

Sermon for Pentecost 21 (Series C) / Evangelism
Text: Luke 17:11-19 Preached on 10-14-2007

Introduction:

So have you gotten over last week's losses yet? Before last weekend the Packers were 4 & 0 and the Badgers were 5 & 0. Fans across Wisconsin were super pumped. Then tragedy struck! Both teams suffered their first loss of the season: The Packers losing by 7 points and the Badgers by 5 points. Worst still is that both losses were to Illinois teams. I'm from Illinois, so I guess it's a good thing for me. If you're from Wisconsin, however, two close losses like that (on the same weekend) can leave a bitter taste in your mouth. As you sat down to cheer on your favorite teams, I'm sure that you raised your voice on at least a few plays gone bad. That kind of voice-raising can leave a person a little hoarse. Still, coaches raised their voices from the sidelines. Players raised their voices from the benches and the field. Fans raised their voices from the stands and their couches at home. Yes, there was a lot of voice-raising last weekend.

Isn't it interesting how and when we raise our voices? Last weekend lots of people yelled in frustration and anger over the Packers and Badgers losses. Consider for a moment how we use our voices when it comes to Jesus. Do we get as heated or stirred up when the devil wins some great victory? Are we pumped up enough to go running down the streets in a riot, screaming at the top of our voices, "Jesus Saved Me! Jesus Saved Me!"? Or, when we have the chance to talk about Jesus, do we say nothing at all? Today Jesus raises His voice to speak to us. He encourages each one of us to...

Theme: Raise Your Voice!

Part I: Crying out for mercy (vv. 11-14)

Part II: Shouting out the cure (vv. 15-19)

Part I: Crying out for mercy (vv. 11-14)

Jesus was on His way up to Jerusalem. This was His last journey before His suffering and death. There was no hesitation on Jesus' part to go to the cross. Along the way He came to a village somewhere between Samaria and Galilee. As He entered this village, ten men who had leprosy met Him. Leprosy, at that time, was considered to be incurable. It resulted in the formation of lumps, sores, and other deformities on the skin and limbs of a person. People afflicted with this disease were considered unclean and, because of the contagious nature of it, were

forced to live outside the city limits, in lonely, isolated leper colonies – cut off from everyone they had known and loved.

Is it any wonder why, when Jesus passed by on His way up to Jerusalem, ten lepers cried out, **“Jesus, Master, have mercy on us” (v. 13)?** That’s all they could do! They couldn’t heal themselves. All they could do was throw themselves on God’s mercy. And that’s exactly what Jesus had on them. Jesus did not ignore them. He didn’t say, “Get out of here! Leave Me alone! You’re disgusting!” Instead, Jesus listened to their plea for help and healing. More than that! His heart went out to them. He answered their cry for mercy.

Application:

Do you see any parallels between what leprosy did to those ten men and what sin does to you and me? Scripture says that sin makes us ugly in God’s sight. So much so that it literally separates us from God’s presence. Not for a temporary period either. Sin separates us from God for all eternity! Not only that. When we refuse to admit that we are wrong; refuse to admit that we’ve hurt someone with our slander or ungodly living; refuse to forgive someone else, we are really separating ourselves from one another. By our impure thoughts, hurtful words, and self-centered actions, we prove again and again that we are unclean. Just like those ten lepers, our disease (of sin) has separated us from God and the people we know and love, leaving us feeling hopeless to do anything about it.

BUT then Jesus passes on by! As He does so, we too have the opportunity to cry out, **“Jesus, Master, have mercy on us” (v. 13)!** Jesus HAS both heard and answered our plea for help? He took our disease on Himself. Scripture says that, **“He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him” (Isaiah 53:5).** In other words, Jesus says to you and me, “What you were powerless to do I HAVE done. I HAVE healed you. I HAVE made you My own! Trust in Me!” Isn’t that what it takes? Our forgiveness and salvation is not dependant on anything we pile up for ourselves. It isn’t dependant on our thinking, choosing, or doing. It is, however, dependant on believing in Jesus Alone with a simple, child-like faith, trusting that our sins ARE forgiven and that Heaven IS ours!

Transition:

So Raise Your Voice! We’ve got something to cheer about. It’s a lot

more exciting than a football game too. We're talking about our forgiveness and salvation here! Recognizing the dreaded condition we were born in (**Psalm 51:5**), how can we not cry out for mercy. Recognizing the healing Jesus HAS freely given, how can we not...

Part II: Shouting out the cure (vv. 15-19)

Although Old Testament Law demanded that lepers raise their voices to announce their disease, no one demanded that they announce the cure. But that's exactly what one of those ten lepers did! After Jesus spoke the Word and the lepers went on their way, all ten men were cured. All ten must have realized they were cured. Their skin would have certainly looked different. Perhaps they would have felt different as well. This miraculous healing must have stopped them dead in their tracks. They must have stood there, gawking over their smooth, clean skin; checking one another other in amazement. Certainly they all rejoiced over their healing. But only one, "**A Samaritan**" (v. 16), returned to announce the cure! Jesus was the cure!

This lone, now cured leper couldn't get back to Jesus fast enough. Luke tells us, "**When he saw he was healed, he came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw Himself at Jesus' feet and thanked Him**" (vv. 15-16). Wow! This guy was excited! He was on fire for Jesus! He couldn't shout his praises loud enough or long enough! When he finally reached Jesus, he fell on his face and kept on thanking Him. Considering what Jesus had done, nothing was more important than thanking and praising Him in worship. I imagine he eventually made it to the priests. He surely went home and told his family and friends what had happened. What News he had to share! He more than likely told everyone he ever met for the rest of his life what Jesus had done, shouting the cure of his incurable disease: "JESUS!"

Application:

Isn't it true that all people are born with the incurable disease of sin? Isn't it true that all people HAVE BEEN cured of that dreaded disease? The Bible says that, "**God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life**" (John 3:16). We know this. We confess it regularly. Still, I can't help but feel that the grateful Samaritan in our text puts us all to shame. You might be thinking, "How could I get that excited? Jesus hasn't cured me of any dreaded, deadly disease like that?" No He hasn't. Leprosy is a disease that kills only the body. Sin, however, is a disease that kills both the body and soul in Hell. In

reality, then, Jesus has cured us of a much more dreaded, deadly disease. We know we are cured. But do we always announce the cure? Do we shout our thanks and praise to Jesus?

Raising our voices to Jesus in worship is the most important activity we have to do! Still, take a look at the number of empty pews. The reason why there are so many empty spaces week after week is because our churches are averaging about 1 out of 10 members who actually return to thank Jesus in worship. Where is everyone? That's not my question. It's Jesus' question. He says, **“Were not all ten cured? Where are the other nine” (v. 17)?** Do you hear the disappointment in His voice; the sadness? He gave His life for all people? And how are we responding to that wonderful News? We come to church only when it's convenient to do so. Even when we're here, it's easy to think, “Come on! Get on with it! I've got things to do today!” NO WE DON'T! Or have we forgotten that this is a Sabbath (A Day of Spiritual and Physical Rest) to the Lord? We have no better place to be than at the feet of our Lord and Savior, shouting our thanks and praise at the top of our voices!

Conclusion:

Imagine both the Packers and Badgers winning championship victories THIS season! It's still possible. Finishing their seasons with undefeated, perfect records, however, is not. Those dreams died last weekend. Does that disappoint you? Does it make you sad?

Don't worry. Jesus HAS won an even greater victory on our behalf. He did it with an undefeated, perfect record too. Trusting in Jesus' perfect, fully sufficient victory on the cross, we can only *Raise Our Voices!* When we leave here today, we will be encountering all kinds of people who do not know Jesus as their cure from sin. They're going to die and go to Hell unless we *Raise Our Voices*, pointing out their sinful condition so that they might (1) cry out for mercy and so that we might (2) shout out the cure. Whether proclaiming Law or Gospel, God says to *Raise Your Voice!* Amen!