

Jesus on the way to the Feast of Tabernacles

Matthew 19 vv.1 and 2.

John 7 vv.1-9.

"If Thou'so desirest that the people shall acknowledge Thee as the Messiah, why remain in Galilee? Depart hence, and go into Judea, to Jerusalem, the capital city of our land where the greatest number and the most important elders live."

There stands the Lord Jesus, surrounded by various people who look upon Him half mockingly and defiantly after speaking such words as these.

"If thou do these things, shew thyself to the world."

Do you hear the mockery in their voices, boys and girls? Can you see the half closed eyes with which they look upon Him so sneeringly?

Who are these men? ... Are they scribes and Pharisees? ... No, not this time! They are the brethren of the Lord Jesus. So they are of His family. They are reproaching Him for still walking about in despised Galilee. What is He doing there? Why does He not go to Jerusalem? Why does He not allow Himself to be crowned there openly as king? ...

They think that Jesus does not dare to go! They think that Jesus is deceiving people.

No, they do not speak these words in sincerity. By no means! Just read what it says in John 7: "for neither did His brethren believe in Him."

What ...! He the Messiah? ... He, the Son of God? ... That cannot be. He is just making believe.

This is what His brethren think about Him. They challenge the Lord Jesus. If it is true, what He says of Himself, then let Him show it! Let Him go up to Jerusalem. ... Now He has a fine opportunity to reveal Himself! They themselves are going to Jerusalem and Jews from all parts of the world will be streaming into the city. In a few days the feast of Tabernacles will be celebrated.

Can you still remember what that feast was about? ... During this feast the Jews lived in huts or tabernacles which they made for themselves out of the green branches of trees. They thus commemorated the way their forefathers had lived in tents for forty years in the wilderness. So it was a thanksgiving day!

The harvest was brought in, the whole harvest! Not only the wheat and barley, but also the other fruits were then gathered in.

First the great day of Atonement was celebrated and then followed the feast of Tabernacles, the feast of happiness!

"Well," say His brethren, "come with us." We will all go together with the other Galileans, and at the feast show Thou thy power."

There stands the Lord Jesus. How will He answer those defiant words? He hears the mistrust and unbelief in their voices. He knows what they think about Him. Will He put up a defence? ... No, the Lord Jesus answers calmly: "My time is not yet come... Go ye up unto this feast: "I go not up yet into this feast, for my time is not yet full come."

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Luke 9 vv.51-56.

Perhaps some of you are thinking, why did the Lord not do it? Did He not dare to, because the Pharisees in Judea wanted to kill Him. Did He fear for His life? ...

Oh no, you must not think that. Would He not venture? ... Of course. But He had not come to get earthly honour. That is not why He did all those miracles. By no means. He helped when help was needed. He always helped when His help was asked for. He did this out of compassion for the sufferers, not for the purpose of receiving an earthly crown from the Jewish people. The Lord Jesus sought not His own glory, but He came upon this sinful world to save poor sinners from ruin.

A few days after the people had left for the feast, the Lord Jesus also sets out. Not in the midst of a numerous multitude, but secretly.

The Galileans always go through Perea, but Jesus chooses the shorter route, and intends going through the land of the Samaritans. The Jews did not like to do that, and so they made a great detour. You can still remember that, can you not?

Look, there He is walking through Samaria, through the hostile land. Evening approaches. Very soon night will fall.

Over there, in the distance is a Samaritan village. Jesus sends a few disciples on in front. They are to ask whether they may spend the night there in that village. But when the disciples approach the Samaritans and ask them for lodgings they meet with refusal. Jesus may not spend the night there with His disciples. They will not receive Him. Why not? ...

Well, that is because He is making for Jerusalem. The Samaritans cannot bear that. According to them the true temple was not that at Jerusalem, but that of Samaria. The Samaritans believed this quite definitely, and that is why they would not receive Jesus and His disciples. The old hatred and enmity comes to the fore again. Religious hatred ~~xx~~ fills their hearts with revenge and anger.

The disciples return disappointed with their message.

There they stand. What next? ... Darkness is already falling.

The disciples are filled with indignation. Is that the way to treat people? All sorts of ugly, vengeful thoughts well up in their hearts. James and John can stand it no longer. Bitterly they ask: "Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?"

Oh they long to have Jesus' permission. Those houses must go up in flames. They want to take revenge, bloodthirsty revenge. If they had their way - then ... then ... They await their Master's answer impatiently.

"Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them."

In these words there lies a solemn rebuke for their cruelty.

Yes, so is man. We all want to take revenge. Murder and threatenings frequently spring up inside us over the smallest things. No, do not avenge yourself, but love your enemies - that is God's requirement. But for our fallen nature that is tremendously difficult. And we see that evil, devilish tendency not only in adults, no. We can even notice it in little children. It is even in your hearts, boys and girls.

The disciples are silenced by the rebuke of the Lord Jesus. They would have given vent to their fury, they had wanted to destroy that village with fire, and now they get this answer! ... The group walks on to another village or they may even have slept under the open sky.

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Luke 17 vv.11-19.

It was evidently during this journey to Jerusalem that the Lord Jesus performed another great miracle.

As He journeys on with His disciples and is about to enter a village, there met Him ten lepers. You know already what a terrible disease leprosy was. It was both contagious and incurable.

These ten lepers had sought each other out and now lived together. And why not? They were all ten of them unclean, and had to live apart from others. Now at least they had their own companionship and support.

But hearing that Jesus was in the neighbourhood, they have left their hiding place. Yet they do not dare to come close to the Lord Jesus, for we read in

the Bible that they "stood afar off". Truth to tell, they were not allowed to come among the people, for they were unclean.

Look, there they stand, and together they cry: "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us."

They have probably heard that other lepers have been cleansed through this Prophet of Nazareth. Well then, will He not be able to cleanse them? ... They believe that He can, and that is why their cry is: "Have mercy on us."

Jesus sees them there. Ten deeply afflicted men, who are thrust out from their families by this fearful, incurable disease. He sees the tension in their disfigured faces. He sees those longing eyes. He has compassion on them. Oh how terrible are the consequences of sin.

"Go shew yourselves unto the priests!" resounds His command. No, He does not say that they ARE healed, but He commands them to go away and shew themselves to the priests.

In the laws of Moses it was written that a leper, if he was healed, was to go to the priest. He had to examine the leper, and if it appeared that he was indeed healed, then he was declared clean by the priest.

These ten lepers are commanded to go to the priest. They must believe in the Word of the Lord Jesus. The Lord is proving them.

And what do they do? ... Just look! At that word they all turn round and go away, to shew themselves to the priests. So they doubt not at all the truth of what Jesus has said. And their faith is not put to shame.

Even as they turn and go, the leprosy departs. They feel it in their bodies. They are healed.

Suddenly one of the ten stops. The other nine hurry on, but this one man turns back. Why is that? ... Does this man not believe the words of Jesus? ...

Oh yes, just read what is written in God's Word: "One of them, when he saw that he was healed." No, he does not turn back in unbelief. Why then does he not go with the others? ...

Just look. He approaches the Lord Jesus. He no longer stands afar off. That is no longer necessary. He is healed now, is he not? ... Now he may come close to Jesus.

He falls down there at the feet of Jesus. With a voice trembling with emotion, he thanks the Lord for the great mercy which he has received, he, who is so unworthy.

Who is this man? ... Look carefully. He is ... a Samaritan! The other nine may well have been Jews. They do not turn back. They are satisfied with being healed. Now that they are cleansed they have no more need of Jesus.

But this one, this stranger, this Samaritan cannot be without Jesus. He comes back. He falls on his face at the Saviour's feet. He thanks Him, out of the depths of his heart. Yes, we are told even more. He glorifies God with a loud voice. He gives God the glory for his deliverance.

The Lord Jesus says: "Were there not ten cleansed, but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger."

Alas, it is true ... one returns, but one only!

"Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole," says the Saviour.

Look, the Samaritan gets up and departs. ~~His~~ soul is filled with a sacred joy. He cannot forget the wonder. How good God has been to him.

Do you not think the other nine lepers were terribly ungrateful? ... They were indeed. But ... but what do you do yourself. Are there not many of us who resemble those nine ungrateful lepers?

Certainly, when you are in trouble, when you are sick or in some other difficulty, then you pray to God! Then God must help you, then He must make you better or get you out of your difficulty. Of course.

And, what when the Lord answers your prayers? ... What, when He brings deliverance? Oh, then most go away without ever thanking the Lord for His blessings. Then you forget the Lord. Then you no longer need the Lord.

How ungrateful! Is He not worthy of our gratitude?

Take an example from this Samaritan. He turned back and gave glory to God. He humbly thanked the Lord Jesus.

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