

SIMILARITY THAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE LUKE 17:11-19
21ST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST OCT 9, 2016

¹¹ On the way to Jerusalem he was passing along between Samaria and Galilee. ¹² And as he entered a village, he was met by ten lepers, who stood at a distance ¹³ and lifted up their voices, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." ¹⁴ When he saw them he said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they went they were cleansed. ¹⁵ Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice; ¹⁶ and he fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving him thanks. Now he was a Samaritan. ¹⁷ Then Jesus answered, "Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine?" ¹⁸ Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" ¹⁹ And he said to him, "Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well."

Last year's National spelling bee had tie for first place.

Winners were Jairam Hathwar and Nihar Janga.

What they also shared in common, beside the fact that their own names are hard to spell,

is that they were children of immigrants.

This is also true of most winners for last several decades.

Their similarity is their difference from most Americans.

I speculate that a possible reason for this is that

rather than taking the English language for granted, they realized difficulties & need to work hard to learn it and so ended up learning it better than others.

Maybe other students would do well to see the similarity

between them and these who stand out as different, that they have same need to work hard and learning and same ability to do it if they tried.

We all may do well to see similarities between us and others who seem different,

and seeing this may make a difference in what we do with ourselves and how we treat others.

Today, seeing the similarity between us & people in text may make a difference in how we live.

DIFFERENT PEOPLE HAVE THE SAME DISEASE OF SIN
JESUS' MERCY GIVES US ALL THE SAME SALVATION
GOD'S MERCY MAKES A DIFFERENCE IN US

DIFFERENT PEOPLE HAVE THE SAME DISEASE OF SIN

¹¹ On the way to Jerusalem he was passing along between Samaria and Galilee. ¹² And as he entered a village, he was met by ten lepers,

who stood at a distance ¹³ and lifted up their voices, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us."

We don't hear much of leprosy today, but there are similarities between it and other things we are more familiar with.

Most recently, the Zika virus has been rapidly spreading, has terrible consequences, is little understood, and has no known cure.

Before this it was Ebola and AIDS. each of which were highly contagious and feared and so were dealt with by avoiding contact with those who had it.

Those with AIDS also need to avoid contact with others because it makes them susceptible to slightest infection.

Those with AIDS in particular tended to be scorned with assumption what is wrong is not just physical.

All this was true of leprosy. Those who had it were considered both physically & spiritually unclean, and they were quarantined, cut off from society.

A curious result of this in text is that even though normally Jews & Samaritans never associate with each other, These men who all had leprosy now apparently did.

Despite difference, a similarity made difference in behavior.

We too have a similarity with them.

What is different is that our disease is not physical, What we all have is a sinful nature.

which weakens our resistance to slightest temptation, makes it hard for us to do what we should, and is a degenerative disease that leads to death.

Like leprosy, sin is social disease that not only effects personally but effects relationship with others.

It makes us disgustingly repulsive, especially to God

Individual effects include bad habits & addictions

Social effects include anger, bitterness, prejudice;

jealousy & hurtful words destroy friendships

lust, adultery, and selfishness ruin marriages

disrespect, power struggles ruin relationship with children

pride & stubbornness ruins relationship with God

With many diseases we expect doctor to give a diagnosis and prescribe a cure even if it is difficult.

But when diseases have social effects what makes it worse is those who are afraid of it and in denial don't even want to be tested or diagnosed

and so it not only gets worse but also keeps spreading.
We don't like being told we have sin

and may not really want a cure that makes us get rid of it
especially one that requires us to change our behavior.

We would rather just have relief from the symptoms
of guilt, pain, hatred, etc.

and so people self medicate with alcohol and drugs.
We may say, I am not like that, but we still have a similarity.

Paul writes, "there is no difference, for all have sinned
and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace
as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus"

Here is another similarity:

JESUS' MERCY GIVES US ALL THE SAME SALVATION

¹⁴ When he saw them he said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the
priests." And as they went they were cleansed. ...¹⁷ Then Jesus
answered, "Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? ¹⁸ Was no one
found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" ¹⁹ And
he said to him, "Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well."

All ten men were treated the same by Jesus, promised healing.

And all were the same in being made well,
and in receiving this healing through faith.

They believed what Jesus said & so headed off
to show this to priests & were healed as they went.

It may never have been noticed that one of them was Samaritan
except that what happened caused him to act differently.

He recognized Jesus' special grace toward him
and came back to thank him.

What made the difference for the Samaritan? We are not told.

I suppose he realized his difference from the others
which reminded him of his unworthiness & deeper need.

The others may have assumed they would go rest of way,
curing their social isolation, by themselves,
by observing the ceremonial law with the priests.

But the Samaritan couldn't do that, even though cured,
he still was excluded from the temple.

He had no one to go to but Jesus.

And so he ended up with not just faith to be healed physically
from one symptom of the ruin caused by sin

but faith through which he was saved spiritually as well,
saved from the disease of sin itself.

He was like Ruth in O.T. reading, who, though a foreigner,
recognized that she not only had same troubles as Naomi
but could also have same God who helped her.
it is not insignificant that v. 11 says Jesus is going to Jerusalem.
Jerusalem was place sacrifices for sin were offered.
Jesus was going there offer himself as our sacrifice.
Sinful uncleanness separates us from God but Jesus saves us
by a similarity that makes a difference.
He made himself one of us, a mortal human being,
in order to keep laws of God we need to keep, but don't
He did not keep himself separated from sinful people
but took our sin and guilt on himself
in order to take our place in suffering and dying from it.
This forgiveness of sin and new life
and restored relationship with God
is all received simply through faith in Jesus' promise,
as when the ten lepers took Jesus at his word.
It does not depend on anything special we are or do.
But, when we see the difference between what we deserve
and what God does for us by his free grace
it makes a difference in what we are and do.

GOD'S MERCY MAKES A DIFFERENCE IN US who have faith.

¹⁵ Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back,
praising God with a loud voice; ¹⁶ and he fell on his face at Jesus' feet,
giving him thanks. Now he was a Samaritan.

In some parts of country is chain of stores called Git 'n' Go"
for people in hurry to get gas & groceries needed right now
and quickly go on their way again.
The other 9 in text were in a hurry to git 'n' go.
The had what they wanted and surely
their lives & relationships are now dramatically changed.
but not as much as the one who came back again.
We could treat church & Sunday worship as way to git 'n' go.
We can stop in, be relieved of sin, feel better,
which makes a difference in our relationship with God
but there is more to be had.
As both leprosy and sin are social diseases,
effecting not only individual but relationship with others,
Salvation is also social, effecting relationship with others.
it makes us part of the whole body of Christ.

It transforms relationships both other believers & all people including those who are still deadly sick with sin.

This is why instead of just coming here to git 'n' go we also come back for fellowship and Bible study and then go with faith strengthened to love others, to serve those in need, to share the faith.

Those we help because of how God has helped us will never come back and say thank-you.

That happened to Jesus and he helped them anyway.

When we help and serve others it is not because of how we expect them to respond to us but because of our thankful response to God.

And it is because our similarity with them, who have the same kind of needs and faults we have and are undeserving of God's blessings just as we are but who are just as freely loved by God as we are makes a difference in how to live our lives.

This is the time of year when we are again going to think intentionally about how we want our life to be different and the difference God makes in our lives as we make a spiritual life plan.

This year we will especially think about what we will do, like the man who came back and bowed down to Jesus.

There are activities we will do as individuals & together because of what Jesus has done for all of us.

DIFFERENT PEOPLE HAVE THE SAME DISEASE OF SIN

which effects our relationship with God and with others.

JESUS' MERCY GIVES US ALL THE SAME SALVATION

which includes a new relationship with him & others

GOD'S MERCY MAKES A DIFFERENCE IN US who have faith and in how we live our lives here now and forever in heaven.