



# St. Paul's Weekly Toolkit

## LifeGroup Study

November 24, 2024

Luke 17:11-19

**Welcome** Do you have a dream? Is there something you've always wanted to do or be? Sometimes what we dream and how life plays out are radically different. Do you realize that God has dreams too? Another way to consider the kingdom of God is to think of it as God's dream for how the world should be and could be. God's dream is yearning, wanting, trying, and hoping to come true but there are things standing in the way. Today we'll consider the social, political, economic, religious, and geographic boundaries that stand in the way of God's dream coming true and how we can be instruments of change in our world.

“The call to faith is the call to trust God and God's dreams enough to realign our dreams with God's, to dream our little dreams within God's big dream. The call to receptivity is the call to continually receive God's dreams—a process that seems to be a lifelong one. The call to baptism is the call to publicly identify with God's dream and to disassociate with all competing isms or ideologies that claim to provide the ultimate dream (including nationalism, consumerism, hedonism, conservatism, liberalism, and so on). And the call to practice is the call to learn to live the way God dreams for us to live (*Brian McLaren, The Secret Message of Jesus*).

In order to align our dreams to God's dream we need to understand what opposes God's dream. Boundaries, injustice, pride, indifference, death, fear, and ambition all stand in opposition to the dream of God in how we could live together in God's kingdom.

**Prayer...** God of our past, present, and future, open our eyes to see the dreams you have for your world. Open your word to us, that your dreams would have clarity and purpose. Open our ears so we can hear you speaking to us in a new way. Your kingdom come; your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Amen!

**Equip** How would you answer the following: “What one man made object is visible from a space capsule orbiting earth”? If your answer is the Great Wall of China, you're correct. I think it is ironic that the one thing we can see from space built by people is a wall, a boundary to keep certain people in and certain people out. That is our theme—how certain boundaries and walls can prevent God's dream for people and the earth from becoming all that God wants it to be. In our text for today, you will see this operating on a few different levels. First of all, you will see how human need is helping to tear down certain barriers and create community across the lines of racial hatred. You will also see God tearing down barriers between those who are outcast because of disease, allowing them to reenter community. Finally, you will see that many choose not to tear down the wall between their reality and God by not

responding in gratefulness to God's power acting on their behalf.

Read Luke 17:11-19. Jesus is headed toward Jerusalem where he will be crucified for the sins of the world, including the sins that create dividing walls between people, and between people and God. As this text unfolds however, we see how human need has the power to pull down some of the walls we erect in life. The setting of this text is on the journey toward Jerusalem, and on the border between Samaria and Galilee, on the outskirts of a village where the lepers were obviously living, far enough away to not contaminate others with their leprosy but close enough to receive their charity. It is a mixed Jewish and Samaritan group, something that was unheard of in Jesus' time. Obviously the common reality of this disease had torn down the wall between these groups that usually hate one another. God's dream includes tearing down the dividing walls that we build between one another.

- *What boundaries disconnect us from one another?*
- *What is as true about boundaries in our time as it was in Jesus'?*

God's dream in Jesus is to tear down dividing walls of hatred between people and reconcile them by putting to death hostilities. Many times God will use human need and suffering to accomplish this task. Sometimes, in our deepest pain, we find commonality with those in similar pain. Here we begin to see the kingdom of God at work in our relationships and our connectedness.

- *Share about a time when similar pain has broken the barriers between you and someone else.*

The central message of the story is yet to come. It has to do with the gratefulness of the Samaritan leper and his returning to give thanks and praise to Jesus for the healing of his body and the restoration of his life. Jesus responds with a series of questions which reveal not only that he is a Samaritan, but that nine Jewish lepers did not respond with gratefulness as he did. This is the third point about God's dream and boundaries. Many times God acts in our lives in gracious ways, sometimes as dramatically as this healing or sometimes as simply as forgiveness. The right response is to thank and praise God for the activity in our lives, allowing ourselves to be changed as a result.

- *Name those things for which you need to give thanks and praise to Jesus today. How does naming these things change us from the inside?*

**Send** God's dream is that we don't put up false boundaries with each other or God in our lives. God will use all circumstances to get us to drop those barriers, including suffering that comes our way. God wants to break down especially the boundaries between us and God, expecting grace to transform us into a grateful people. This week, consider specific ways in which you can be God's instrument in removing barriers between people.

**Prayer...** Lord God, we want your dream to be our dream. Take away everything that stands in the way. Break through the barriers that confine us to limited possibilities. Turn us back to you. Open our eyes and reconnect us to your dream for all of humanity. Amen.

Luke 17:11-19 NLT As Jesus continued on toward Jerusalem, he reached the border between Galilee and Samaria. (12) As he entered a village there, ten men with leprosy stood at a distance, (13) crying out, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!” (14) He looked at them and said, “Go show yourselves to the priests.” And as they went, they were cleansed of their leprosy. (15) One of them, when he saw that he was healed, came back to Jesus, shouting, “Praise God!” (16) He fell to the ground at Jesus’ feet, thanking him for what he had done. This man was a Samaritan. (17) Jesus asked, “Didn’t I heal ten men? Where are the other nine? (18) Has no one returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?” (19) And Jesus said to the man, “Stand up and go. Your faith has healed you.”

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# Daily Walk on the Rock



Date: November 24, 2024

Text: Luke 17:11-19

**Day 1: God's Dream** Of what do you think when you hear the words, "God's Dream"? Ponder the words Jesus spoke to his disciples when they asked him to teach them to pray: "Our Father...Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven..." (*Matthew 6:9-10*). Now consider what gets in the way of God's will being done here on earth; what opposes God's kingdom dream in and for your life? Meditate on Proverbs 3:5-6; John 15:9-11; and Hebrews 11:1; 12:1-3. How does trusting God relate to doing God's will? Pray you will see God's will as a reflection of God's heart of love; pray you will seek God's will, God's dream, as God's very best for you.

## Day 2: A Parallel Account

Our theme text is the story of the ten lepers (*Luke 17:11-19*). However, before we reflect on it, let's look at a parallel text that provides insights into God's heart, embracing love, sovereignty, power, and more. Read 2 Kings 5:1-15c, noticing how God uses a young slave girl as a witness to God's greatness, how human pride can get in the way of God's activity, how blessing comes when we do things God's way, and how God's love and grace reaches beyond the boundaries we might expect. Now put yourself in the story: do you tell others about God, humble yourself before God; acknowledge God's activity in your life? In silence, ask God to speak to you.

**Day 3: Boundaries** The Hebrew Scriptures dictate a protocol for lepers in Israel. Read Leviticus 13:45-46 and 14:1-4. These texts help us understand the isolation lepers experienced and also the necessity of being declared 'clean' by a priest before reentering Jewish society. Read Luke 17:11-19, remembering that, normally, a Samaritan would not be fellowshiping with Jews. Remember the simple slave girl and Aramean commander acknowledging God (*2 Kings 5*)? Now, in Luke 17, it is the Samaritan who returns to thank Jesus. Thank God there are no boundaries to God's love. Ask the Spirit to enable you to see beyond any boundaries to God's love that you might erect.

## Day 4: Healing or Being Made Well: Is There a Difference?

What did Naaman proclaim when he was healed (*2 Kings 5:15c*)? Notice what Jesus says to the Samaritan leper when he returns (*Luke 17:19*). The other lepers were cleansed of their leprosy (*Luke 17:14*), so what does Jesus mean by his words to the Samaritan

(*17:19*)? Is there a wholeness or wellness beyond physical healing? What does faith have to do with it? Have Naaman and the Samaritan seen God in ways the nine apparently have not? Meditate on John 6:27-37; 11:25-26; Acts 17:28a; and Galatians 2:20. Tell Jesus you want to be made well in him.

**Day 5: Gratitude** Consider J. Oatman's lyrics: "Count your blessings, name them one by one; count your blessings, see what God has done." Is it easy to ask God for help and then forget to thank God? Do we often take for granted the many ways, great and small, in which we are blessed beyond measure? Read 2 Kings 5:15 and Luke 17:15-19, noticing the two men who intentionally returned to offer thanks and praise to God (and these two were not Jewish; they were not considered by most to be among God's chosen). Do we, who have experienced the love of God through Jesus, take God's goodness for granted? Dedicate time to thanking and praising God.

## Day 6: The Gift or the Giver? Praise God!

Read Luke 17:11-19. Notice that all ten lepers are healed, but one, the Samaritan, embraces not only the gift but also the Giver. And notice that it's in seeking the Giver of the gift that he receives the most profound healing: the gift of relationship with Jesus! How does this thought correlate with the words recorded in John 1:4,14; 6:35; 7:37-39; 1 Corinthians 15:19; Philippians 3:8; and James 1:17-18? Do you seek God's gifts but not a deeper relationship with God? Pray for the greatest gift, a relationship with the living God through Jesus.

## Day 7: The Wideness of God's Mercy

Meditate on Isaiah 53:4-6; 58:6-11; Jeremiah 17:14; Luke 17:11-19; and John 3:16. Now ponder Frederick Faber's lyrics: "There's a wideness in God's mercy, like the wideness of the sea; there's a kindness in His justice, which is more than liberty. There's a welcome for the sinner, and more graces for the good; there is mercy with the Savior; there is healing in His blood. For the love of God is broader than the measure of man's mind; and the heart of the Eternal is most wonderfully kind." Pray God's will and dream will live in you.