

## **God shows His love**

Valentine's Day, February 14th in our country. They say this is a day that's all about love. Is it? Well, I'm going to tell you, I think a day before Passover in Israel almost 2,000 years ago was all about love. It's when the Son of God died as the Lamb of God. He offered up as a sacrifice his own life for the sins of the whole world. That was the last step in something that, though planned from the foundation of the world before its creation, had this plan that had begun to unfold just 33 years before that day, that day before the Passover.

It began in the body of a young virgin woman in Israel. And God said it this way, and I turn you to 1 John 4:9, and 10 to see what God said about that day and all that would come afterward. "In this, the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him." And then verse 10, "And this is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." That's what God said, the greatest demonstration of love this world has ever known. You see, he loved everyone that much. He knew that all people are sinners by choice, and without a Savior, all would have to stand before him on the day of judgment, and he would have to declare them unrighteous. He would have to send them to hell. To send them to hell. But he also knew that if he provided a Savior, some would admit their sin, and some would humble themselves before him and call upon him for mercy. And out of the love he had for them, he could let the Savior's perfect life be a substitute for their sinful life, and he could forgive them their sins and make them a part of his family forever.

And oh, how much the Son of God looked forward to coming to this earth and showing God's love to people. For three years, beginning at about the age of 30, God's Son showed the love of God to the world. Sometimes, he showed it to people who wouldn't even say thank you.

### **God's love to sinners illustrate by the 10 lepers**

Turn with me to Luke 17 because I like to back up everything we teach with the Word of God. I want you to see that some wouldn't even say thank you. Luke 17, in verse 11, "Now it happened as he went to Jerusalem that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee." I want you to understand he's going through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. Obviously, if you're going to go through Samaria, you're going to bump into some Samaritans. Except there were certain ones in Samaria, though they were despised by the self-righteous Jews down in Judah. Not even the Samaritans wanted to bump into these people. They were lepers, and they had to keep their distance from everybody. Then he entered a certain village, and there met him 10 men who were lepers, who stood afar off. And they lifted up their voices and said, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us."

Now, as you study the Word of God, you must be aware that when mercy is mentioned, it really is a way for God to show love. Mercy is a subheading under the subject of love. God shows love to those who have no claim on his love, those who don't deserve his love, and those who, in fact, deserve judgment. But they cried out for mercy. In other words, these 10 men were asking for God somehow to show his love to them. Even though they admit to the word mercy, they didn't deserve it. They had no claim on it. But could it be that God manifests in the Son? Could it be that God actually is a God of love? Could he be appealed to for mercy? Can you cry out to him, ask him to show love to you, though you don't deserve it? These men were at the end of opportunities, the end of possibilities. They were at the end of hope. But Jesus was coming that way. And I think this is letting you know that they made it their objective to put themselves in his path, though they stood afar off.

So when he saw them, he said to them, "Go show yourselves to the priests." Now let me tell you, in the book of Leviticus, the book of the law, you have many details about the behavior that Jews would have in their worship, especially in their coming before God ceremonially. And God had set up a priesthood. And in Leviticus, God makes it very clear that

this disease of leprosy is symbolic of sin. Leprosy is a symbol of sin, but it also is a very real disease. And because it's used as a symbol for sin, it comes quite properly into the book of Leviticus and has to be talked about with respect to cleansing from the disease. The disease that symbolizes sin is leprosy. And it's clear there that they had to come to the priests. The priest had to examine them, and the only one who could pronounce that they were clean was God's representative in worship, the priest. That's why Jesus says to them, "Go show yourselves to the priests."

Now, if they did that, and they were lepers, they knew ahead of time that if they did that, the priests would have no difficulty saying, "You are lepers." "Separate yourselves from the people. Don't come into the city. Beg, but stay away." They knew that. They lived with that. Now, they were being told to go show themselves to the priests. And so it was, as they went, they were cleansed. What hope did they have anyway? Should they obey this one who they'd heard of that was Lord, Master? They obeyed him. They had no other option. But miracle of miracles, their leprosy was taken away from them as they went. In their obedience to follow his words, God rewarded them with a very loving act. He cleansed them from their disease. And they went along being cleansed.

When he saw that he was healed, one of them returned with a loud voice, glorified God, and fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks. And he was a Samaritan. Everything about that man, even if he didn't have a disease, was hated by the Jews. They wanted nothing to do with him. He couldn't go into the territory that the Jews lived in. He had to separate himself from that territory because he was a Samaritan. But he had found somebody, a Jew in fact, that showed love to him. And by the power of God, he healed him. And his heart was overflowing. He went back to say thank you. And humble himself before the Lord Jesus.

So Jesus answered and said, "Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?" And he said to him, "Arise. Go your way. Your faith has made you well." Many times in the scripture, we don't have evidence on the surface from the words given to us, but what's going on in somebody's heart? God, as he said to Samuel, "is not like man; man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks on the heart." And God knows our hearts. Jesus, Son of God, God himself knew the heart of this man. We can't say that the other nine believed in Jesus. We know they came and cried out for mercy, but they seem to have just wanted mercy with regard to their sickness. And they did receive it, which was a showing of love. But the greater need for every human being is to have their soul cleansed, their spirit, their eternal self made right before God, forgiven of sin, and brought into the family of God. That's what they really need.

This man, this man, had faith. Jesus declares it. That ends the discussion when God declares that he sees in somebody's heart that they have faith in him. I don't need to have any more evidence. God says it's true; it's true. Like Paul says, "Let God be true and every man a liar." I'll stand with what God says. Coming to some who wouldn't even say thank you, showing love wasn't the only time the Savior showed love. He showed it all the way through those 33 years, but especially in those last three years of his ministry.

### **God's Mercy Given to a Real Outcast**

In Luke 17, there's also this in verse 11. I mean, that's where they. Yeah, 17:11. Those are the 10 lepers. Now, I'm going to go to Mark. Let's go to Mark. I wanted to show you another time when the Lord showed his love. Mark chapter 5. This is a striking story. Mark seems in 95% of his material to give us things we find in Matthew. Well, you say it's just a kind of a subset of what Matthew gives us. Well, you see, we really believe each of these books is inspired by God, which means what if we find material in Mark that isn't in Matthew? How about that 5%? How'd that get in there? Well, by the Spirit of God putting his hand upon Mark as he wrote these things.

In chapter 5, we have a story about a man who was a real outcast. The people of his community shunned him, but God showed his love to somebody who was an outcast here.

Demons bound this man. He was living in caves. They had, at times, put iron chains about him, and he would be screaming at night and screaming during the day. People were afraid of him. He was tormented, really. He was tormented. Nobody loved him. In fact, they wanted nothing to do with him. He was demon-possessed. He was in the worst of states. And along came Jesus. And his greeting is, I guess you could say, just about what you could expect from a demon. In verse 7, the demon cries out and says, "What have I to do with you, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore you by God that you do not torment me." You see, they're begging all right. Remember the ten lepers were begging for mercy? The words that come out of this man really are a plea not to be tormented. Why is that? Well, because these words do not come from the man. They're coming from a demon or demons. And you see, demons are already under judgment. There is no opportunity for mercy for demons. There is no savior for demons. There is no salvation for demons. They cannot cry out for mercy. The love of God is not available to them. They had been created holy, and they threw it away. They have been judged already and are under the ultimate sentence of that judgment. Not totally fulfilled yet, but it shall be fulfilled. And they know that when it is ultimately fulfilled in all its parts, they will be tortured. They know they deserve it, but I'd rather put it off for a while. They don't want to be tortured yet. And so they cry out to Jesus this way.

And Jesus says, "Come out of the man, unclean spirit." He asked him, "What is your name?" He answered, "My name is Legion, for we are many." When some people study the word of God, they're awestruck by this great creature, Satan. And they're taken back by how much power he has, how great his knowledge is, and by the great power that the demons that follow him have. Put very bluntly, yes, they have power, but truthfully, it's not great. When you compare it to the infinite power of God, it says nothing.

And so when Jesus says, "What is your name?" and they say, "We are many," it's kind of an allusion to their power. Wow, we're very many. A lot of us. Yes, there were a lot of them. We're not told how many, but you see, they were cast into some swine that were feeding nearby, and we're told that there were 2,000 of the swine. It's quite possible. I don't know. Maybe he just put one demon in every pig. Could have put two or three in a pig. There could have been 2,000 demons in this man. They don't take up any space. They're spiritual beings. Yes, they're localized in that their spirit can go into somebody, but it doesn't take any physical space. This little bit of this one word of bragging that we're many cannot overcome the great power of the Lord Jesus. And he begged him earnestly that he would not send them out of the country. They knew they had to be sent somewhere. They didn't know where, but they started begging. Begging. That one word tells you they realized their position before the Son of God. They realized their position before the Son of God. He had ultimate power over them, and they feared him. And their will could not set his will aside. Whatever his will was, they knew they'd have to submit. But they at least could let him know what they didn't want. I wonder if he would even allow it, you know. But they didn't want to be sent out of the country.

And then they say in verse 12, so all the demons begged him saying, "Send us to the swine that we may enter them." Now, that seems a very humble thing for a demon, being willing to be removed from a human being, which would be the most ideal place for them as far as they're concerned, to use that human being's body as a vehicle to go about doing evil and extreme things to the glory of Satan. And it seems to be a very humble thing that they should want to do, to be willing to be cast into swine. But let me tell you something. These disembodied spirits knew that there was something horrible about not being in anything. And they wanted to be in something that they could at least express their will in, even if it were a pig. And notice they begged just for a crumb of their will, just for a slight demonstration of love. Jesus gave them permission. It says, "And all at once Jesus gave them permission. And then the unclean spirits went and entered the swine." There were about 2,000. "And the herd ran violently down the steep place into the sea and drowned in the sea."

There isn't a second between this event, this happening, of these demons coming into the swine and the immediate event of their running down the slope of the sea coast into the Lake of Galilee and drowning. Search this story over. There is not one word, there is not one suggestion, there is not even one moment that allows for love. Those demons are not dealt

with in mercy. They may have been crying out, thinking that they would have a better situation, at least being in pigs. Yes, Jesus gives them their will for a very faint moment and then shows his power and his places judge over them and sends them into the pigs and then into death.

Well, the people standing by, the people that fed those pigs, herded them, frightened them. They ran into the city to tell everybody what had happened, and people started coming out to see where Jesus was. And when they came out there, they saw this man that had been demon-possessed; they saw him in his right mind, sitting at the feet of Jesus. He was clothed, and the disciples must have each shared some of their clothing enough to make the man able to put some clothing on. It's a beautiful example of what happens when we are truly forgiven and cleansed. We are sharply aware of things that please God or displease God. And this man who had been running around naked for who knows how long was instantly aware of his nakedness, as were Adam and Eve when they sinned in the garden. They tried to do something on their own to cover up their nakedness and made clothes for themselves of plant materials. And God, when he came to them, having mercy on them, brought clothing that required the shedding of blood. As a picture, the covering of sin and cleansing of sin required perfect blood, perfect shedding of blood from a perfect sacrifice. Christ. This man was seated there in the Lord's presence. And so those that saw it there wondered how it happened that this demon-possessed man had come to this.

And the keepers of the swine who saw all of this happen explained to them how the demons were cast in the swine, the swine had gone into the sea, and they were drowned. So the people, believe it or not, began to plead with Jesus to leave the place, to leave their area. That is a very sad, sad comment. So he got into one of the boats that had brought them there. And he was going to follow their request. God doesn't force himself on anybody. He loves us, but he doesn't force himself on us. He pleads with us. He shows us his mercy. He shows us his love. He shows what he can do for the life that's surrendered and tender to him. But he doesn't force his love on you if you don't want it.

So he got into the boat. But the man that he had freed from demons begged him, oh, he begged him, don't leave me here. Take me with you, please. He knew what true love was. Those people may want you to leave, but I want to go with you. I want to be where you are. They may not want you here. And if you do not stay here, I want to be where you are. Take me with you. Jesus wanted him to learn a great truth. Even though he might not be where Jesus was in his body, he could still be in that hostile area and have Jesus with him in his heart. That Jesus wasn't going to abandon him. That salvation that came to this man is the same salvation that we have today. When life enters us, we're not required to be in Jesus' presence to be okay. He comes to live in us. The spirit of God comes into us. The Father comes into us to abide. This man was saved, but he was not abandoned. And Jesus told him, go home to your friends and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you and how he has compassion on you. Compassion, that's love, by the way. Tell them about my love. Go home. And this story ends this way.

And he departed and began to proclaim all that Jesus had done for him in Decapolis. And they all marveled. Decapolis was a territory on the other side of Jordan, on the other side of the Sea of Galilee, with 10 districts and 10 major cities. Decapolis, the deca means 10, okay, in Decapolis. It was the territory of 10 cities. And so the idea is, yes, he went home, but he let Decapolis know about the love of God. He became an evangelist in Decapolis. His mouth wasn't shut because he wasn't in Jesus' presence, because Jesus was with him. That's a story of love.

### **God's Mercy to the Woman of John 8**

I want to tell you another story of love. I actually have a list of about 15 of these, but I want to give you one more, okay? And this is about a very sad case. This is from John chapter 8. And this is about a woman taken in the very act of adultery. It's a sad case. She was brought before Jesus by some self-righteous Pharisees and scribes. And they put a challenge before

Jesus. "They said this woman was taken in a very act of adultery. Moses said she should be stoned. What do you say?" And they really were trying to find some cause against him that they could use to ultimately bring a death penalty against him and get rid of him. It didn't work on this occasion. They kept asking him, what do you say? What do you say? And he just said to them, "he who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first."

Now, the Spirit of God used that to convict their hearts. They all knew that they were not righteous. They all knew that they had sinned. But rather than humble themselves before the Lord Jesus, the Savior, rather than put their faith in him and no freedom from their sin, they hardened themselves. They hardened themselves. And they walked away one by one, with conviction in their heart. They walked away until they were all gone.

And Jesus came to the woman. And he said, woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you? And she said to him, no one, Lord. And Jesus said to her, neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more.

### **God's Love and Mercy for a Woman Sick for 12 years**

Now, I wanted to tell you this sad story because it has a happy ending. This woman, I could show you the woman with the issue of blood for 12 years. We could show you other cases; maybe Jairus' daughter was raised to life. Maybe the miracle at the wedding at Cana of Galilee. Other things that demonstrate all of those things demonstrate the love of God. But here, this woman wasn't sick with a physical illness. This woman didn't have something you could see taken away, like leprosy. She didn't have a withered arm, demon possession. She was in her right mind. But still, something happened in her. The Lord did something in her. And he can say to her, neither do I condemn you. Do you know the only ones that Jesus can say, I don't condemn you to, are those who have trusted in him for forgiveness? Those who have in their hearts put their faith in him. Otherwise, he has to condemn them. They deserve the full condemnation of God. No, he wouldn't bring that against her. He wouldn't condemn her. Go and sin no more.

### **It is the Same for Us**

Do you know that's the same thing he says to every Christian? He forgives us of our sins. He cleanses us and makes us one of his children. But after that, he would say to us, now you go and sin no more. You don't have a free ticket to go sin. You're forgiven. But God wants you to live a righteous life. He wants you to live a God-honoring life. He wants you to show the world what he's like in righteousness, but more than that, in love. And to go and sin no more doesn't simply mean to be righteous. It also means showing the fullness of God's love. The full nature of God. Show the world that God is love. What has he done for you? Be like the man who had the demons cast out of him. Tell the world. Tell the world. God has not left us as orphans. He hasn't abandoned us.

We've come to the Lord Jesus. He says tell them, but he hasn't abandoned us. He's with us. And he'll give us the strength we need to do whatever he's asked us to do. And if you love him, you keep his commandments. You won't keep your mouth shut if you love and belong to him. You may have to go home to people who hate him and want him away from them. Let them know what he did for you. That's all he asks. And sin no more. Let the world see him.

"Father, thank you for your love. Thank you for your true love. Your love that brought Jesus here as our Savior. Thank you, Lord Jesus, for loving us so much that you are delighted to come and do the Father's will. In dying for us, you could look forward to the hope of having many brethren in heaven forever. Help us be faithful, Lord, to do your will. We so love you that we would let the world know what you've done for us. And that you love them also. That they might be free of their sin. Thank you in Jesus' name, amen."