

But where are the nine

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[0:00] Let's turn to that second passage that we read, Luke chapter 17 and verse 17.

Jesus asked, were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Especially the words, where are the other nine?

Last Sunday evening at the After Church Fellowship, we had speakers from the National Bible Society telling us about some very exciting news from other parts of the world.

There were 15 people present at that meeting to hear them, to hear of the great things that God is doing in Latin America and in Russia and Eastern Europe.

15 people to hear a challenge concerning our own spirituality and the things that are happening in our own land in comparison to these other parts of the world.

[1:14] 15 people. Now at an evening service, we normally have roughly about 150 people. And so the question occurred to me, where were the other nine-tenths?

Where were the other 90%? Where were the other nine, as Jesus puts it? And that brought home to me an aspect of our congregational life that I find worrying from time to time.

Because this brought home to me in, I suppose, an extreme form, something that is there underlying the surface all of the time.

And to be fair, not just in our own congregation. This reminded me of this question of the Lord Jesus.

Where are the other nine? And I'd like to look with you this evening at that question. And I hope we'll be challenged, as well as blessed, by what we discover here.

[2:27] The first thing we notice is that all were blessed. This account that's given of Jesus meeting with the ten lepers, all of the ten lepers were blessed.

Here they were, they were suffering from leprosy. Now this word is possibly not as specific a word as it is today. We use it specifically today for a specific disease.

Proper name is Hansen's disease. But in ancient times it was used really of any kind of skin disease, especially one that was judged to be contagious.

And so these lepers kept apart from other people. There were special places for them to live, outside the village, outside the town. Abel wouldn't go near them. And so here they respect that social custom.

As they come to Jesus, they stand at a distance. And they shout over to him. They don't come near to him. They shout over to him, Jesus, Master, have pity on us. Now throughout the Bible, disease of any kind is not only seen as a result of man's sin and rebellion against God.

[3:44] We live in a fallen, broken universe in which there is sin and misery and disease and illness of every kind. But it is also used in the scriptures as a picture of our sinful condition.

So that when we read of sick people coming to Jesus and being healed by him, we have here a picture given to us of the sinner coming to Jesus and receiving blessing.

So that as we read these accounts, one thing we can take out of it is that no matter how we're feeling physically, this applies to us spiritually. For we are all sinners, all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

And so as we read of these things, we can say, well, there is hope for the sinner because Jesus helped those who were in need.

But not only were these people lepers and therefore stand as representatives of the sinful human race, they also had a kind of solidarity in their separation from human society because we know that there was a mixture of people there.

[5:01] We know that the one man who came back and thanked Jesus was a Samaritan. And so the implication is that at least some of the others were not Samaritans, they were Jews.

So there was a mixture. The people who normally, in normal circumstances, wouldn't have anything to do with one another, they would look down on one another or whatever. In their condition, in their diseased condition, they had a kind of solidarity together.

Now, that's true in, I suppose, different ways of our sinful condition. A couple of lines from a song by Runrig come to mind.

They speak about down the neon isles and the twilight miles where the world takes comfort in shame. That speaks of people having solidarity in sin.

People who have solidarity in recognizing that what they're doing is wrong, but because everybody else is doing it, they don't really, perhaps, feel as ashamed as they would otherwise.

[6:07] And throughout this city tonight, there'll be people in pubs and bars where they will be blaspheming the name of the Lord Jesus, where they'll be indulging in obscenity and immorality, and they'll be taking comfort from the fact that, well, they're all in the same boat, they're all doing the same thing.

And we shouldn't look at such people, perhaps, and think, oh, well, we're much better than them because we have exactly the same kind of sinful humanity. And maybe, as we hear a sermon being preached about sin, we say, well, yes, that's right, I'm a sinner, but so is everybody else.

And we take some kind of comfort from having solidarity in sin with everyone else. But, of course, there is a sense in which this brings home to us, if you like, a good truth.

And that is that certainly the fact that we are sinners breaks down all other kinds of social distinctions. We all stand the same there.

These people, they all had the same need, they all had the same disease. They were all lepers, they were all outcasts, they were all separated from civilized society. And so, when the Bible tells us that we are sinners, we must recognize that we are all equal there.

[7:27] We may have different social distinctions. We may belong to different classes, have better jobs or less better jobs than one another. But we all stand equal there, that we are equally condemned by the law of God.

But then, these men, they all come and they all cry to Jesus. In verse 13, we read, they called out in a loud voice, Jesus, Master, have pity on us.

They had heard about Jesus, they had heard that he was someone who could heal the sick, he could even heal the leper. Perhaps heard about a time when he laid his hand, actually, on a leper to heal him.

So Jesus wasn't afraid of their condition, and Jesus was powerful to be able to help their condition. And so they cry out to him. You like, they come and they pray to Jesus, and they ask him for help. And this again is true of all these ten people. They all pray to Jesus, and ask him for help.

[8:30] And I'm sure it's a truth, that every single person in the world, at one time or another in their lives, they pray. It is said that even atheists pray.

In times of need, in times of distress, there's a cry that comes out for help. It's part of the aspect of our being made in the very image of God, that we have a God consciousness, and that we will cry out to God for help, in our times of need.

And here were men, who would cry out to Jesus, because they had heard about him, and they thought, well here's someone, who perhaps can help us. So they all stood the same there.

Also, they were all the same, in that they were all healed by Jesus. There's no indication, that any of them was left out.

We're told, as they went, at the end of verse 14, as they went, they were cleansed. Jesus simply had said the word, go, show yourself to the priests. That was the rule in those days.

[9:40] If someone was to be recognized, as cleansed from leprosy, they had to go, show themselves to the priests, and if the priests said, yes, you're clean, well then, they were allowed back, into normal society.

Jesus told them, go, and show yourself to the priests. And we're told, that as they went, they were cleansed. All of them, no distinction, all of them, were cured, of their leprosy.

Now what does that say to us, in the kind of context, we're thinking of it this evening? Well it says, that in many different ways, all of us, have the same kind of blessings.

First of all, let's take it in the sense, of what we call, common grace. Now we use the word, common there, not in the sense, of it being something, derogatory, something you look down on, common in that sense, it means in the true, meaning of the word, common, common to all people.

Something that's the same, for all people, common grace. The Bible teaches us, that God shows, grace and kindness, to all people, who live on the face of the earth, in this general way.

[10:49] We've been singing, in Psalm 145, good unto all men, is the Lord. That is literally true, to all men, God is good. He gives gifts, to all men liberally.

He causes the rain, to fall, both for the just, and the unjust. He causes the sun, to shine, both for the righteous, and the unrighteous. God gives good gifts, to all men.

There's no person, who has ever lived, in this world, who has not enjoyed, some good things. No matter, supposing his life, may be full, of miseries, at various points, that are good things, also, that he has enjoyed.

So, there is that sense, in which, we have all received, blessing, from God. All received, good things from him. Because you see, God has created, the world, and everything, that we use, and even the things, that we abuse, they are all God's.

And every pleasure, that we've ever had, everything that we've enjoyed, the joy in it, the pleasure in it, belongs to God. It is only the sin, in it, that, if you like, belongs to Satan, belongs to your, sinful, fallen condition.

[12:04] So you see, we all, have enjoyed blessing, from God's hand. God's hand. But then, there is also, a special blessing, in belonging, for instance, as we do, to what we may call, a gospel nation.

A nation, that has been touched, that has been blessed, by the power of God, through the gospel. From the time, at least, of the reformation onwards.

God's word, coming in power, in many different ways, and in many different times, of revival. So that our nation, has been influenced, its very structures, and its very, society, influenced, in so many different ways, by the word of God, by the law of God, and by the gospel of God.

So that's another way, in which we all, here, in this kind of society, we have enjoyed blessings, from God. These things are too numerous, to mention. But I'm sure you know, many of them.

You know that our, educational, system, derived, basically, from the great vision, of John Knox, to have a school, in every parish, as well as a church. A vision, which he was not able, to implement, in his lifetime, because of the greed, of the nobles.

[13:21] But one, which later, people like Thomas Chalmers, were able to further, even in the cities, of our land, in the time, of the industrial revolution.

And so this great, love of education, came from a Christian base. And although today, people may forget about that, or they may denigrate that, yet it is the truth.

And people who enjoy education, enjoy the benefits of it, they must stop and think, these things have come to us, through the goodness of God. And so many other things, benefits of science, science, and modern medicine, these things too, have come, because of the influence, of Christianity.

Why do you think, those things arose, in the West, and especially, in nations, where the Bible, had such a great influence? It is simply, because in the Bible, people, like Isaac Newton, and others, discovered, that here, was a God, who, gave laws, and who created things, according to laws.

And so, they sought to find out, the kind of laws, that were, in the creation, that God had made. All these good things, have come again, because of that influence, of the word of God, in our Western society.

[14:38] And yes, these things today, may be, treated in a different way. They may not be seen now, as to the glory of God, but to the glory of man. But nonetheless, these things derived, originally, from the influence, of the word of God, in our society.

The very kind, of respect, that we may have, for morality, in our society, again, it derives, from the influence, of the Ten Commandments, on our society.

It's been said, that Western institutions, and democracy, have been built, upon the Ten Commandments. So all these things, derive, from the goodness of God, to our society, in the past. And you, and I, enjoy those things, and those benefits. All, have been blessed, by God. God. But then, there's another sense, in which, narrowing it down, a little bit more, perhaps, to ourselves here, we enjoy, special blessing.

Those of us, who have had the privilege, of being brought up, within Christian families, of being brought up, at least, within the orb, of the Christian church, we know, too, that we have enjoyed, special blessing, from God.

[15:55] Now sometimes, coming from such a background, we may look upon, what we view, to be the disadvantages. But if we are honest, we will recognize, the advantages, of homes, where, love, was something real.

Of homes, where things like, honesty, and rightness, and good, were upheld. And we recognize, that as we see, people who come, from other kinds, of backgrounds, the great privileges, we had, even in these areas.

The very emphasis, upon things, that we've already, been mentioning, such as education. The tremendous emphasis, that there has always been, where the gospel, has had effect, in an area, like the highlands, upon education, the development, of the mind.

And now, we may take, those benefits, and we may use them, for our own glory, our own advancement, our own material things. But nonetheless, these benefits, came originally, from a respect, for the word of God, and a respect, for the mind of man, that God had created.

So again, we have enjoyed, so many good benefits, and blessings, from God. But of course, the most special, blessing of all, is the experience, of many people, here this evening.

[17:26] That most special, blessing of all, I'm talking about, the gift, of eternal life, through Jesus Christ. I'm talking about, that gift of faith. I'm talking about, that time, when God met with you, and when God, in his grace, enabled you, to see yourself, as a sinner, and to see, the Lord Jesus Christ, as the Savior, made for you.

And the transformation, took place in your life, and you know, that greatest, of all blessing, that peace with God, through Jesus Christ, that hope of glory. Many of us, as I say here, this evening, know that great benefit.

So in all, these different ways, at whatever level, you fit in, you have enjoyed, the blessings of God. You have received, good gifts, from God. Even as these men did, in a very special way, receive this blessing, of physical healing, from Jesus Christ.

Christ. But then, we read, that only one, out of ten, responded properly.

[18:41] Only one, out of ten, responded, in the way, in which Jesus Christ, wanted. The other nine, they were healed, they enjoyed the benefit, but they went, on their way, quite happy.

Only one, returned, to thank Jesus, and he, we're told, was a Samaritan. Jesus remarked, on it. Because, people would have thought, oh well, he would be the last to come.

It might have been, one of the others, one of these people, who perhaps, before they were lepers, and excluded from society, perhaps, they had even been, Pharisees, or Sadducees, perhaps they had, been religious people.

Well, surely one of them, would have come, but no, it was a Samaritan. Someone, who was, at enmity, normally, with the Jews, and disagreed, with them theologically, and socially, and so on. Yet, he was the one, who returned, to thank Jesus. And that should remind us, in passing, that you see, man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks on the heart.

[19:44] We do not know, what's going on, in people's minds. So often, we're surprised, are we not, when we hear of someone, who's converted. Because we think, well, I wouldn't have expected, it was that person.

I would have expected, it was someone else, but not this person. But God, in his sovereignty, acts to show us, that he takes pity, upon the weak, and upon the foolish, and those, that we least expect good of, to demonstrate, that it is all, of his power, and his glory, and not of our wisdom.

So, there was one, who returned, to praise God, and to thank, the Lord Jesus, for what he had done, for him. Well, we come to the question, of the Lord Jesus.

Where, are the other nine? Were not all ten cleansed? Where, are the other nine? Well, where were the other nine? Well, we know where they were, they were off, to enjoy life.

They had been restored, to health, not just to physical health, but, to social acceptance again, and they were off, to enjoy the benefits of it. They were off, to enjoy life.

[20:58] Not a thought, returning, to praise God, and to thank, the Lord Jesus, for what he had done. Now, today, there would have been, one person, out of ten, in church, in Aberdeen.

These are the figures, roughly. one, in every ten people, would be, in some kind of church, somewhere, in Aberdeen, with some kind of thought, in their mind, to praise God, and to thank, the Lord Jesus Christ, for his goodness.

Where, are the other nine? Where is the other 90%? All have enjoyed, the blessings, of God's common grace. Every day of our lives, every one of us, enjoys good things, from God's hand. God's common grace, and the Christian heritage, of our nation. But where are the other nine? No thoughts, in their mind, concerning, thanking God, for those things.

Concerned only, with the things, of this world. Concerned only, with the things, that are going to perish. And no thought, of the God, who has given them all this. And the God, to whom one day, they will have to answer, for how they have used, those things.

[22:15] If you are a Christian, if you know, the Lord Jesus Christ, does that question, not bother you? That we are surrounded, by people, that nine, out of every ten people, perhaps we know, are far from Christ.

Not concerned, to thank him, and to praise God, for what he has done. That should concern us. It should concern us, in our prayers. It should concern us, in our desire, to represent Christ, by how we live, and by how we speak, so that others, may be one, for the Lord Jesus.

But then, perhaps, only one in ten, from a Christian background, and I use the word, just generally, and loosely, a Christian background, for instance, in the Highlands, and Islands, perhaps only one in ten, are out and out, committed, to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Maybe many of them, tonight, they're not here, in church, they're perhaps, in a pub, or bar, somewhere, but they're certainly, not here in church. But maybe some of you, are here tonight, and you come from, that kind of background, I've been painting, with all its blessings, with all its benefits, and yet, you're still not committed, to the Lord Jesus Christ, the source, of all these blessings, and benefits.

You maybe only see, the good things, of your background, as just culture, and you forget, that it is the gift, of God, through Jesus Christ, every good thing, is his gift.

[23:57] And you have not returned, to give thanks, to the Lord Jesus, for all that he has done, for you, in these very general terms. You see, it's possible, that only one in ten, from such a background, are returning, to give thanks, to the Lord Jesus.

But all the time, you are enjoying, the benefits. All the time, you are enjoying, the blessings, that come from such a background. The very way, you've been brought up. The kind of things, that you've been led, to respect, and to live for, and to think about.

And all these benefits, you're enjoying these, and the fruits, that flow from them. The kind of respect, you get from other people, because you are, the kind of person you are. You're enjoying it, but you're letting it, reflect upon yourself.

And not letting the glory, reflect on the Lord Jesus Christ, who has given, so much to you. But then finally, I come, to this.

And perhaps, it's an exaggeration. I hope it's an exaggeration. But, are there only one in ten, of church members, committed to full participation, in the congregational life, of this church?

[25:22] Are there really only one in ten? Or are there more? Well, I hope there are more. But as we look, at congregational life, we see that yes, we get big crowds, here on Sunday, especially Sunday morning.

We get big crowds. And maybe we all feel good, because we've got, such big crowds here. And let us never denigrate that. Because it's great, to see people coming, to hear the gospel, of Jesus Christ.

And that is all, that is given here, the gospel of Jesus. So it's great, to see that. But what I'm getting at here, is what about those, who are members, of the church?

Those who are out and out, committed Christians, who have openly, and publicly, professed faith, in the Lord Jesus Christ. How is our involvement, in the whole, congregational life?

About the highest, attendance we get, at the prayer meeting, it's about 45. How do you think, that's very good attendance.

[26:30] But if you compare it, to the size of Sunday congregations, we've got to ask, at least, not where perhaps, are the nine, but at least, where are the others? Now yes, I know, that we may have, good reason.

It may not be, as I was preaching, about this morning, they all alike, began to make excuse, in the sense, of giving, very poor reasons. We may have, good reasons at times, for, not being able, to participate, in the full life, of the congregation.

But have we always, got good reasons? Or sometimes, are the reasons, very poor? And that we are, just making excuse. We've got to consider, those kind of questions, not only concerning, the prayer meeting, but also concerning, the fellowship meeting, as we call it.

The time when we can have, discussion together, as a congregation, on Sunday evenings. It's not always on. It's only on, certain times of the year.

So is it asking too much, that we should take part there? Maybe we don't want, to speak in it, but to share, in the congregational life, to know the kind of things, that concern other people, in the congregation.

[27:50] These are things, that we ought to be, concerned about. If we are, fully committed Christians, as we claim to be, to be concerned, about the body of Christ, to which we belong.

Surely, these are ways, in which we can show, thankfulness, to the Lord Jesus Christ, for what he did for us. Because he commands, those things. He says, forsake not the assembling, of yourselves together.

He says, pray at all times. He says, have fellowship, one with another. And every, means there is, every avenue there is, surely for those things, should be things, that Christians desire, to have a part of.

There are so many, other things, that are areas, of our congregational life, where help is needed. Especially, at the moment, there is help needed, in running the boys club, and the youth club.

These are opportunities, that God has given to us. Children, and young people, from non-Christian homes, from homes, that have no idea, concerning the things, we have been talking about.

[28:56] From homes, where they have enjoyed, the blessings of God, as we have said. that there has been, no one yet, to express thankfulness, to God, for all that they have enjoyed. But here, in one way or another, we have had contact, with these people.

Some have just, wandered in off the street, because they saw, an open door, in the church, and they came in. They came in, to the centre of Aberdeen, at a weekend, just to hang about. Perhaps they didn't have, very much money, to do anything, as so many young people do.

Yet they saw, an open door, and they came in. And as well as, having a good time together, with other young people, they hear the gospel, of Jesus Christ. Are there only, one or two people, who are concerned, about that work?

Should there not be, multitudes of us, concerned, to help, and to encourage, that work, to grow, and to develop, to see some of these, young people, coming on, to faith, in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so we could go on, I don't want this evening, to belabor you, with these things. But I do want, to bring these things, before you. I believe that I've got, a duty, as your minister, to bring those things, before you.

[30:10] And to ask the question, as the Lord Jesus did ask, where are the nine? Am I wrong? Have I got it wrong, somewhere? Is my emphasis, perhaps too exaggerated?

Well if it is so, you come along tonight, to the discussion, and you put your point of view, and I'll be more pleased, than anyone else, if at the end of it, you have proved me wrong.

Let us pray. Amen. Amen. Our gracious, and loving, Heavenly Father, we pray, that you would enable us, to express, thanks to you, for all that you have done, for us.

You have given us, so many good things, and you know, you know, how poor we are, and how weak we are, and how easily, we make excuse for ourselves, there is no one, accepted from this. Oh Lord, enable us, by your grace, to show, by how we live, by how we conduct ourselves, by how we speak, by how we relate, to one another, by how we participate, that we are concerned, to show, love, and thankfulness, to the Lord Jesus, above everything else.

[31:30] we recognize, that only you can do this, by your grace, at work in our hearts. And we pray forgiveness, for all that is amiss, in our thinking, of these issues, and concerns.

And we pray, for your guidance, and blessing upon us, as we consider, these things together. And oh Lord, we do remember, before you, those multitudes, around us, who receive good, from your hand, every day, but as yet, they have no understanding, of your grace, to save them, and to transform them.

Oh Lord, may this congregation, of your people, and all the fellowships, of your people, throughout this city, be moved, in a mighty way, to share, the good news, of Jesus Christ.

And to this end, we do remember, before you again, the preaching, of your word, which will take place, in a very public way, and in a way, that will attract attention, at Petaudry, at the end of this month.

We pray, for your blessing, upon Dr. Billy Graham, recognizing, that the power, is not in man, but in God. But we pray, that the gospel, may be indeed, preached in power, and with love, there, on these occasions.

[32:50] And we pray, that many, would be drawn, to hear it, and by the power, of your spirit, converted. We pray, that you would bless, all those, who are working, towards that end.

And we pray, that you would bless, each one of us, as we may have opportunity, not just, to defend, Dr. Graham, and to say, that he preaches, the gospel, but to, ask others, to come, and to hear, for themselves.

Gracious Lord, we pray, your blessing, upon the preaching, of your word, then, and, upon your word, as it is proclaimed, week in, week out, in the churches of Christ, in this city, that great good, may flow, from that preaching.

We ask, all these things, in Jesus name. Amen.