

## **I Need a Sense of Belonging**

Series: It's Somewhere: Looking for Answers

Luke 17:11-19

June 4, 2017

I'm so glad we are here together this morning. It's good to be together.

IT'S SOMEWHERE: LOOKING FOR ANSWERS. BOXES HOLD KEEPSAKES OF MEMORIES OF FAMILY, FRIENDS, PLACES, EVENTS.

We all have basic needs. In Psychology 101, you probably learned of Abraham Maslow and his hierarchy of needs. He said we first have basic physiological needs, the physical requirements for human survival: food, water, air, shelter, etc. If these requirements are not met, the human body cannot function properly and will ultimately fail.

Once a person's physiological needs are relatively satisfied, their safety needs take precedence and dominate behavior. These safety and security needs include personal security, financial security, health and well-being, and a safety net against accidents/illness and their adverse impacts.

After physiological and safety needs are fulfilled, the third level of human needs is interpersonal and involves feelings of belongingness. These include friendships, intimacy, and family. This need is especially strong in childhood and it can override the need for safety as witnessed in children who cling to abusive parents.

We all have the need for belonging, of being part of something. It might be a club, an organization, a movement, a social group. Some kind of belonging. I want to be part of something.

I want to share a passage of Scripture with you today about some people who needed some belonging. I want to invite you to turn in your bulletin to page 4 as we look at Luke 17.

### **READ LUKE 17:11-19 (NLT)**

The lepers keep their distance, for they were under the strict prescriptions of Levitical law. As ones who had been declared ritually unclean, these lepers were ostracized from their families, their homes, their livelihoods, and their communities. Deprived of all social contacts, lepers were banished to the boundaries of the village and were forced into begging, relying on mercy and generosity for their survival.

LEPERS BANISHED FROM FAMILY AND SOCIETY. THE ONLY BELONGING THEY HAD NOW WAS TO A COLONY OF OTHERS JUST LIKE THEM.

Jesus is in the business of meeting needs, of help people belong. Let's examine the movement towards belonging.

### **First, we see the People for the Restoring.**

These 10 individuals were forced from the places where they belonged. And we see 3 causes for this.

Obviously, the sickness. Leprosy was a most dreaded disease in Bible times, for there was no known cure for it. It would disfigure and destroy the body. Deformity of hands and feet and ears and nose and lips occurred in its later stages. It was generally believed that only God could heal leprosy, so when Christ healed a leper, it gave evidence of His deity.

The next cause was the society. “Ten men that were lepers... one of them... was a Samaritan.”<sup>1</sup> The society of the ten men was composed of 9 Jews and 1 Samaritan. Normally Jews and Samaritans had nothing to do with each other, but the common misery of these lepers drew them together. But associating together did not lessen the problem.

The third cause was the separation. Verse 12 says they “stood at a distance.” Those with leprosy were separated from the rest of society. This separation was one reason it was such a dreaded disease. Leprosy literally broke up families and separated loved ones which added to the heartache of the land. In this action is seen the work of sin, for it separates, breaks up families and causes much heartache in the land.

Because of all this, we see the second movement towards belonging. **There is the Plea for the Restoring.**

**READ LUKE 17:12, 13**

When the lepers met Christ, they pleaded for Him to heal them.

They had first passion. Verse 13 says they cried out. They lifted up their voices. The passion in the plea is demonstrated in two ways. First, the debility of their voices. The voice of a person with leprosy is often greatly weakened by leprosy. Therefore, it was with great effort that these lepers shouted to Christ for help. Second, the distance of their voices. Remember, the men “stood at a distance” because of their restrictions, so they had to lift up their voices extra loud in order to be heard over the distance.

So they had passion. They also had praise. The lepers called Jesus “Master” which gave Jesus honor. If you want blessings from Christ, you must honor Him. You will get little from God when you do not honor Him. Our land needs to realize that truth.

They also had pity. “Have mercy on us.” The lepers wisely sought healing via Divine mercy. Thus they appealed to the right Person for help. They did not plead merit or rights. They did not appeal to the government or pray to some dead saint. They went straight to Jesus where help could be found.

The proper way to seek help from God is always to come via the door of mercy. Merit or rights will not get you much. Especially is this true in regards to soul salvation.

Titus 3:5 says

*he saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy.*<sup>2</sup>

**The third movement towards belonging is the Precept for the Restoring.**

**READ LUKE 17:14**

The healing of the lepers came with a command from Christ. I’ve put this in your bulletin: If you want God to do something for you, do not be surprised if He asks you (through a command) to do something for Him. The precept here if obeyed would bring honor to Jesus Christ.

When it says that Jesus saw them, it reveals His compassion. So often, it is easy to ignore, to not even see the needy, to turn our eyes away because we don’t want to look. That’s not the compassion of Christ.

Jesus tells them, “Go show yourselves to the priests.” This followed the Mosaic Law which required a leper to be examined by a priest who would declare the extent of the case. If the leper was healed, the priest would declare the healing so society would

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 17:12, 15, 16

<sup>2</sup> Titus 3:5a (NLT)

know it was not a fake. By showing themselves to the priests, it would give a great witness to the priests of the marvelous work of Jesus in healing the lepers. When the lepers told the priests how they were healed, the priest would examine the lepers rigorously because they did not like Christ, but the more they examined the lepers, the more they would have to admit that Christ did a marvelous job of healing and must be the Son of God as He claimed to be.

Notice that Jesus doesn't do some "a-bra-ca-da-bra." How does the healing take place?

*as they went, they were cleansed of their leprosy.*<sup>3</sup>

Jesus' command would test the lepers' faith, for they had to start obeying before they were healed. The promise in the command was only implied, but they had to exercise faith for the healing. Times of stress often tests our faith, but obeying Him will strengthen our faith in the Lord.

Blessing came as a result of obedience. Lack of blessing often reveals a lack of obedience.

**The final movement we see here to belonging is the Praise for the Restoring.**

Over half of the report of this miracle is given to the praise for the miracle.

**READ LUKE 17:15-19**

When one of them saw that he was healed, he glorified God. As soon as this leper saw he was healed, he praised God. We want God to act quickly when we request His help, but too often we are very slow to praise Him for His help.

But not this guy. And what else do we know about him? He was the only Samaritan. He was the only one who returned to thank Christ.

This great ungratefulness is common in every age. We beg God for help but seldom thank Him when help comes.

But this man "fell to the ground at Jesus' feet." In his thankfulness, the healed leper prostrated himself before Christ. The healing miracle not only made the man thankful, but it made him humble, too. One cannot praise God and be proud. We praise God best when we are prostrated at His feet.

Then Jesus says something interesting. Verse 19.

**READ LUKE 17:19**

An additional blessing was given to the leper. Jesus said, "Your faith has healed you." This spoke of more than healing from leprosy, but it also spoke of spiritual healing. **This spiritual healing is a greater blessing than the physical healing.** Let me repeat that: Spiritual healing is a greater blessing than the physical healing.

I read a story about a young man, let's call him Tim, who as an unkempt, poorly adjusted youth was converted to Christ in an evangelistic crusade. He began attending church, and many things changed in his life except one: his untamed love for his Savior. One Sunday, Tim rushed to one of the leaders of the church, looking somewhat perplexed. He lamented, "Why me? I keep asking myself, why me?" The leader thought that Tim had become another complaining Christian. Then with arms outstretched, he went on to say, "Out of all the people in the world who are greater and smarter than I am, why did God choose me?"<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Luke 17:14a (NLT)

<sup>4</sup> ODB 9/9/94

The greatest instrument of healing God has ever used in this world only needed to be employed one time. That single act of healing was the Cross. Our greatest wounds, our most serious infirmities, our most malicious malignancies, were all wiped out by this radical act of spiritual surgery. Through Jesus' sacrifice, the destructive power of death was crushed, leaving in its place our choice for health and wholeness and belonging.

Count on it! Salvation and God's blessings.

Back in 2013, there was a story that came out about a young man named Davion Only. Davion was a 15-year-old boy who had grown up in the foster care system all his life; he had pretty much come to that place of resolve, "I'm ready to be adopted no matter what, and I've got to do something about it."

He communicated that to his case worker, who explained to him, "Davion, the older you get, the less chance there is of you being adopted. We need to work on some things in your life, and I'm not sure how we're gonna get the word out."

Between Davion and his case worker, they came up with a great idea: They would go to a church and ask if he could go to the microphone at the end of the service and tell them what he wanted. So, at this church in Florida, Davion got up at the end of the service, and here's what he said.

He said, "My name is Davion Only, and I have been in foster care since I was born. I know God hasn't given up on me, so I'm not giving up either. I want to be adopted." He goes on to say, "I don't care if you're old or young, you're just a dad or just a mom, you're black, you're white, you're purple, I don't care. I want to be adopted. I just want people to love me for who I am, to grab me and keep me in their house, and to love me no matter what."

This 5- or 7-minute little communication that he did caused everybody to be in tears. Eventually a reporter would pick up the story and put in the newspaper, and then people started interviewing Davion. There were over 10,000 inquiries from around America and the world of people who want to adopt Davion.

He put his heart out there, put his life out there, said "I have a need," and over 10,000 people responded. Because you see, we're made for adoption, for belonging. Whether it is to reach out and care for another as a rescuer or to be rescued, God has set us up for that scenario. And it moves people's hearts over and over again.