Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Curing Our Sin Disease

Luke 17:11-19
Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost
Analysis by Chris Repp

11On the way to Jerusalem Jesus was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee. 12 As he entered a village, ten men with a skin disease approached him. Keeping their distance, 13 they called out, saying, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!” 14 When he saw them, he said to them, “Go and show yourselves to the priests.” And as they went, they were made clean. 15 Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice. 16 He prostrated himself at Jesus’s feet and thanked him. And he was a Samaritan. 17 Then Jesus asked, “Were not ten made clean? So where are the other nine? 18 Did none of them return to give glory to God except this foreigner?” 19 Then he said to him, “Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well.”



Ten Lepers by Bill Hoover; https://billhooverart.com/

“The lepers’ skin disease is not their biggest problem after all. Their sin disease is. Skin disease separates only from families and friends. Sin disease separates from God, the source of life. ”

Author’s Note: Luke’s Gospel announces Jesus’ birth by declaring glory to God and peace (reconciliation and wellbeing) to favored humans. I think the story before us here can be seen in the light of that angelic proclamation.

DIAGNOSIS: Alienated

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem): Unwell and at a Distance

These ten men are keeping distance from their village because of their contagious skin disease. This is a biblical quarantine. They could be restored to their community only by demonstrating to the authorities that they had been healed – something akin to a negative COVID test is needed to be able to return to work after coming down with the virus. Probably they’ve heard that

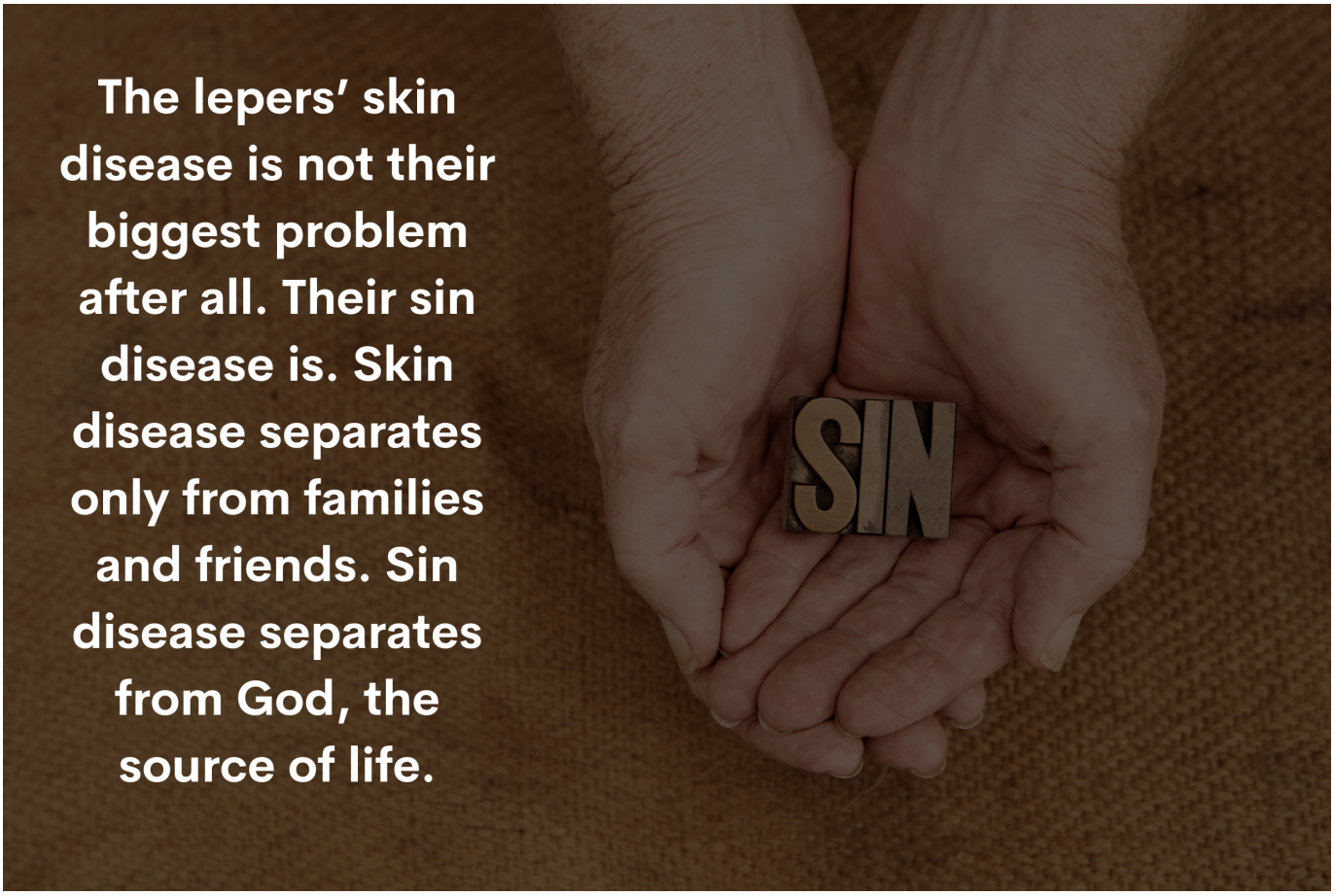
Jesus is a healer, so they appeal to him for healing. He sends them off to get tested, as it were, and on the way, they are healed. That could be the end of the story. Skin disease cured. Hurray for Jesus!

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem): No Faith

But there is a deeper malady being addressed in nine of these men. Their healing elicits no praise (glorifying) of God, no recognition that God is the source of their cure. This lack of praise betrays their lack of trust in and dependence upon God; or in other words, their lack of faith.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem): Disconnected from God

Their skin disease is not their biggest problem after all. Their sin disease is. Skin disease separates only from families and friends. Sin disease separates from God, the source of life. Though now healed of a debilitating and isolating physical ailment, a yet deeper, more existential ailment remains uncured.



Skin disease Sin disease (from Canva)

PROGNOSIS: Reconciled

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution): Reconnected to God

Into the breach steps Jesus, bridging our separation by his incarnation and life among us, curing our fatal sin disease by his death and resurrection, and restoring our relationship with God and one another by the work of the Holy Spirit.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution): Faith

That work of the Holy Spirit has created faith in us. We can tell, because like the one Samaritan foreigner who noticed his healing and couldn't help but break out in praise of God, so our faith makes itself known in praise and thanksgiving, living each day joyfully acknowledging God's love and care for us.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution): Brought Near and Made Well

We who were once far off have now been brought near (see Ephesians 2:13). And our healing is so much more than skin deep. The faith that connects us to God penetrates to the depths of our souls and spills over into our relationship with our fellow humans and all of God’s creation. We are made well, and in our wellness become agents of wellness for the world. (Hurray for Jesus!)