

WHAT JESUS SAID – THEN AND NOW

WHERE ARE THE NINE?

TEXT: Luke 17:11-17

INTRODUCTION: Dr. Luke, **the author of the Gospel of Luke, was a consummate historian.** The historical detail of his gospel and the sequel which we call Acts is so precise and exacting that **clever skeptics** used to think this was the Bible's Achilles' heel. They **thought that if they could show some of these historical details to be in error, they would prove that this so called Word of God contained mistakes** and was therefore unworthy to be believed.

And so they tried, and failed.

And they tried, ...and failed.

Time and time again they challenged the good doctor's place names, geographical descriptions and the precise nautical terms used in these two New Testament books, confident that in all the detail, they would certainly find a mistake.

- **They found one.**
- **Only one,**
- **but they found one.**

The mistake was that they challenged the historicity of the good doctor and **the inerrancy of the Bible**, because at every point they thought to prove Luke wrong, the facts eventually proved him to be exactly right.

Luke's accounts are so meticulous that the uninformed might think the author to be a professional historian. But of course we know that Luke was by trade a physician. So along with a propensity to technical accuracy, we see in Luke's writings a love and appreciation of the healing ministry of the Great Physician.

And therefore, out of all four of the evangelists, Luke alone tells us this story and these particular words of Jesus that are so tremendously appropriate for today.

Luke 17:11-17 11 Now it happened as He went to Jerusalem that He passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. 12 Then as He entered a certain village, there met Him ten men who were lepers, who stood afar off. 13 And they lifted up *their* voices and said, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!"

14 So when He saw *them*, He said to them, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And so it was that as they went, they were cleansed.

15 And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned, and with a loud voice glorified God,
16 and fell down on *his* face at His feet, giving Him thanks. And he was a Samaritan.

17 So Jesus answered and said, “Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine?

One of the best ways to truly understand a Biblical passage is to try to picture yourself as a part of it. When I do that with this story, there is only one part appropriate for me, that of one of the lepers.

- Describe leprosy; the horror of having it,
- the hopelessness of having it.
- One day hearing of Jesus who heals all manner of disease. Hearing He came to town.
- Crying out. Going to priests, cleansing.
- Joy unspeakable.

Then I pause and wonder: Which one of the lepers would I be? And I pray, “Lord, not one of the nine!”

That leads me to think about the gratitude that I already owe to others. Memorial Day is all about gratitude: gratitude for those who gave their lives for us on fields of battle. It reminds me of some to whom **I owe my thanks to ...**

I. THOSE WHO DIED FOR US IN THE WARS OF OUR COUNTRY

A. Beginnings of Memorial Day

- The holiday began following the civil war to honor those who lost their lives.
- It was first called Decoration Day because the day was used to decorate the graves of the fallen soldiers.
- Following WWI, the holiday was changed to be a time for honoring all Americans who died in any of our wars.

B. Since those days there have been many who gave their lives to defend America and her principles, to give us the lives of freedom we enjoy today.

1. There was World War 1 in the trenches when much of war was still fought where you had to look your enemy in the eye before you shot him or he shot you.
2. World War 2 where the improving technology of war caused men to be mowed down as they stormed beaches in Normandy to prevent the beaches of the Gulf Coast from being one day invaded by the enemy.
 - a. Thanks to the kindness of a friend in Slidell named Eddie Polk, Karen and I got to walk on those beaches a few years ago.
 - b. Some of the bunkers that housed artillery and machine guns are still there. It is sobering to stand in one of the emplacements and realize how many men would be killed before sufficient numbers would be able to take such a site.

- c. Even more sobering is to stand in the cemetery above Omaha Beach and see the countless rows of crosses standing upon the graves of American soldiers who gave their lives for me, ...for us.
 - d. We went from the cemetery inland to a field outside a small French Village. This was the place where my own father, a few weeks after D-Day had been the object of the wrath of a German mine. At the field hospital the doctor said they might as well skip this guy, he will never live. But he did. Severely disabled, having to learn again to walk and talk, he lived.
 - e. But many, ...many did not. He returned to his family, but many did not return. They died. They gave their lives for us, and **the very least we can do is be grateful**. "Lord, we cannot say thanks to them for they cannot hear us; but we say thanks to you for giving us men and women who gave their lives for ours."
3. Then there was Korea
 4. And Vietnam, where as a nation we have probably been the most guilty of being one of the nine. But men and women gave their lives for this country and for the principles of freedom we all cherish in the rice paddies of SE Asia the same as they did in the forests of Europe.
 5. Since then there has been the Gulf War, the War in Iraq and Afghanistan.

And folks, **we should be grateful**. Grateful to them and to those who came before them... **to**

II. THOSE WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES TO GIVE US A FREE AND CHRISTIAN NATION

- A. Revisionist history has tried to erase any trace of those whose noble purpose was to give birth to a nation that honored and obeyed the Lord of Heaven.
- B. In so doing they have erased speeches from text books and removed descriptions of sacred devotion from their biographies.
- C. But they cannot erase their names, because they are the names that are at the heart of the history of the early days of our country.
 1. Like George Washington - thanksgiving Proclamation

Thanksgiving Proclamation

[New York, 3 October 1789]

By the President of the United States of America, a Proclamation.

Whereas it is the duty of all Nations

- **to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God,**
- **to obey his will,**
- **to be grateful for his benefits,**
- **and humbly to implore his protection and favor—**

... whereas both Houses of Congress ... recommend to the People of the United States a day of public thanksgiving and prayer to be observed by acknowledging with grateful hearts the many signal favors of Almighty God ...

Now therefore I do recommend and assign Thursday the 26th day of November next to be devoted by the People of these States

- to the service of that great and glorious Being,
- Who is the beneficent Author of all the good that was, that is, or that will be—
- That we may then all unite in rendering unto Him our sincere and humble thanks

... and also that we may then unite in most humbly offering our prayers and supplications to the great Lord and Ruler of Nations and

- beseech Him to pardon our national and other transgressions
- To promote the knowledge and practice of true religion and virtue, ...
- and generally to grant unto all Mankind such a degree of temporal prosperity as He alone knows to be best.

Given under my hand at the City of New York the third day of October in the year of our Lord 1789.

George Washington

2. And Benjamin Franklin – at the Constitutional Convention on June 28, 1787 ...

I have lived, Sir, a long time and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth -- that God governs in the affairs of men.

And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without his aid?

We have been assured, Sir, in the sacred writings that "except the Lord build they labor in vain that build it." I firmly believe this; and I also believe that without his concurring aid we shall succeed in this political building no better than the Builders of Babel: ...

I therefore beg leave to move -- that henceforth prayers imploring the assistance of Heaven, and its blessings on our deliberations, be held in this Assembly every morning before we proceed to business

3. And later Abraham Lincoln - Senator James Harlan of Iowa introduced a Resolution in the Senate that asked President Lincoln to proclaim a national day of prayer and fasting. On March 30, 1863, the President made this proclamation:

Whereas, the Senate of the United States, devoutly recognizing the Supreme Authority and just Government of Almighty God, in all the affairs of men and of nations, has, by a resolution, requested the President to designate and set apart a day for National prayer and humiliation.

And whereas it is the duty of nations as well as of men, to own their dependence upon the overruling power of God, to confess their sins and transgressions, in humble sorrow, yet with assured hope that genuine repentance will lead to mercy and pardon; and to recognize the sublime truth, announced in the Holy Scriptures and proven by all history, that those nations only are blessed whose God is the Lord.

And, insomuch as we know that, by His divine law, nations like individuals are subjected to punishments and chastisements in this world, may we not justly fear that the awful calamity of

civil war, which now desolates the land, may be but a punishment, inflicted upon us, for our presumptuous sins, to the needful end of our national reformation as a whole People?

- We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of Heaven.
- We have been preserved, these many years, in peace and prosperity.
- We have grown in numbers, wealth and power, as no other nation has ever grown.
- But we have forgotten God.
 - We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace, and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us;
 - and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own.
 - Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace,
 - too proud to pray to the God that made us!

It behooves us then, to humble ourselves before the offended Power, to confess our national sins, and to pray for clemency and forgiveness.

Now, therefore, in compliance with the request, and fully concurring in the views of the Senate, I do, by this my proclamation, designate and set apart Thursday, the 30th day of April, 1863, as a day of national humiliation, fasting and prayer. And I do hereby request all the People to abstain, on that day, from their ordinary secular pursuits, and to unite, at their several places of public worship and their respective homes, in keeping the day holy to the Lord, and devoted to the humble discharge of the religious duties proper to that solemn occasion.

All this being done, in sincerity and truth, let us then rest humbly in the hope authorized by the Divine teachings, that the united cry of the Nation will be heard on high, and answered with blessings, no less than the pardon of our national sins, and the restoration of our now divided and suffering Country, to its former happy condition of unity and peace. ...

By the President: Abraham Lincoln

D. These men gave their lives to establish a Christian nation in these United States.

1. They never envisioned a land where signs and symbols of Christian faith would be outlawed from the public square.
2. They never meant to have a country where someone could not of their own free will bow their head and say a prayer whether they be at school or in public or private gatherings.
3. They did not give their lives to establish a system that would try to administer justice by banishing the Ten Commandments given by the Supreme Justice of the Universe.
4. By religious liberty and pluralism they meant that each man was free to make his own choice concerning his faith. They did not mean that they believed that all faiths were equal, and they explicitly identified that the country they were founding was based upon faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as the one and only True God of Heaven.

E. And although we Americans in our self centered pride and foolishness have in more recent years elected people to public office who not only denied but sought to undermine these godly foundations of our nation, we can be grateful for the foundation that was laid and that yet

remains because of the shed blood of those who gave their life to establish one nation under God.

But most of all, we should be grateful to

III. THE ONE WHO GAVE HIS LIFE TO SET US FREE FROM THE CAPTIVITY OF SIN AND DEATH.

- A. For what would it matter if we were free from the tyrants of this world if we were captive to the Evil One himself, who desires only to steal, kill and destroy?
- B. And it would be a small gain to live in a country that loved and obeyed God if we were destined for eternity to live in the Lake of Fire because our own sin was unforgiven?
- C. And what would it profit if we had access to all of the truth of God if there were no way to overcome our sinful natures which even when knowing the commands of God disobey Him anyway, thus increasing our own sin and guilt?
- D. No my friend, although there are many to who we should remember to be grateful, the first of all is the One Who gave His all. If we would use this occasion as we ought, let us first and foremost be grateful to Jesus
 1. Who abandoned the indescribable riches of glory to be born in poverty on our behalf
 2. Who shed his robes of light and brightness for olive tones of human flesh
 3. Who left and eternal city of pearly gates, golden streets, and jeweled walls to be a homeless man
 4. Who without discarding His eternal deity, took upon Himself temporal humanity
 5. Who lived a sinless life, so that all the sin of the world could be laid upon Him
 6. Who had been the recipient of all the sacrifices of men since the beginning of the world but became the sacrifice for man, once and for all
 7. Who willfully entered into the grave in order to lead all those who would believe in Him out of the grave and give them life for all eternity.

CONCLUSION: My friend, let us determine in our heart today that we will not be one of the nine to receive so much at the hand of the Master and never return to offer our thanks.

How can we thank Him?

- a. Those who are not yet saved, by trusting Him.
- b. Those who have wandered away, by returning to Him in repentance
- c. Those who have neglected Him, by walking faithfully with Him and serving Him.
- d. Those who have not obeyed Him, by becoming a witness for Him in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

PRAYER - Lord let me not be one to the ungrateful nine. But whatever you would have me do to express my gratitude for all you have done for me, lead me to do it right now.