

**Intro:** I can't tell you how huge it is to see what God has done and is doing in the life of our church. The video we saw only tells a very small piece of the story God has written in what we could call chapter one of Redemption Hill Church. [It's hard to believe all of this began with a prayer about seven years ago.] One Year...

People call New England a church planter's graveyard... Some of my friends, both in and outside of Boston have said, "Man, it's going to be really hard to start a church there."

- They were right. Starting a church in Greater Boston requires mad grace and perseverance, but as one pastor told us, "Everyone wants to talk about how hard it is to start a church in Boston. We want to talk about how big God is!" All along our journey it has been our aim to "Expect great things from God and attempt great things for God."
- In our way, with our own stories, we can say with the Psalmist: "Great are the works of the Lord, studied by all who delight in them." (Psalm 111:2)
- "You have multiplied, O LORD my God, your wondrous deeds and your thoughts toward us; none can compare with you! I will proclaim and tell of them, yet they are more than can be told." (Psalm 40:5)
- We are where we are because of the grace and mercy of God. Every good thing that has happened in and through our church is a result of the grace and mercy of God.
- To help us think about where we are as a church, I want to invite you to open up your Bible to the gospel of Luke. We will be in Luke 17:11-19, that's page 876. This passage is going to help us with how, we as a church, should be

### **"Responding to the Mercy of God"** **Luke 17:11-19**

- Luke opens our passage in verse 11 by saying: "On the way to Jerusalem he was passing along between Samaria and Galilee."
- Jesus is journeying to Jerusalem, and he is getting away for a little rest and relaxation. He is not going on a vacation. This isn't a trip to hang with the fam. He is on a journey to die.
- In fact, this is the third time Luke has told us Jesus is journeying to Jerusalem. He already told us this in 13:22 and Luke 9:51 where he writes: "When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem."
- As early as chapter 9, Luke makes it very clear that Jesus would willingly lay down his life as a ransom for many on the cross. He was completely determined to die a sacrificial death for us. This is what it is talking about when it says, "he set his face to go to Jerusalem."
- That's the context, what happens on his way to Jerusalem? Well, Luke continues in **verses 12-14**.

Trans: I have two encouragements for us this morning...

#### **I. Recognize the mercy of Christ is the foundation of our response (17:11-14).**

##### *Christ's mercy to the Lepers*

- Luke tells us there were 10 lepers who were in great need of mercy. Lepers were some of those most pitiable people in the 1<sup>st</sup> century. They were afflicted with a horrific skin disease that created open sores all over their body. They were social outcasts. Did you notice that it says that stood at a distance? They were forced to live outside of the walls of their cities and villages in their own little colonies of sickness and misery. They were even required to warn others to keep away by crying out as they walked the streets. Added to their physical and social woes, they also suffered emotionally. They were shamed, looked down upon, and ostracized from the love most of us take for granted.
- But all was not lost for these ten. We get the idea from verse 13, that they understood Jesus had both the power and the heart to heal them. Let me explain. First, Notice how the lepers address Jesus in verse 13. "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." They call him "Master." This is Luke's way of highlighting that Jesus has authority over this nasty disease these men carried. Jesus has absolute authority over all things, and *he distributes his mercy based on his authority*, but that's not all.
- *Jesus also distributes mercy based on his love.* In this passage we once again see the character of Christ on display. He is the one who extends mercy.

- Mercy is the goodness of God confronting human need and suffering.
  - Grace is the goodness of God given to the undeserving.
  - When Jesus saw the lepers, no doubt filled with compassion, he acted quickly to meet their needs.
  - **Verse 14.** It was culturally important for the lepers to show themselves to the priests because they would declare them clean. But isn't it amazing how Jesus heals these lepers?
  - "As they depart, they are cleansed. Jesus does not touch them as he had the leper of 5:12-14."
- And we should ask an important question here: *What does this miracle say about Jesus?*
- Compassionate? Yes. Merciful? Yes. Powerful? Yes. Anything else? Yes. It says what all of the miracles are designed to say... Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God. You say, "Where do you get that?" Isaiah 35 & the Gospels

*Trans:* Like these lepers, we too are recipients of the mercy and grace of God. In light of the mercy of Christ in this passage, we should ask ourselves how *Christ been merciful to us?*

- For every individual who has embraced the gift of salvation Jesus offers, Paul describes it this way in Ephesians 2:4-5): **"But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved." (Ephesians 2:4-5)**
- You say, that's nice. The mercy of Christ gets us into the Christian life and brings us salvation. Then what? Well, like we saw last week, God has given us power for everything we need for life and godliness. That's why Psalm 23:6 says,
- **"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever." (Psalm 23:6)**
- Those truths highlight the personal and individual aspects of God's mercy. But on this one year anniversary of our church, we think about how we have seen the mercy and grace of Christ in the life of Redemption Hill.
- Let me hit a few highlights that reflect our Core Values: Gospel, Community, Mission.

### **The Mercy of Christ to Redemption Hill Church**

#### **Gospel**

- **People are growing in grace** and living out the implications of the gospel on a daily basis.
- **Sunday Worship.** Launch. Summer. Great Fall. Nice Winter. Plugging Along. New Year. Spring. Blown away.

#### **Community** (People are connecting in a deeper way with God and *one another*.)

- **Growing and Diverse Community** We have a growing and increasingly diverse community. Our CGs are growing and multiplying. Membership is increasing. We are connecting with people from diverse backgrounds, life experiences, ethnicities, and generations. Another highlight is the swell of...
- **Shared Responsibility and Leadership**
- Our leadership is passing on responsibility to others. Our members and regulars are taking ownership of the mission of RHC. (e.g. Easter Egg Hunts)

#### **Mission**

- **Serving our City**
- It's awesome to see how God has given us a place in this community, not only at Springstep, but also through opportunities to serve our city in a variety of ways. (local partnerships, efforts like Soccer Nights). We are making a difference, however small... and God is in this thing.
- We like to ask ourselves what would happen if Redemption Hill was not in Medford. Would people notice? Would Medford care if RHC no longer existed? Hopefully, people would take notice and the would care because of the difference we're making in the community. We have the potential to make a huge impact in this city over the next 10, 20, 30, 100 years.
- We talk about the cumulative effect... Think about how this works for people... No awareness. No trust. No openness. Not coming. Not staying..
  - Jon & I met with Arwyn Jackson, who is the Director of Operations of a non-profit that assists victims of Human Trafficking. Needless to say, the ladies that they work with have some major and really valid trust issues. Does that cause her despair? No. Here's her attitude: "I can love you longer than you can distrust me."

- That's us! Yo, Medford, Malden, Somerville, you fill in the blank, we will love you longer than you can distrust us." Who's in on that?
- **Helping Other Church Plants (Charlestown, etc.)** God is giving us an opportunity to take what we've learned and pass it on to others.
- God is doing an awesome work in our church, and we realize this is his deal. There is nothing special about us, but there is everything special about our him.

When we experience the mercy of Christ, how should we respond. It's really simple, and we find the answer in vv. 15-19. **Read 15-19.** These verses teach us to...

## II. Respond to the mercy of Christ with gratitude & praise (17:15-19).

- Think about what just happened for these men. In an instant, everything changed. Physical suffering, removed. Social suffering, gone. Emotional suffering, finished. Their health was restored; they would now longer be looked as fourth-class citizens; and soon would be reunited with friends and family.
- After telling us that the lepers were cleansed on their way to see the priests, he quickly says in **verse 15**. "Then one of them, ..."
- We should not be too hard on the other nine for they were exercises a measure of faith in turning to go and show themselves to the priest "without having experienced the healing first." (Wallace)
- However, this one is commended because of his unique response. Check it out with me..
- He responds to the miraculous work of Jesus ("when he saw that he was healed")
- What does he do?
  - Turns back: There is a recognition and a turning to God.
    - Do you recognize what God has done for you?
  - Praises God with a loud voice:
    - This isn't a little sheepish, "that was really nice of you..." This is a loud and clear declaration that God is worthy of our worship. Then he...
  - Falls on his face at Jesus' feet:
    - a picture of complete humility and unrestrained worship.
    - Do you think he was concerned about what people thought around him? Do you think he was calculating how many people would be think he was a little crazy for his outpouring of emotion. "Man, I better not get too spiritual up in here. People might think I'm a little crazy, a little off my rocker." For some, the opinions of people keep them from living an unrestrained life before God. For others, social barriers keep them from turning back to God altogether. People have all kinds of barriers to receiving Christ: intellectual, emotional, moral. Don't let social barriers stand in the way of the life God wants for you. The Bible calls this the fear of man... (Explain)
  - Giving thanks
    - This isn't just a little, "Hey, thanks a lot. I really appreciate it. Thank you card is in the mail." This is a: "My life has been forever changed. I could never thank you enough but let me try kind of thank you.
- And this kind of gratitude and praise thrills the heart of God. You say, "How do you know?" Well, because Jesus just told us in verse 17.
- **Verse 17.** In his commendation of the one, we really find an indictment on the other nine.

*Have you ever been guilty of this? Have you ever been among the nine in regards to gratitude and praise?*

- Someone does something nice for you, and rather than responding in gratitude, you think "Man, I deserve this. I worked hard for this. If anyone deserves a break, it's me!" And often we live our lives with a sense of entitlement.
- Does gratitude regularly and demonstrably mark your life? So often we more readily ask God for what we do not have than thank him for everything he has so *richly* given us.
- Gratitude should be evident in our conversations with others, and it should be expressed to God regularly in prayer.

- When we wake up, we have reason to give God thanks and praise. Why? He is with us, working in us and through us each day. All of his promises are ours in Christ. When we lie down at night, we can look back at our day and find specific reasons to thank him for his faithfulness.
- That's why 1 Thess 5:16-18 says, **"Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."** (1 Thess. 5:16-18)
- A life of gratitude and praise should characterize the lives of disciples of Christ.
- Thomas Watson said that kind of life is the "true genius and complexion of a godly [person]."

Trans: But that's not all Jesus says. He goes on to say, "Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?"

- Jews looked down on Samaritans for ethnic reasons and their watered down worship of God, but Luke loves to show how the gospel of Jesus is for all people. He loves to show how Jesus loved the outcasts of society. He even notes that people called Jesus "a friend of tax collectors and sinners!" (Luke 7:34)
- And we take our cues from Jesus. We are a church for all people. So that family member, that friend, that co-worker, that neighbor, you don't have to worry about if they are welcomed here. They are all welcomed here. We are a church for all people because the gospel is for all people.

Trans: Well, what was the result of this interaction between the thankful Samaritan and Jesus?

- **Verse 19.** "Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well." Or "your faith has saved you."
- We get the idea that this one leper experienced much more than physical healing. He received complete salvation from Jesus.

So what has Luke 17 taught us?

**The Point: When we experience the mercy of Christ, we must respond with gratitude & praise.**

### Conclusion

Have you experienced the mercy of Christ? Do you know the mercy of Christ in the gospel? It's the gospel, the good news about Jesus Christ that should elicit the greatest gratitude in our hearts... Let explain how this works...

Well, it's everyone's favorite time of the year. The federal tax deadline is just two days away! Do you have yours mailed away? Hopefully the majority of us will be getting returns rather than paying additional taxes to Uncle Sam, but I want you to think about a scenario with me. Can you imagine if someone, year after year, let's say for forty years had failed to report a considerable amount of income. Can you imagine if they failed to pay taxes on thousands and thousands of dollars that by the time interest had accrued amounted to hundreds of thousands of dollars? Can you imagine the weight of despair when Uncle Sam sends that person a bill in the mail? What would they do?

Someone else pays the bill thereby totaling removing and canceling your debt. But it's more than that... It's not just that your bill now reads 00.00. All of the sudden, you discover that same person dropped a heavy bankroll of wealth in your bank account that you can never come close to exhausting, not in a million lifetimes.

That is what God has done for us in the gospel. "The death of Christ removed our debt and returned us to a zero balance, BUT the righteousness of Christ and obedience of Christ put unimaginable wealth into our bank account!" – Harvey...

Respond to this gift by receiving it in repentance and faith. (Take a few moments to pray and say, God I need you. I want your mercy. Forgive me. Save me. Change me. Make me new. I give my life to you.)