

One of Them

Luke 17:11-19 8 March 2026

Preached by Rev. Yoo of the Rotterdam Korean Church

(abridged translation)

1–2

Today's passage begins with Jesus travelling to Jerusalem. His public ministry had begun in Galilee in northern Israel, where He grew up in Nazareth and proclaimed the gospel of the kingdom around towns such as Capernaum by the Sea of Galilee. As Luke 9:51 tells us, when the time for His ascension drew near, Jesus resolved to go to Jerusalem.

3–4

Samaria, lying between Galilee in the north and Judea in the south, had a history of both glory and shame. After Israel divided following Solomon's reign, Samaria became the capital of the northern kingdom and enjoyed prominence. Yet when that kingdom fell to the Assyrian Empire, the region became a place of disgrace for the Jews.

5–6

Assyrian settlers brought their own idols and worshipped their native gods in the land. Over time they intermarried with the remaining Jews, and Samaria came to be seen as a land of mixed blood and idolatry. By Jesus' day hostility was so strong that Jews avoided contact with Samaritans and even took longer routes to bypass their land.

7–8

As Jesus travelled toward Jerusalem, He passed along the border between Samaria and Galilee and entered a village. There ten men with leprosy saw Him. This disease, now known as Hansen's disease, damages the nerves and can lead to the loss of sensation and even parts of the body. In the past it was often regarded as a punishment from heaven.

9–10

Leviticus 13–14 contains the laws concerning leprosy. Anyone suspected of having the disease had to be examined by a priest. If declared unclean, he had to live outside the village, separated from others. If healed, the priest would examine him again and, after a purification ritual, he could return to live among the people.

11–12

Following these laws, the lepers were staying outside the village when they saw Jesus. They could not enter the village or approach others, so they cried out from a distance, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." By this time Jesus was concluding His ministry in Galilee, and news about Him had spread widely throughout the region.

13–14

Though they lived apart from others, the ten lepers had clearly heard about Jesus. Knowing His name, they cried, "Have mercy on us." They hoped He would heal their disease so they could return to their families. Since there was nothing they themselves could do to cure it, they longed for a miracle.

15–16

When Jesus appeared before them, the one they had only heard about, they cried out again, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." Hearing them, Jesus said, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." According to

the law, however, a leper was to see the priest only after being healed, so His command must have seemed strange.

17–18

Yet Jesus took no further action and simply told them to go to the priests. The exchange is striking: they cried for healing, but Jesus only gave a command. Even more surprising, they actually began to go, though they were not yet healed. In doing so they showed immediate faith and obedience.

19–20

As they went, they were cleansed. The men who had cried, “Have mercy on us,” truly received Jesus’ compassion. Significantly, Jesus told them to show themselves to the priests, not a single priest. This suggests the men came from different villages, each needing to return to the priest of his own community.

21–22

Hearing Jesus’ command, they set off in different directions toward their priests. As they went, their bodies were healed. Imagine their joy at that moment. Once forced to live apart from family and friends because of their disease, they now realised they could return home. The happiness of that restoration must have been overwhelming.

23–24

Yet verse 15 tells us that one of them, seeing he was healed, turned back. He could not return quietly; his joy was too great. Instead of boasting about his healing, he returned praising God in a loud voice and fell at Jesus’ feet to give thanks.

25–26

Only moments earlier he had been unable to approach Jesus because, as a leper, he was unclean and could only call out from a distance. Now he could come to Jesus’ feet. Though the law required a priest’s examination first, that formality no longer mattered. Realising he had received mercy, he fell before Jesus in gratitude.

27–28

Verse 16 reveals that the man who returned was a Samaritan. Among the ten lepers near the border of Galilee and Samaria, he alone came back to Jesus and fell at His feet. Seeing him, Jesus asked, “Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?”

29–30

By calling him a foreigner, Jesus suggests that the other nine were likely Jews. His words are a rebuke. While this outsider returned to glorify God, the others did not. Though Jews despised Samaritans, it was the Samaritan who recognised God’s mercy and gave thanks. Jesus therefore lamented the absence of the others.

31–32

Then Jesus said to the man at His feet, “Rise and go; your faith has saved you.” The Jewish disciples must have been shocked, for Jesus was declaring salvation to a Samaritan. Through this declaration the man’s body was healed and his heart restored, and he had returned to give thanks.

33–34

There he also heard Jesus declare his salvation. Those words must have healed the wounds of his heart and restored his broken soul. In truth he was one of the most marginalised people in Israel: both a Samaritan and a leper, despised by Jews and excluded even from his own community.

35–36

But everything had changed. His body was healed and he had become a citizen of God's kingdom. Though he might still face discrimination as a Samaritan and live with the scars of illness, his standing before God was transformed. No longer unclean, he could now glorify God and come before Jesus in gratitude.

37–38

What made this Samaritan different from the other nine? The difference lay in their faith. All ten showed faith when they obeyed Jesus' command to go to the priests. But the faith of the other nine ended the moment they were healed. Their faith went no further than receiving the miracle.

39–40

The Samaritan's faith, however, continued even after he was healed. It was shown in praising God and returning to fall at Jesus' feet in gratitude. His faith was not self-centred, using Jesus' mercy only to obtain what he wanted. Recognising this faith as genuine, Jesus declared his salvation.

41–42

We must remember the difference between the Samaritan's faith and that of the other nine. Once healed, the nine forgot the Jesus who had shown them mercy. Their attention was fixed on their restored bodies. But the Samaritan, seeing his healing, remembered Jesus and gave glory to God with gratitude.

43–44

Our faith must not remain self-centred. It should not be used merely to ease guilt or to pursue success. True faith leads us to praise God and fall at the feet of Jesus in gratitude. Even today, those we least expect often recognise God's grace and glorify Him with thankful hearts.

45–46

May our faith not remain self-centred but become true faith that recognises God's grace and gives Him glory. Each time we gather for worship, may we remember His mercy and come before the Lord with gratitude. May each of us be that "one of them," hearing not rebuke but the blessing: "Your faith has saved you."