

# WHAT HAPPENS TO YOU, *MAKES A DIFFERENCE TO ME*

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Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance and called out in a loud voice, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us!" When he saw them, he said, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were cleansed. One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him—and he was a Samaritan. Jesus asked, "Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Has no one returned to give praise to God except this foreigner?" Then he said to him, "Rise and go; your faith has made you well."

**LUKE 17:11-19**

It was John Claypool who observed Jesus' attention to the hurting is God's way of saying, "What happens to you, makes a difference to me!" Jesus' dining with the tax collectors and prostitutes, healing the blind and lame, cleansing the leper, turning water into wine is like a cosmic note from his Father.

*What happens to you, makes a difference to me.* Isn't that what we all long for? Do the people you care for know that you feel that way?

In the scripture above, we see Jesus listening to the lepers, the outcasts of the

community. He pays attention to their cry. We may not have the power to heal in the same manner Jesus did, but we have the power to say to people, "What happens to you makes a difference to me." A text, an email, a timely phone call, a touch on the shoulder, attending a funeral, asking about a child; all of these can convey that message.

Do we, as a church, convey that message to people around us?

Jesus' actions conveyed his kindness and compassion to others. In addition, I believe we can see in a more subtle

way a glimpse of his compassion for the hurting in how he spoke to people.

Sarah Shelton notes, "New Testament scholar, R. Alan Culpepper has made an insightful observation that when Jesus saw the ten men, not once did he refer to them as lepers. Rather, he saw them as men who happened





to have leprosy. Similarly in the healing of the paralytic (Lk. 5:18), the man is not referred to as a paralytic but as a 'man who was paralyzed.' The same was true with the Gerasene demoniac whom Jesus called not a 'demoniac,' but a 'man who had demons.' (Lk. 8:27) Culpepper writes, 'The difference is subtle, but reflects a humanizing and dignifying recognition of personhood.'" (*The New Interpreter's Bible, vl. IX, 1995, pp. 326*)

Labels can cause us to generalize about people. They can cause us to have less compassion and become judgmental toward those we have labeled. In the church, labels often produce stigma which prevents people from admitting they need help and in turn, they refuse to seek help. Labels can begin to seep down into someone's heart and soul and have a self-fulfilling prophecy that begins to play out in their lives. How often has a child heard they

are a troublemaker, and they begin to see themselves as fitting into that role? When people are labeled a "junkie" or an "addict," that is how they can begin to see themselves. They don't see themselves as created in God's image with the ability to change and grow, one whom God loves and desires to have a more abundant life. (John 10:10) Remember, Thomas was more than a doubter and Peter more than a denier. In Christ,

we are more than our embarrassments, failures, flops, and scandals.

Quite often, Jesus calls upon those whom he is healing to collaborate with his initiative. His presence in an area caused the ones seeking healing to seek Jesus out like the ten men with leprosy. They obeyed Jesus' instructions by going to the priest, and "...as they went, they were healed." Some other examples of this are, the woman with the issue of blood reaches out (Luke 8:44), the two blind men who won't be quiet (Matt. 20:29-34), the blind man who was told to go to the pool of Siloam (John 9:4), the disciples who search for food (John 6:8-9), Jesus asking the invalid, "Do you want to get well?... pick up your mat and walk" (John 5:6-8).

These examples are throughout the Gospels and show actions that bring healing are always in response to Jesus's initiatives of grace.



## WHERE IS GOD CALLING YOU TO RESPOND TO HIS INITIATIVE OF GRACE?

Luke 17:11-19 reminds us “...as they went” is quite often how we are healed. The journey itself is part of the healing process. The ten men with leprosy were not healed standing in front of Jesus. They were healed “...as they went.” They had to take the first steps in faith, in response to Christ’s instructions. This gradual, step by step improvement can allow our body or our soul to become more resilient. The healing process begins to seep down into all parts of our lives. If we are rehabbing a knee, the healing processes of the body take time. If we are battling an addiction, even the missteps and relapses can be used by God to ultimately make us stronger and be used to help others.



The final thought we can take from this text is, gratitude to God makes us whole. The other nine went to the priest and went happily back to their old lives. The Samaritan returned to the source of his healing, threw himself at Jesus’ feet, praising God and thanking Jesus. Jesus says his faith has made him well, whole, saved, and reconciled to God.

*If we think of returning as repenting, what area of your life do you need to turn in repentance to Jesus?*

*How can you show your gratefulness to God, for what God has done? Is there someone you need to thank for what they have done for you?*