

## *PK's Perspectives...* The Other Nine

The story of the ten lepers in Luke 17 was on my mind last night. Pastor Brian Williams of Empire Pentecostal Holiness Church used this passage in his sermon @ the Community Thanksgiving Service and so the story kind of bubbled back to the surface of my thoughts in the quietness of the late Sunday night hours.

You know the story. Ten lepers cried out for Jesus' mercy & compassion. Jesus responded by healing all ten guys of their leprous condition yet only one of the ten returned to thank Jesus for the miracle. All ten lepers received the physical healing which would allow for religious and social restoration (vs. 14) but verse 19 seems to indicate that only the sole leper who returned to give thanks to Jesus experienced the deeper soul blessing of wholeness through salvation.

I know God desires my life to be a reflection of Jesus. Bible stories, like this one about the ten lepers, show me how Jesus loves people and I struggle with His incredible generosity. Ten guys had unspeakable need. Jesus made a way for all ten to return to their families, jobs, and communities. Jesus did not ask for anything in return; He did not demand reciprocity. In fact, the story is told in such a way as to indicate that the healing was not immediate: "and while they were going, they were healed." (vs. 14) We don't know how far down the road the lepers had traveled before their skin began to clear; maybe they were already halfway home and turning back was forgotten in the excitement of once again being home and sharing dinner with family/friends for the first time in a long time. But we do know that one dude fought through the mesmerizing thrall of the incredible miracle, stopped, and intentionally backtracked in order to kneel at the feet of the Miracle Maker.

Here's what my puny, selfish, self-righteous mind is thinking last night: Jesus had only a 10% success rate in this ministry/healing/loving venture. Jesus didn't withdraw His healing from the nine who hurried on home though He did ask about them in a rhetorical sense (vs. 17). So last night I'm asking myself, "Self, would you take on a ministry that showed a 10% success rate; would you outrageously, extravagantly, and unconditionally love a hurting, displaced group of people if you knew only one out of ten would respond to your expressions of unconditional love and the other nine would walk away w/out a single word of thanks?" If I'm honest, the answer is "No." I would rationalize about stewardship of time/resources and look for a more fertile ministry field. Then I remember Christ lives in me and He wants to love through me in the same outrageous, extravagant, and unconditional way that led me to kneel at the feet of the Miracle Maker.

Another train of thought chugging through my mind on Sunday night was how easily I assume the Judge's bench as regards my attitude toward the nine guys who ran home with nary a word of thanks. "Ingrates." "Wanting something for nothing." "Oblivious." I'm having really strong negative feelings for these nine lepers and I start to understand it's because I see myself in those nine guys. I see how often I enjoy God's blessings with nary a word of thanks; I assume ownership of the gifts He offers and immediately run off to enjoy His gifts without thought to the Giver. So I'm trying hard this Thanksgiving season to be more like the one and less like the nine. I'm stopping to intentionally express thanks: in my vehicle; in the aisle of the store; working in the yard; throwing Frisbee w/Avett; listening to music; breathing air; writing an article. "Thank you, Lord, for the gift of sharing life with a ridiculously amazing church family." Cya Sunday morning, PK.