



We Begin Anew Bible Study

[Please provide: Bibles and copies of the Bible study for attendees.]

In the *Lutheran Service Book* we have a Christmas hymn, “Let Us All with Gladsome Voice” (390). This hymn’s fourth verse is:

Christ, our Lord and Savior dear,
Be Thou ever near us.
Grant us now a glad new year.
Amen, Jesus, hear us.

What fitting news for us to hear! Jesus is the Savior and He is ever near us. This makes for a glad New Year. Yes, He hears us and He offers us His help.

To better appreciate why this is a glad New Year, please take your Bible and open it to Luke 17: 11-19. Read these verses a couple of times.

This is a text often associated with Thanksgiving. It certainly is appropriate since appreciation for the gifts of life are a prominent theme. However, I believe it is just as appropriate for our use as we move into this New Year.

Jesus is traveling to Jerusalem. Somewhere along the way (the text says between Samaria and Galilee) He comes across a group of lepers. By Old Testament law (Leviticus 13-14) they were to be separated from the community near them. Their skin diseases had condemned them to be separated so the disease would not spread to the healthy.

How do you think these men felt about their lives?

How might their condition and the way they were forced to live cause them to believe they had been given a death sentence?

What hope did they have?

There were those who might someday be healed, but for most there was little hope that anything would ever change to allow them to enjoy life as they once had. The disease had taken everything away and now, with others like themselves, they waited to die.

As you think about the New Year, think about what your life has been like.

What has caused you to be separated from what you want?

What is it that makes you unclean?

As you reflect on these lepers, how are you like them?

We know there are many things wrong in our lives. Some are physical, but most are spiritual. We so often act contrary to what God wants. Our sinful lives show the ugly sickness and disease of sin. As marked as these men may have been by their skin diseases, so we are marked by our sinful natures that cause us to be unfit, not only to God, but to each other.

Reread verse 13. These men cry out together to Jesus. They call Him Master. They want Him to notice them and their condition. From a distance they know who He is and know He can heal. They have heard about Him and they want miraculous help. Their cry is for Jesus to bring them mercy.

Alone, and as good as dead, they cry for help. They want new life. They know they can't do this themselves. They need Jesus.

What holds us back and why?

Will our life situations get any better by our efforts and actions?

Jesus sees these leprous men and He hears their cries. Verse 14 says Jesus simply commands them to go and show themselves to the priests. The only way to be declared healed was for the priest to look and determine if the disease was gone.

The trouble for these men is they are told to go. There is no sign of healing, just Jesus' command to go.

What should they do?

The lepers leave. They go, as Jesus told them to do. They must have trusted that Jesus knew something that was not at first apparent. They depart and, as they go, they are healed. The Miracle Worker has worked a miracle. There should be no surprise for us. After all, it is Jesus. He has already done so many miracles. These lepers may have paused, and even had some debate, but they went as commanded.

On the way the lepers are cleansed. Praise God! They are healed. They continue on. However, one leper, a Samaritan, stops, recognizes what has really been done, and returns to our Lord. To the Jews, this man was already an outsider without being a leper. As a Samaritan the Jews considered him, and others like him, to be unfit and unfaithful.

This does not matter. This Samaritan loudly praises Jesus and falls at Jesus' feet to worship Him. He has been healed outside, his skin, and inside, his soul. Jesus has made him whole. His diseased body and life are well.

How are you healed?

How do you react to the miracle of Jesus making you well?

The Word tells us of all His miraculous gifts. He has touched you in so many ways and sent you to go back into life well.

What is your response to all Jesus does?

Where are the nine? Jesus knows, but He asks the question for the disciples' and for our sakes. Nine went on and had their agenda in mind. They asked to be healed and it was granted. First, it is to the priests and then back into society and life the way they had it and wanted it again. The death sentence is removed and they rejoice in their good fortune.

The one, a Samaritan, rejoiced in the Giver of the gift. He was no less happy than the nine. He also desired to go back home. He knew that His Lord, Jesus, made it happen and without thanks his life would never be right.

As you live in this New Year, how are you approaching it?

What is it that Jesus has done to make you well and to change your future as He changed that of the lepers?

You live because Jesus lived for you. His miracle of healing came from the cross and the empty tomb. "*Go and show yourselves ...*" (Luke 17:14). These are Jesus' words to the lepers. Through His interaction with these men, our Savior reinforces a message to us, we are healed in Him. Our sins are forgiven and we are now whole. As you realize you are well, be found at Jesus' feet offering praise and thanksgiving.

Your year will be much better and much more productive and more meaningful if and when you thank Jesus and hear Him say to you, "*Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well*" (Luke 17:19).

Prayer: Dearest Jesus, thank You for bringing us Your healing in this New Year. As thankful children, healed by Your death and resurrection, grant us newness of life to walk in Your glorious ways. Empower us in thankful living. Our faith makes us well. In Christ's holy name we pray. Amen.

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