

PRACTICAL LIVING SERIES ONE
THE RETURN ENCOUNTER
Pastor Jack Schull
Luke 17:11-19; Eph. 1:17

Intro:

Christmas music playing in background – a few people in line at a return counter and I begin the sermon from in line.

- We all log some time in lines – don't we!
- They say that the average person will spend about 5 yrs of their life waiting in line!
- As we approach this Christmas season, we are preparing ourselves for logging the time in line

- This Friday is black Friday – it's typically the day where most businesses turn the corner to going in the black and make most of their income in the last quarter of the year.
- **It's dubbed as the biggest shopping day of the year**
- Many live with anticipation for this Day!!!
 - ❖ and you know who you are – you're the ones not parked in front of the tv on Thanksgiving day afternoon, but rather you're sitting in the family room with your city map, a pile of ads and you're game planning the best and fastest routes...if you have drawings of the inside of stores – you're really in need of counseling)
- I ventured out 4 yrs ago at 5am in the morning and enjoyed meeting people in line...but I haven't repeated that adventure...
- Have you noticed: most people don't enjoy the line... they're not happy!
- They're: fidgety, foot-tapping, cell phone talking, eye rolling, watch gazing, frustration wearing people
- We approach lines, fueled with impatience...
- We just want to get in, get through, and get on – with life...
 - We want to: get what we need and move on to number next! (repeat 3X's)

→ If you're honest: you mind just recognize that rhythm in your life

→ flash forward – after Christmas: you might find yourself in this line...the return line. Returning something you got from someone and you're not totally sure what they were thinking?

Q have you ever noticed: NO ONE gets in this line to come back and say thank you!???

(get back into character – approach counter)

Today: I want us to look afresh at a RETURN ENCOUNTER that Jesus had. Guys who logged some time in line...and one of them that couldn't move on and move past too quickly... There are some spiritual lessons in this return encounter for us today...

I'd like us to draw out couple simple implications to

- what God's heart is like and
- what He desires our hearts to be like

To center our hearts on some practical pictures that will help us build that kind of heart, and then to continue in worship and practicing this morning.

In following God, there is something very central & significant found in lingering. Returning. In living with an attitude of gratitude and expressing that to God.?

Turn your Bibles to Luke 17

Now in Luke 17:11-19, we find Jesus journeying toward Jerusalem and passing through the border between Samaria and Galilee. Luke's Gospel really centers around two main facets of Jesus' life; His life and ministry in Galilee and His journey toward Jerusalem. It is within these journey stories toward Jerusalem that Luke further develops a main goal of his Gospel. That goal being that this Jesus news is news for all people groups. John's Gospel might be aimed at more of a Jewish audience, but Luke's is more geared toward the Gentile audience as it pertains to people hearing and knowing about Jesus.

We have to understand the vast racial tensions b/t Jews and Samaritans – they had a huge disdain for one another. We have to keep in mind the social handicaps that existed with the lepers in this culture. A leper was a social outcast, a misfit, nuisance and one perhaps seen as under divine punishment from God.

→ **But Jesus looks past and beyond all that.**

READ TEXT: Luke 17:11-14

→ 10 people standing at a distance and shouting – sounds like a line to me!

Luke 17: 13-19, NIV

T It fascinates me, that there is this great picture of what God is truly like in this story. That God's love

Is very eager to go beyond our expectations...it reaches beyond

#1 point: God's love is always reaching beyond.

His love goes beyond explanation and expectation. It catches people off guard and exceeds their dreams. Even though those lepers were crying "mercy us" – please relieve us from this leprosy, surely they weren't totally expecting to be heard and cured. They had hope, but it was probably a sliver of hope. What Jesus did, surely exceeded their expectation.

Transition: It reminds me of the waitress whose expectations were eclipsed .

Illustration:

Franchesca Renderos, 22, was working as a waitress on an ordinary Wednesday night in Houston when she was stunned by grace. At one of her tables sat Doug Brown, a mortgage broker trying to attract the business of six female real estate agents. When Franchesca came up to the table, Doug asked, "What would be the most special tip you could have? A pair of shoes, a purse?" She responded, "No, I need a car." Doug looked around his table at the six real estate agents and said, "If you will give me your business, I will give this girl a car." The six women agreed, so he turned to Franchesca and said, "Okay, you get a car." Her response: "Sure. What do you want to drink?" She didn't believe it until an hour later when a brand new silver Mitsubishi Lancer pulled up, and Doug Brown gave her the keys. Franchesca could hardly contain herself. "Is this happening? What do I say? What do I do?"

-pause-

I wonder if similar emotions, questions were flying around the minds of those 10 lepers?

"Houston Waitress Gets Tip of Lifetime: New Car," *TheNewOrleansChannel.com* (1-20-04); submitted by Bill White, Paramount, Califo (preachingtoday.com)

Transition: God is a God who exceeds expectations – and he likes to do it! Most of us have a tendency to limit the results of God's grace and love, or think he grace might be a reluctant grace; but all throughout Scripture we see his limitless love being expressed – like here with the lepers.

Not only does His love reach beyond expectation, but His love reaches beyond his own agenda.

Have you ever noticed the occurrences of Jesus' miracles **are often** as He passed by, as He was on his way, as He was passing through? Jesus was a very busy man, with an incredible mission and purpose, but yet His agenda never crowded people out. **People who were in need, never seemed out of reach.** He had this ability to focus on others, to notice those that others missed. God's heart is always looking for those who are calling to Him

→ His love reaches beyond those who think they're too broken.

Maybe that's you this morning – you are not beyond the reach of God's love, healing and mercy!

People in social or emotional isolation, who think they are past His reach of grace and healing. He's got a long enough reach for you!

His love reaches beyond any social stigmatism and his loves echoes as a love available to all!

That is what this Samaritan might have felt as he was included in this command given by Jesus to go show themselves to the Priest. He acts upon this word from Jesus, he experiences healing and as he's asking questions of: Is this really happening? What do I say? What do I do? ...he stops in his tracks and decides he can't go any further, he can't just move on → he has to return...

T Look back with me into this story that's unfolding...

Luke 17: 14b-16

- Something transpired – Something changed in all 10 of these Lepers!
- One noticed and decided he couldn't take one more step away from the man that had changed everything for him
- One couldn't move on too quickly to number next in his agenda and life plan!

Reminder: #1 observation: → God's love is always reaching beyond...

#2 point: God desires our love to reach back.

→ God is interested in a relational connection with us! **Relational Correspondence!** Our heart with his!

Explanation:

We can sense the Lord's disappointment in the return of only the one Samaritan leper. But what lies just below the surface is the satisfaction he has with this **foreigner.**

Illustration:

Reread Luke 17: 17. This very word “foreigner” (*allogenes*) (*al-log-en-ace*) is found imprinted on the limestone block from the temple of Israel in Jerusalem. It was placed in the Court of the Gentiles next to the entrance to the Court of the Women or an area into which only the Jews could go. “Let no foreigner (*allogene*) enter within the screen and enclosure surrounding the sanctuary.” A foreigner doing this was subject to the penalty of death. So here we see that a foreigner might not be permitted in the Jewish part of the Temple, but here in this passage, one has found grace with the Lord of the Temple. (*Hobbs, The Exposition of Luke, 249-250.*)

He is blessed by his praise. He shares more with this one who comes back, than with the other nine who got His healing touch.

- Perhaps this ratio of 1 out of 10 is more accurate of human nature, but it’s far below what God desires. Maybe having a gratitude attitude is harder than we think.

But it is within that attitude that we’ll discover the deeper things of God. Why?

- God is more interested in: relational connection, than mere religious compliance.

The spiritual life Jesus invites us to: isn’t a purely factual or intellectual endeavor – it’s all about your heart and this ongoing, growing relational connection with your creator!

Ephesians 1:17 (my fav. Verse)

- Revelation is so that I can KNOW God better!!!

This Return Encounter – Got this leper something more than the others!

He reveals to this leper alone that it is his faith that has saved him. The Greek, the perfect form of *sozo*, could mean to heal of disease or to save. Most scholars agree, since all ten were healed of leprosy, evidently it means here to save from sin.

→ The nine Jews were saved from leprosy, nothing more. **But this grateful foreigner received more.** He was saved from sin. The perfect tense of this word, means that he would never be lost again. He was twice blessed: healed in his body and saved in his soul.

→ This return encounter brought further blessing to this healed leper – but it also brought a great deal of praise and adoration to God – b/c ONE took the time to get back in line – this time with a heart welling up with thankfulness – he chose to express that and give that too Jesus!

Quote:

Gratitude is an offering precious in the sight of God, and it is one that the poorest of us can make and be richer for having made it.

A. W. Tozer in Signposts. Christianity Today, Vol. 39, no. 13.(preachingtoday.com)

Transition:

God’s love is always reaching beyond – He desires our love to reach back *in relational correspondence*. Today I want to take one last peek at this story and notice two practical pictures we can be about – in order to foster a gratitude attitude within ourselves

→ b/c this is about closing the gap to a deeper intimacy with God!

Look back @ **Luke 17:15-16**

Keep what **this 1 Samaritan did in mind**: – as we look at a couple pictures I've been wrestling with to help me live like this one healed leper more and more...

#1) Windshield vs Rear-View Mirror

→ I have a windshield and a rear-view mirror up here...

- Think about driving – how much time do you look in the rear-view mirror?
- Most of us spend the majority of our time focusing out the windshield!
- In life – most of us focus out the windshield to pay attention to what's on the horizon – what's after this, what's out there to accomplish, what's next?

In fact, I'll make a wager that 9 out of 10 of us don't use the rear-view mirror enough!

→ This leper noticed in the rear-view mirror of life: God's mercy! And he couldn't keep driving until he savored that!

Being thankful – is really fuel for the soul

→ May every time you see your mirror, may it remind you to look for the ways that God's grace has crossed the landscape of your life! May it remind you to allow your heart to fill up with gratefulness...to stop and savor those treasures – to rejoice in them and continually whisper thanks to your Savior!

Q What are we taught as children to do: if we catch on fire?

#2) Stop, Drop and Roll

A simple way to tackle this is: to remember what you're supposed to do if you ever catch on fire. What were you taught as a kid? You are too: stop, drop and roll.

I want to apply this to this text because that is what this leper did. He had a fire of gratitude welling up within him, so he stopped to recognize it was Jesus who brought this blessing.

- He stopped moving onto to number next and instead, paused and returned to Jesus to worship and give thanks.
- He dropped to his knees. His gratitude led him to a profound sense of a humble heart and adoration.
- Thankfulness and a chorus of gratitude & praise rolled off his tongue for Jesus to hear.

Allow these simple pictures and practice becoming more and more a part of how you go through your days. A come back kid will more and more, become a person who can: Stop. Drop and Roll with thankfulness for the heart of God to enjoy.

Transition to 2nd Worship Set and Thank You Card in bulletins

We have built in time to continue in worship this morning. I want to invite you to engage with this habit right now! Individually and together with our community, that we'd be people who act upon this truth.

I'm haunted by the question Jesus raises: Were not all ten cleansed?

-how often have I gotten his love – it reached beyond my expectation and I didn't stop long enough to bring him an offering of praise and gratitude for that...I get caught up moving on to number next...I don't look in the mirror enough!

→ We've put a thank you card in each of your bulletins this morning...an invitation for you to take some time during this worship time and your week leading up to Thanksgiving to stop, drop and roll in writing the things, people, you're grateful for...

→ As we go on with worship – take this time as sacred space b/t you and God – to bring an offering of praise & gratitude for him to enjoy this morning... (you can stay seated, stand, kneel)

→ I'll come back up and close us in a few minutes!

-----Worship set----- (may have some verses on screen prior to singing) 3 songs

Blessing and Closing:

STOP, DROP AND ROLL – makes a real good rhythm to life...

May you be undone by this Jesus, whose love actually wants to reach beyond your expectations and conditions!

May you be captivated with a hunger and thirst for your own ongoing return encounters

May we be a community that's satisfied with being the 1 out of 10 communities that is filled with gratitude and expressing that through worship and the way we live!