

“Faith is Not the Goal”

Luke 17

Purpose: Show that faith should not be our goal.

Read Luke 17:3-5

"Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. "And if he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times, saying, 'I repent,' forgive him." The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!"

The apostles ask Jesus for more faith. Faith seems to be the answer for their situation. Faith has become their goal, and Jesus has become the provider to attain this goal. It sounds like a good request, but hear how Jesus responds:

Luke 17:4-10

And the Lord said, "If you had faith like a mustard seed, you would say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and be planted in the sea'; and it would obey you. "Which of you, having a slave plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come immediately and sit down to eat'? "But will he not say to him, 'Prepare something for me to eat, and *properly* clothe yourself and serve me while I eat and drink; and afterward you may eat and drink'? "He does not thank the slave because he did the things which were commanded, does he? "So you too, when you do all the things which are commanded you, say, 'We are unworthy slaves; we have done *only* that which we ought to have done.'"

The apostles still do not recognize Jesus for who He is. They still see him as One who requires more than they can do. They do not see Him as the ONLY ONE who accomplishes the will of God. They want lessons and explanations and provisions to enable THEM to satisfy the heart of God.

Luke 17:11-19

While He was on the way to Jerusalem, He was passing between Samaria and Galilee. As He entered a village, ten leprous men who stood at a distance met Him; and they raised their voices, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" When He saw them, He said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they were going, they were cleansed. Now one of them, when he saw that he had been healed, turned back, glorifying God with a loud voice, and he fell on his face at His feet, giving thanks to Him. And he was a Samaritan. Then Jesus answered and said, "Were there not ten cleansed? But the nine — where are they? "Was no one found who returned to give glory to God, except this foreigner?" And He said to him, "Stand up and go; your faith has made you well."

So now we have one who turns to Jesus. The ten are going to the priest—why a foreigner would go to the priests to be proclaimed well seems strange to me...perhaps it did to him also, since he turned to the one who MADE him well and Jesus did not send him back to the priests this time. His faith made him well. No priest was needed to proclaim him clean. Jesus, the high priest, accomplished the task and then proclaimed him well. Notice that the cleansed leper never asked for faith. All he did was turn, recognize and thank Jesus.

The apostles viewed themselves as the Lord's servants and sought as such to satisfy God. The leper simply viewed himself as the recipient of mercy and did not turn to the Lord out of any command. His response resulted in faith making him well...not the Lord giving him faith. The Lord was his goal. Faith, just as righteousness, salvation and anything else found in Christ, is not given to us as something separate from the Lord Himself.

Activity: Make leprous people to reenact the story in Luke 17:11-19

Materials:

Cardboard tubes (empty toilet paper rolls work well)—one for each student
Markers
Colored tissue paper—We used odd colors and random sizes
Toilet tissue—enough to go around each tube a couple of times
Pipe cleaners—this was an afterthought that one of the kids wanted to do for arms.

Draw faces on the tubes with the markers.
Wad up the tissue or cut it to make crazy hair to stick in the top of the tube.
Wrap each tube with some toilet paper to create the “leprosy”
Optional—poke holes in the side to push a pipe cleaner through to create arms.

As we wrapped our people with toilet paper, we briefly discussed what leprosy is. Then, we took turns reading the story and letting different ones be the person who turned back to Jesus.



Leprous “people”



Cleansed “people”