

An Appropriate Response to Grace

Matthew 8:1-4

I. Last week: The leper is us.

- A. The leper was physically disfigured, socially isolated.
 - 1. He was spiritually unclean.
 - 2. He was an outcast, rejected, despised.
- B. When you heard that you are the leper, were you offended?
 - 1. There are two ways you could take that.
 - (a) You could view it through the lens of religion.
 - (b) You could view it through the lens of the Gospel.
 - 2. If you were offended:
 - (a) Was it because you saw yourself as being a good person?
 - (b) Or maybe you thought, "I'm a sinner, but I'm not that bad."
 - (c) That is looking through the religious lens.
 - (d) You think you were somewhat acceptable based on your own morality.
 - 3. If you were viewing this through the lens of the Gospel:
 - (a) You wouldn't feel offended, you would feel grateful.
 - (b) The passage would emphasize to you how lost you were.
 - (c) It would emphasize how much you needed to be rescued.
 - (d) It would emphasize how good God has been to you.
 - 4. Your heart would be moved by the goodness of God.
 - (a) You would feel gratitude well up.
 - (b) You would worship God for his goodness!
- C. So, like the leper, we come humbly to God for salvation because we know that we are unclean.

II. Religion is not seeing our need for grace. We think we can save ourselves by being moral people.

- A. It is not believing in the perfect holiness and justice of God.
 - 1. Isaiah had a vision of God (Isaiah 6:1-4).
 - (a) Seeing God's holiness, he saw himself clearly (Isaiah 6:5).
 - (b) "Woe to me..." God is so holy! I am so lost!
 - (c) Remember, this is Isaiah. Compared to people, he is holy.
 - (d) He also realizes how his community falls short.
 - 2. He receives grace (Isaiah 6:6-7).
 - 3. God says, "Whom shall I send?"
 - 4. Isaiah: "Send me."
 - (a) His response to grace is availability.
 - (b) "I will serve you God. You are worthy. I am honored."
 - (c) God wants availability to be our response also.

III. Jesus told the leper how to appropriately respond.

- A. "Don't tell anyone," is for the immediate context.

- 1. It isn't time for Jesus to be controversial yet.
- B. Two other responses are for us, though.
 - 1. Go show yourself to the priest.
 - 2. Offer the gift Moses commanded.
 - 3. Do these things as testimony to what God has done.
- C. The priests represent the religious establishment.
 - 1. They do the rituals prescribed by the Law.
 - (a) They still see works/morality as one's righteousness.
 - 2. Jesus is telling him to bear witness to the religious leaders.
 - (a) Tell them what God has done for him.
 - (b) Perhaps God will turn them from works to grace (Acts 6:7)
 - 3. We have this same calling upon us.
 - (a) Many in our culture are religious.
 - (b) They may go to church. They may think they believe.
 - (c) But Jesus is not in their lives.
 - 4. God calls us to bear witness to the religious and irreligious.
 - (a) To intentionally develop relationships in our context.
 - (b) To tell the story of what God has done for us.
 - (c) To pray regularly for people.
 - (d) To pray for opportunity to share the Gospel.
 - 5. If you had the cure for leprosy, would you keep it a secret?
 - (a) The Gospel is the cure for something far more deadly.
- D. Offer the gift Moses commanded.
 - 1. Moses commanded that several animals be sacrificed.
 - (a) There was a guilt offering and a sin offering.
 - (b) The former leper would have to provide the animals.
 - 2. The sacrifices are made after the healing, not before it.
 - (a) They are not made to get clean.
 - (b) They are a response to having been made clean.
 - 3. God calls us to make a sacrifice also.
 - (a) Like the leper, we don't give anything to become clean.
 - (b) Salvation is a free gift that we receive by grace.
 - 4. We are called to respond to grace with a sacrifice (Rom 12:1).
 - (a) We are the sacrifice! It's our life, lived for God (2 Cor. 5:15).
 - (b) We live for the one who cleansed us!
 - 5. Romans 12 also tells us how to offer our lives.
 - (a) Be transformed by the renewing of your mind.
 - (b) Fully embrace the values Jesus taught and be different.
 - (c) Use your spiritual gifts to serve both God and people.
 - (d) Sincerely love one another as you have been loved!
 - (e) Bless those who persecute you. Overcome evil with good!
 - 6. Why do we do this? What is our motivation?
 - (a) Do you think the leper was grateful to Jesus?
 - (b) Jesus gave himself so that we could be clean.
 - 7. Gratitude and love for Jesus, are why we want to live for Jesus! Jesus is worthy to be served!