

Mission Work.

Text: 2 Kings 7:9

Suggested Hymns:

221, 225, 224, 283, 219

- 1) The Lepers' Dilemma
- 2) The Lepers' Unexpected Find
- 3) The Lepers' Duty
- 4) The Great Need
- 5) Being Zealous

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is 2 Kings 7:9, ***9 Then they said to one another, "We are not doing right. This day is a day of good news, and we remain silent. If we wait until morning light, some punishment will come upon us. Now therefore, come, let us go and tell the king's household."*** (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

This text takes us back in spirit to a dark period in the history of the Jewish nation. Under the reign of the kings - the people of Israel, from king down to peasant, became more and more godless. On account of their chief national sin, idolatry, God sent grievous and great afflictions.

Thus, in the days when Elisha was prophet and Jehoram was king of Israel, Ben-Hadad, the king of Syria, mustered his armies against Israel. In a battle Jehoram was thrown back and compelled to withdraw his troops to the city of Samaria, which was surrounded by walls. The Syrians forthwith laid siege to the city.

Our chapter tells us of four lepers who kept themselves near the city gates during the siege. According to Jewish law the men were not permitted to enter. Driven by hunger, these lepers finally resolved to go to the camp of the Syrians and surrender themselves for better or for worse.

When they approached the lines of the enemy, they were surprised not to be stopped; as they came nearer, lo and behold, they found the camp deserted. No soldiers were in sight; instead, they found a vast quantity of provisions and spoils of war. Overjoyed, they helped themselves in a liberal manner.

By and by, however, they realised that their action was selfish and dangerous. They thought of their famishing countrymen in Samaria. They resolved to return to the city and report the good news to their fellow-men. By this action they saved thousands of their countrymen from death by starvation.

This incident can well be applied to the great work of the Church under consideration today, mission-work.

Let us note some of the striking truths suggested by this text and thus warm our hearts and fix our purpose for the great work of the Christian Church. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. The Lepers Dilemma

We have a picture of the situation portrayed in 2 Kings chapter 7 from which our text is taken. Let us note these lepers. The position of lepers among the Jews in those days was a pitiable one. They were ejected from their communities; they were compelled to live with their like in the uninhabited wilderness. They were social outcasts. And taking into consideration their loathsome disease, we in a measure understand their tragic situation.

In these lepers we actually have a picture of ourselves, as we are by nature. Yes, we are by nature sinful and unclean before God. In consequence of sin we are outcasts. God cast out the first sinners from His holy presence, and the descendants of the first sinners have inherited the disease and must share the disgrace of their ancestors.

By our daily sins we aggravate our condition and compel God to deal with us as with rebels and outcasts. In this terrible condition we would meet an awful doom away from God here, and away from God throughout all eternity. Remember the parable of *The Rich Man And Lazarus*,¹ and the *Parable Of The Talents*.²

2. The Lepers Unexpected Find

These lepers came upon an unexpected find. Death, either by starvation or by the sword, stared these men in the face. They chose to risk the latter. They resolved to go to the camp of the Syrians. They approached with fear and trembling. Finding themselves unchallenged, they went into the very midst of the camp and found it abandoned.

How did this happen? We read in 2 Kings 7:6–8, *“For the LORD had caused the army of the Syrians to hear the noise of chariots and the noise of horses — the noise of a great army; so they said to one another, “Look, the king of Israel has hired against us the kings of the Hittites and the kings of the Egyptians to attack us!”* ⁷ *Therefore they arose and fled at twilight, and left the camp intact — their tents, their horses, and their donkeys — and they fled for their lives.*

⁸ And when these lepers came to the outskirts of the camp, they went into one tent and ate and drank, and carried from it silver and gold and clothing, and went and hid them; then they came back and entered another tent, and carried some from there also, and went and hid it.

In this remarkable manner they came upon a find by which their lives were saved.

Likewise, we, too, have come upon a rich find. Infected with the leprosy of sin, cast out, we have found treasures of far greater value than all the riches of this world.

We have found Jesus, our Lord and Saviour, forgiveness of sin, peace of heart and mind, a sure foundation of hope, a reliable, satisfying Gospel.

Like these lepers, we have come upon these treasures unaware. As little as these wretched men expected to find those provisions in the camp, so little aware were we of the riches of the treasures of the grace of God in Christ Jesus.

The Holy Spirit opened our eyes, enlightened our understanding, and led us to recognise the riches of God’s love and grace. As these lepers did nothing to produce those vast quantities of provisions, as they were in no way responsible for their being there, so we, too, have done nothing to produce the rich spiritual treasures of which we have become partakers.

They have been given to us without money and without price.³ Jesus, the Son of God, came into the world; He fought and overcame Satan, the enemy of God and man, and by His life, suffering, and death procured for us all these spiritual spoils, which God in His mercy has permitted us to find, to possess, and to enjoy. Truly, when we consider all this, must it not awaken in us an earnest resolution?

3. The Lepers Duty

The unexpected finding of those rich supplies awakened an honourable resolve in these lepers. Having fully satisfied their present wants and having hidden some supplies for future use, they said one to another: ***“We are not doing right. This day is a day of good news, and we remain silent. If we wait until morning light, some punishment will come upon us. Now therefore, come, let us go and tell the king’s household.”***

They realise that their actions were selfish. They were in possession of food, and their countrymen in the city were starving. In addition, they conjectured that their selfishness and delay might prove disastrous to them.

The watchmen on the walls would have observed that the enemy was inactive and would cause spies to be sent to find out the reason. Had they been caught indulging in these rich supplies, it would not have gone well with them. Realising this, they hastened to tell of their wondrous find.

Precisely the same reasons should urge us to do mission work. By the grace of God we are Christians. We enjoy extraordinary advantages. In our Lutheran Church we have and enjoy the pure Gospel and the unadulterated Sacraments. How richly we are blessed with spiritual blessings!

Shall we be selfish? Shall we indulge in the enjoyment of these blessings while so many others lack them? We would not be Christians if we kept all these blessings to ourselves. It is wicked to ignore our neighbour’s physical needs, but it is infinitely more sinful to pass by our neighbour’s spiritual needs.

To say in the language and spirit of Cain: ***“Am I my brother’s keeper?”***⁴ is a sin against which God and His Word solemnly protest. Moreover, if these lepers feared trouble in case they delayed in reporting their find, we have all the more reason to fear for our delay and indifference in spreading the Gospel.

We know that the day is coming when God’s holy Son will return in order to hold judgement. We must give an account of our stewardship. If we be found slothful, selfish, and lazy, He will frown upon us and give us our desert. Let us make the cry of the lepers our own: ***This day is a day of good news.*** We are living in the time of grace. Who knows how long it will last? All signs point to the approaching end of the day of grace. Let us work while it is day. Let us be active, for the need is truly great.

4. The Great Need

The lepers thought of the great need in the city. There, within the walls, were thousands of men, women, and children suffering extreme want in consequence of the siege. All food supplies from without had been cut off, and the supplies in the city had been consumed. The famine was so great that the vilest morsel was sold at the highest prices.⁵

For want of food mothers slew their children and ate their flesh.⁶ The situation was terrible. This besieged city is a type of the people and nations that have not yet received the Gospel of Christ. Samaria is a type of this ungodly world, where sin and sorrow and suffering, vice and crime, death and desolation, abound. Oh, there are many Samaritans!

The thousands of people that are surrounded by thick walls of superstition, idolatry, worldliness, sensuality, and lust; the countless numbers of heathen in India, China, Africa, and in other countries, are surrounded by the almost impenetrable walls of Buddhism, Islam and other teachings.

To come closer, there are countless numbers of people in so-called Christian lands who have no spiritual knowledge, who live for this world and for its pleasures and treasures. Large numbers of our fellow-citizens are being led and fed by false prophets, who deprive them of the wholesome Bread and Water of Life and instead give them the husks of perverted human reason.

What are all these conditions else than spiritual Samaritans? In view of the deplorable state of unconverted men here and abroad how can we stand aloof and be selfish? Surely the great need on all sides should cause us to hasten and spread the good tidings of salvation from shore to shore, from pole to pole.

5. Being Zealous

We should be all the more zealous because we have that which is able to supply the needs.

The message those lepers brought to the city was indeed a good message. They informed the watchmen that the enemies had fled and had left their provisions and equipment behind. They informed them that vast quantities of foodstuffs were to be gotten in the camp. What welcome news! Could anything have been more timely and necessary? By this message the poor lepers saved the lives of thousands.

Similarly we are in a position to bring good tidings to our fellow-men. The Church of which we are members has a great message to proclaim. The pure Gospel has been given to us. We are not better than others. It is a blessing of God.

But great privileges imply corresponding responsibilities. It is our duty to let the light of the holy Gospel shine. We must carry this light into the dark places of the world. It is our duty to proclaim to the Samaritans of the world that Jesus Christ came into the world, fought and overcame the enemy; that He has established a camp where people of all lands may go and where they can find great spiritual supplies.

This camp is the Christian Church, in which God richly and daily forgives all sins and where He bestows those things upon men that really satisfy even the innermost desires of the soul.

All people need the Gospel of Christ. The spreading of the Gospel requires our very best efforts and our fullest co-operation. Through the channels of mission work souls, blood-bought souls, are saved for time and for eternity. Let us not stand aloof from this spiritual task which the Saviour of the world has laid upon us. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Luke 16:23-26

² Matt. 25:26-30

³ Isa 55:1

⁴ Genesis 4:9

⁵ 2 Kings 6:25

⁶ 2 Kings 6:28