how blessed we are to have so much of God's word, right here at our fingertips. Want to know the power of God's word fully unleashed? In the beginning, Genesis tells us, God SAID and creation came

into being, day after day, until it was ready and completed, the day God said it was all good, very good! God's word did this. Want to see God's word in action, day by day? Just read the Gospels! Christ is God's word among us, in a life form that we can see and touch and follow.

In the Hymn, A Mighty Fortress Is Our God, there is a line in verse three about God's power over the devil – it goes like this

...."one little word shall fell him,"

and it goes on to say that one day doom for the devil through one little word. That word has already been spoken. Christ, the LOGOS, the mind and reasoning of God, present from the beginning, has come to us, and we have it preserved in the Gospels, the Good news..

Our second reading today, from 2nd Timothy 2:8-14a talks about this word and its power. Again, let us hear God speaking to us through Paul's letter to his protégé, Timothy, the minister Paul left to help the Ephesus church.

2nd Timothy 2:8-14a

The Word Of The Lord!

Paul tells Timothy, remember to preach the Gospel, remember to tell all who will listen that Christ Jesus was a man, with a parentage that went back to David, a man who could experience all that we experience and could be compassionate with us and toward us, and to remember also that this same man was Resurrected to show his spiritual side, his linkage to and with God.

Man and God,

both here,

both with us,

both important to us.

If you doubt this, then ask what are the two most important seasons of the church? Christmas, when God came to us, as Emmanuel, as Jesus, the human side of our Christ, and the second major season of the church—Easter, when Jesus died for us and was raised to resurrection power for us, that we might live.

God's Logos, seen in the beginning, is the same God's word the apostles understood as being Jesus. They knew Christ was sent to us, came to us, lived with us, died for us, and was raised for us. And they preached this and lived this—this powerful word.

In the Pauline Scripture we just read, Paul was telling Timothy:

Don't forget the Gospel,

Don't overlook the Gospel,

Don't misunderstand the Gospel.

Why? Because God's word is not chained. No matter what we might do to it: it is not chained.

We can choose not to hear it,

not to read it,

not to live it,

but that won't change the truth—God's word cannot be shut up or penned up or locked up. God's word is unchained and unstoppable. It will continue; it will be heard, and it will produce returns through the Holy Spirit. Our job is to preach it, to take it, to live it.

In Seminary each of us sought a voice, a way to tell others of the Gospel. I have heard many use it

to promote a social gospel, or
to urge fairness and mercy, or
to align with those in the political world.

For me the choice was easy. I read those parts of the Bible like our readings from Luke and Timothy today. I heard that we are to take the Good news to the world, I heard that so God loved the world that He gave his only son, and asked us to believe that. I then read that that son, Jesus, was incarnate and walked and taught us about God. I learned that that son died for us, to take away our sins, to end our separation from God, to restore us to God and bring us into union with God. For all of us, that is the Gospel and anything and everything else we might say it is or isn't is just wrong. While all of our causes and passions might be important, and while they may fit within a life in which the Holy Spirit dwells within us, it is still not the Gospel. Paul told Timothy to remember the essence of the Gospel and to preach and live it.

The Gospel is God's word. It is true, It is powerful. It cannot be stopped. It cannot be chained. No matter what we might do or how we might treat or mistreat it.

I made a choice long ago –I am a Matthew 25 preacher. I want the world to hear God's Good News of our salvation through God's gift of Christ in the flesh and in the resurrection. So, when I hear of the ten lepers, I hear it as an example of the power of God's word, spoken at a distance, giving them a second chance, admitting them to the kingdom of God, forgiving their sins.

And when I hear the power of God's word then, I know it is still here, still able, still powerful, and I want all to hear and know what I know.

God's word is all powerful and ours isn't.

Paul sums it up in the Timothy passage by saying if we are in Christ and accept and rely on the gift of the cross, we shall live with Christ forever. And, if we endure in our faith until the end, we will share Christ's glory with him, but if we disown Christ, he will let us go.

Where are the other nine cured lepers, Christ asked? They heard his voice, they believed the word in part, but they let the fullness of the word pass them by.

We must all keep reminding God's people of what God has done and what God can do, if we will but listen. Thank you God, for loving us so much.

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Luke 17:11-19

11 Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee.

12 As he was going into a village. Ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance

13 and called out in loud voice:

“Jesus, Master, have pity on us.”

14 When he saw them, he said, “Go, show yourselves to the priests.”

And as they went, they were cleansed.

15 One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising god in a loud voice.

16 He threw himself at Jesus’ feet and thanked him ---and he was a Samaritan.

17 Jesus asked, “Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine?”

18 Has no one returned to give praise to God except this foreigner (Samaritan)?”

19 Then he said to him, “Rise and go, your faith has made you well (whole).(saved you)”.

2nd Timothy 2:8-14a

8 Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David.

This is my **Gospel**,

9 for which I am suffering, even to the point of being chained like a criminal,

But God's word is not chained.

10 Therefore, I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the

salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.

11 Here is a trustworthy saying:

If we died with him, we will also live with him.

12 **If we endure, we will also reign with him.**

If we disown him, he will also disown us.

13 If we are faithless, he remains faithful,

for he cannot disown himself.

14 Keep reminding God's people of these things.