

Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity: Luke 17:11–19

Don O'Connor

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The litany of what men are outside of Christ. Romans 1:21-3:19 (KJV)

Romans 1:28 (KJV) And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;

A lot of the world has been given over to a reprobate mind.

Romans 1:29-2:1 (KJV)

If you break one point of the law you're guilty of the whole law.

Romans 2:5-11 (KJV)

Romans 3:9-10 (KJV) What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; [10] As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:

You may not know, but you could have a contention with this, however you deal in abstractions and may not be able to see this.

Some are here today to have their sagging god-project propped up.

Romans 3:11-18 (KJV)

Romans 3:19 (KJV) Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

That every mouth may be stopped, what's that? Anything in Adam, anything in or of flesh. Around here, people still judge and accuse others and not every mouth is stopped. If we judge others according to the flesh, that same judgment will fall back on us. Our warfare is not with flesh and blood - people are not our problem. The devil will immediately tell you that people are your problem.

Man at his best state is altogether idolatrous - vain - empty, even though he may have a lot of husks to fill his belly. It all comes to naught.

Luke 4:21-22 (KJV) And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears. [22] And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph's son?

How can He claim that the Spirit of the Lord is upon him, personally?

Luke 4:23-27 (KJV) And he said unto them, Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country. [24] And he said, Verily I say unto you, No prophet is accepted in his own country. [25] But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; [26] But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. [27] And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian.

None of them was cleansed except the outsider. If you were a Jew, you wouldn't even allow a Syrian or Samaritan to darken your doorway. If Jesus was saying today, he might say that only an Iraqi or Palestinian was healed. They became so indignant they wanted to kill him on the spot.

Naaman was successful, a captain of the Syrian army. The Jordan was muddy like the Church in earthen vessels. Leprosy is the ultimate metaphor of sin and death - figuratively and literally

2 Kings 5:13-14 (KJV) And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? How much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean? [14] Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.

Naaman didn't just go back to being a captain, successful, a man worthy of respect. He didn't deny that he was a leper - a sinner. He didn't call sin by another name, such as indiscretion. The nine lepers who were healed and didn't return to thank Jesus did this. But Naaman returned to the man of God.

2 Kings 5:15 (KJV) And he returned to the man of God, he and all his company, and came, and stood before him: and he said, Behold, now I know that there is no God in all earth, but in Israel: now therefore, I pray thee, take a blessing of thy servant.

A natural response of gratitude is to give - to give back something. The reason people don't give in this church is because they are not grateful and they think they deserve something.

Walther - Page 190 The problem with preachers today is that they have no aim. They do not aim at the conditions of the people in their church. Some people here have anxiety, concern, worry and fear for tomorrow.

2 Kings 5:17-19 (KJV) And Naaman said, Shall there not then, I pray thee, be given to thy servant two mules' burden of earth? for thy servant will henceforth offer neither burnt offering nor sacrifice unto other gods, but unto the Lord. [18] In this thing the Lord pardon thy servant, that when my master goeth into the house of Rimmon to worship there, and he leaneth on my hand, and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon: when I bow down myself in the house of Rimmon, the Lord pardon thy servant in this thing. [19] And he said unto him, Go in peace. So he departed from him a little way.

Naaman was told to go back to being a Syrian but not to worship in their temples. When you use what God has done to your own advantage, take glory from God like a theologian of glory, it will always end in leprosy. If you attain to anything you still will not be satisfied.

In 2nd Kings, in the midst of the heavy siege, people were consuming their children. In a famine, have you prevented the prophetic word from coming near you, or rejected it once it has come? Have you been mad at Jesus once your pigs are drowned? The Word comes to me and I say, "Depart from my coasts," because Jesus threatens the thing I'm trafficking in. Pigs are metaphors of unclean thoughts, evil thoughts, and evil imaginations - pig thoughts. They will never fill or satisfy you. People don't know that they are driven by these thoughts - thoughts of unfairness, etc.

2 Kings 7:1-2 (KJV) Then Elisha said, Hear ye the word of the Lord; Thus saith the Lord, To morrow about this time shall a measure of fine flour be sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria. [2] Then a lord on whose hand the king leaned answered the man of God, and said, Behold, if the Lord would make windows in heaven, might this thing be? And he said, Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof.

Doubt was speaking - hate was speaking - a man who hates the prophet as he speaks. This man will see something happen with his eyes but he will not partake of it. The Lepers are outside the gates of the city.

There is a famine today for hearing the Bread of Life. Look at the Church; the language has slipped. We wouldn't want to offend anyone. We wouldn't call sin, sin because we don't have sinners anymore. Where are they? They've all gone and become victims relentlessly seeking to find their victimizers, and then spend the rest of their days accusing, being driven. Where did the spirits go after they left the pigs?

A leper was an outcast you were to stay away from. They were not allowed in the city. Because they would die in the famine outside the city or inside the city, they thought they'd go into the Syrian camp and if the Syrians killed them that was okay because they were going to die anyway.

2 Kings 7:3-7 (KJV)

2 Kings 7:8 (KJV) And when these lepers came to the uttermost part of the camp, they went into one tent, and did eat and drink, and carried thence silver, and gold, and raiment, and went and hid it; and came again, and entered into another tent, and carried thence also, and went and hid it.

The lepers did exactly what you have done - buried what you've been given.

They had it all, food, the gold, the chariots, the horses, etc., and are telling each other that they do not well because they hid it.

2 Kings 7:9 (KJV) Then they said one to another, We do not well: this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace: if we tarry till the morning light, some mischief will come upon us: now therefore come, that we may go and tell the king's household.

If we hold our mouth, our peace, and there is no proclamation, everyone in Samaria (a mixed place, having 2 things going in their heads) will die.

People come to church today worried about the news, or just good and angry. But they are not aware of it. They seek to find some victimizer, or perhaps they've already found one. People come depleted, reduced down to watching what is said so they can balance it out or defend themselves. Or perhaps they've come for more knowledge. You don't have any other purpose in life than telling the king's household, do you?

Faith is a matter of ultimate concern. There are people in the world who have far greater faith than we do. We are worried about what people think of us. We suck up knowledge and hold it in our hearts or keep it esoteric, and then hope someone sees one day who we really are and what we've been doing all these years. What is your daily concern? Faith is to be grasped by the ultimate concern of your life. I'm not talking about Christian faith now. The scientific type of faith is built upon precedent after precedent, and upon the authority of men like Einstein, etc.

Your faith is in what you call Jesus. The Blues Brothers were on a mission from God, a mission to hate everyone and use everyone. If someone questioned what you were doing, would you say, "I'm doing it for you." Well who inspired you, or what inspired you to do it for me? Are you sure it's not just a cover-up? Being a creature is okay and it's not wrong to enjoy the things of this world, but not to abuse them. Beware lest we spiritualize these sort things. You can do what you want because you have free will down here on earth. But regarding heavenly things, we would have never chosen Jesus.

The lepers go and tell the king that there is unlimited wealth in the Syrian camp, or you could say the wealth of the heathen is stored up for the righteous – for us. All things are yours. God allows stewards over some things and for our good always.

2 Kings 7:10-16 (KJV) So they came and called unto the porter of the city: and they told them, saying, We came to the camp of the Syrians, and, behold, there was no man there, neither voice of man, but horses tied, and asses tied, and the tents as they were. [11] And he called the porters; and they told it to the king's house within.

You are called to be prophets - you have the Spirit of prophesy.

2 Kings 7:17-20 (KJV) And the king appointed the lord on whose hand he leaned to have the charge of the gate: and the people trode upon him in the gate, and he died, as the man of God had said, who spake when the king came down to him. [18] And it came to pass as the man of God had spoken to the king, saying, Two measures of barley for a shekel, and a measure of fine flour for a shekel, shall be to morrow about this time in the gate of Samaria: [19] And that lord answered the man of God, and said, Now, behold, if the Lord should make windows in heaven, might such a thing be? And he said, Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof. [20] And so it fell out unto him: for the people trode upon him in the gate, and he died.

This same thing will happen to a man who contends with God's Word. His own contention, his own wickedness will kill him.

The wealth of the nations is stored up for the righteous. Who are they? Do you want to be found not having any righteousness of your own? I hope so. That would be good. Remember, your ultimate concern is what you have faith in. What are you concerned with today? What is the object of your faith? You can't live in the world without faith.

Luke 21:34 (KJV) And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.

You can be burdened down by the cares of this life. Martha was anxious. Anxiety is this age - a fear we're not aware of. Martha is distracted. She actually has hope in her works.

Matthew 6:25 (KJV) Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?

"Other people do less and they seem to get more recognition than me." People, who want recognition, really want to rule. What do you treasure? What do you want?

Matthew 6:21 (KJV) For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Back when i had an Egyptian, slave mentality things were great. I could indulge myself in Hollywood flesh pots, or Olympian Fleshpots. I knew where my bread was coming from - the Grand Inquisitor. Jesus was killed for who he was, and it takes courage in this life to be who you are. It's easier to invest in the death of this world. "Well, if I was a son of God, I'd have to let go of things like my image, and I've put a lot into this image. You will be something's slave. You will either be a bond slave of Jesus or a slave of the Devil, who is not what you think. The devil is cute. He may never even mention to you that you are his slave. Jesus told Peter to get behind him because he stills savored the things of man and not the things of God.

The things of man: reputation, power, control, image, the consumerism of this world - training your children to look good. Your faith is your ultimate concern to look good. The advertisers love you.

Miriam and Aaron found a pretext to speak against Moses. He married a black woman. I hope it offends you, if it offends you. The real issue was that they thought God not only spoke

through Moses, but also through them. They wanted pre-eminence, or at least equality - the theologian of glory. God said that Moses was very meek, which is the opposite of pride.

Numbers 12:1-15 (KJV)

Those people journeyed not. Have you ever seen anyone around here with leprosy, contention, wanting pre-eminence? You have to wash them daily with the Word because they go back there. They may think, "Well, all I wanted was some love and acceptance." Don't believe it. You have been approved and accepted by God and that's enough. Go do what you want, but don't expect the church to prop up your God-project, even if your god-project is your little children. They lay low for a while, until their circumstances get really extreme and then they get humble. They are spirits. As soon as they get their little security back, after a week or a month you'll find out where they go.

Miriam had to stay outside the camp until she was restored. To be prosperous is to be seven in Hebrew. People who want to be recognized, who don't have the names of God, want a Babylonian garment, a pedigree. They get hyped up and become vulnerable to leprosy. They start getting separated outside the camp and have no contrition or repentance. Forgiveness is not important to them because they've never done anything, like the older brother.

Luke 17:1-5 (KJV) Then said he unto the disciples, It is impossible but that offences will come: but woe unto him, through whom they come! [2] It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones.

[3] Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. [4] And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him. [5] And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith.

You don't need more faith; you've got too much, as a matter of fact. How do you offend a little one? By making the gospel a law. By teaching them to be winners. If you avoid the scandal of the cross you offend them. If you tell them there is a righteousness outside of what God has done, or that they have to do anything to be righteousness other than be dead in Christ, you offend them.

OBATHOC

The theologian of glory has value signs reversed. He who does not know Christ, does not know God hidden in suffering.

What are some people ultimately concerned about? They've got their values reversed. The gospel was scandalous to Martha. Jesus was scandalous to Martha because he was sitting there praising Mary. Martha is doing so much and getting no glory. This doesn't make sense to Martha. Martha was working for herself. Mary was doing a good thing by sitting at Jesus' feet and hearing. If you think this word is not about you, if my preaching seems to be pointless to you, I repent.

The theologian of glory prefers good to evil. These are who the apostle Paul calls the enemies of the cross. They love works and the glory of works. They call the good of the cross evil. God can only be found in suffering and the cross. Through the cross works are dethroned. It is impossible for a person not to be puffed up by his good works, unless first he has been reduced, brought to where he knows he is worthless. There is a place for self-esteem, but not here, not before God. He has to be reduced by God.

Martha believed that her works were good and Mary's hearing was evil. "Who me? Edified by works?"

God doesn't lift a finger to reduce us; he just lets us go in our works. Imagine what people have to go through to prove they're right - court every day. Serves him right. How many of you are the prosecuting attorney on any given day? You have to be reduced - destroyed - every day.

Luke 17:11-13 (KJV) And it came to pass, as he went to Jerusalem, that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. [12] And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off: [13] And they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.

A leper has to stand afar off. To the Jews they were double losers; they were not only lepers, but Samaritan lepers.

Luke 17:14 (KJV) And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed.

If you have leprosy you need a priest. The priest is the one you avoid, the one you won't come near to. The priest is a prophet; he might have a word for you. Outside the came, your works

won't help you. Naaman, you've said you have no need of the word of God. Your money is no good here.

Luke 17:15-16 (KJV) And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, [16] And fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan.

Who are you glorifying? Yourself, if you've not been the leper. Naaman asked that Elisha come out and heal "the" leper.

Jesus is always talking about the little, least and last things. He talks about not offending the little ones. Lepers need forgiveness - they are people who are dead. He saves the little, the lost, the last. He always contrasts this with those who are seeking greatness. All this is a vain effort to avoid the cross. We don't want to scandalize the little ones. Anyone can, if you insist you're going to be a success. You can think that in your circle of friends you only admit those who are success on any level.

THESIS 28: The love of God does not first discover but creates what is pleasing to it. The love of man comes into being through attraction to what pleases it.

Now we have arrived at the opposite side of the great arch described by the Disputation. All else has been shorn away, put to death. What remains is simply the creative love of God. The innermost nature of the operation of the previous thesis is now announced. It is love, the love of God that creates out of nothing, calls into being that which is from that which is not. This love of God that creates its object is contrasted absolutely with the love of humans. Human love is awakened by attraction to what pleases it. It must search to find its object and, one might add, will likely toss it aside when it tires of it.

The proof of the thesis Luther finds simply in the fact that the love of God flows forth to the unlovely:

Luther: The first part [of the thesis] is clear because the love of God that lives in man loves sinners, evil persons, fools, and weaklings in order to make them righteous, good, wise, and strong. Rather than seeking its own good, the love of God flows forth and bestows good. Therefore sinners are attractive because they are loved; they are not loved because they are attractive. For this reason the love of man avoids sinners and evil persons. Thus Christ says: "For I came not to call the righteous but sinners" [Matt. 9:13].

All of this flows forth strictly from the cross. It is the outcome of the theologia crucis.

This is the love of the cross, born of the cross, which turns in the direction where it does not find good that it may enjoy, but where it may confer good upon the bad and needy persons. "It is more blessed to give than to receive" [Acts 20:35], says the Apostle.

The theologian of glory only wants to use people. The Love of God in our hearts, if we allow God to release us, creates beauty wherever we go. Lepers are called, but you have to come to the point where God has done something and you've allowed it. You've stopped trying to make a name for yourself. You've come to a point where your spiritual resources are not enough and you need everyone. Who does Martha need? It's a wonder she's even in the church, isn't it? "What we need is a greater spiritual effort - more faith." Faith isn't what you need. What you need is death.

Once again, you want more faith than everyone else, but you're going in the wrong direction again. You don't need more faith. Love your customers. If you think you can do anything, you're only half fallen and only need a little help with your project. You're going to be spiritual and moral winners. Jesus is not after you becoming the wonderful butterfly you're going to be in the spiritual realm. What's he after? Not your soul being beautiful, confident, successful. He's not after you actualizing anything. He deals in paradoxes. He dies; spiritual, physically, body and soul, and we're to die with him. Most people only want a guide, a guru, a dispenser of gnosis, knowledge that sets them a notch above everyone else. It's too late for that, friend. Death is the only thing that will enable us to realize our potential – resurrection, as a spiritual being.

Creed: I believe in the resurrection of the body. But I also believe in the communion of saints, right here. I've seen some people lose their gifts by burying them. Their gift was given to someone else.

Faith: What is your ultimate concern? Do you still think your faith needs to be made bigger, or purer? Your faith will always be directed toward what you want. He's not into you have a faith meter that goes from lukewarm to red hot. He's after lepers. How moral have you been this week?

The just are saved by faith, but the essential thing is that Christ died for us and gives us faith. Sola gratia!

Who was the leper? The younger brother or the older? Both. You were dead in trespasses, an enemy of God. We're always dead until we get baptized. You're dead if you saw yourself superior. You thought works were good, although you wouldn't even call works, works. The older brother couldn't get over imagining how bad his younger brother was. He didn't know that he was dead in sin because of his pride, and that God resisted him. The older brother lived in the heavenlies. The older brother covered himself with contention to save his life.

The devil leads to heaven and then brings down to hell; Christ brings down to hell and then leads back to heaven. God has chosen those who are not a nation. They have been spoken to commend grace because God saves no one but sinners. He instructs no one but the foolish and stupid. Your knowledge is used to save your life. You prefer wisdom to suffering and the cross. Suffering is that people are indignant because of the offence of the Gospel. He makes alive only the dead, not those who merely imagine themselves to be such, but the kind of people who are dead and admit it. Being saved without any merits or zeal of your own.

The cross is the end of merits, works, or anything that men, or religious men of this world, value. Every other religion except Christianity is about doing good to approach God. In Christianity, God reaches down to us in our total depravity.

If you're a leper today, you can get forgiven and be restored. The older son turned away from his prodigal brother and did not want him to come into the party. The older brother was mad because of what was given freely to the undeserving. If someone got some money, you'd wonder why you didn't get any because, after all, "See what I've been doing all these years..."

Think of why people get mad: There were orphans and widows and you created the ultimate crime of making a place for them and loving them. Isn't that amazing? Are you learning about that? Some people don't rejoice over the blessings of others and they prove they are seeking God not for the sake of God, but for their own sake. They love their own comfort, saving their life. They think they are doing it for their future, but they don't know which way the wind blows. You'd be better to acknowledge that you are a leper. If you want to withhold the good news from people, you can.

The older brother is proud - interested in his own comfort. He gets proud of his own purity, or loathsomeness. If they were really seeking God they would not look down on the support and salvation of others, but would find pleasure in it because they please God. God told Isaiah,

"I've been found by people who don't seek me." Some people enlist the church for their own concupiscence.

Do you believe in the communion of saints? How many of you fellowship with 'together' saints? I believe in the communion of saints, earthen vessels.

Faith isn't the essential thing, but what Jesus has done - he's forgiven you. If Jesus is lifted up, he will draw all men unto him, but not all men will enjoy the Wedding Supper of The Lamb, until they put on the wedding garment of our acceptance of his acceptance of us. Are you trying to become better?

Some people are so angry that they gnash their teeth - grind their teeth in their sleep. God has made the party un-poopable. The older brother has something going for himself and will not come in. Those who are gnashing their teeth will have to continually hear the music and noise of the feast. God loves winners and that's why he makes them losers.

Upping your faith meter makes faith a work. Faith is what you are ultimately concerned with. The number one selling thing in America is weight loss - looking beautiful, making an appearance, today's health, etc.. I'm not anti-health - I take my pills. But there comes a point when that becomes a person's God. "Going to the pool, looking for a new fool; look out kid you're going to get hit."

The one job you have for the rest of your life is DROP DEAD. God can't even begin to move until you've got leprosy - agree with God. Some of you try to cover up your leprosy, when all of a sudden a finger falls off. All you have to do is be honest with yourself for one day, but you can't because you've got leprosy. How many of you have been put outside the camp through your judgment - your leprosy? You wouldn't come to the high priest, to Mt. Zion where he lives.

All God needs from us is to drop dead. Everything else God does. I'll say it my usual way: Salvation, justification is so important that God has not entrusted one bit of it to you, not one bit. It's too important to trust to me.

Jesus is out cleansing people from leprosy - he tells them to go tell the priest. He gives us the grace to cry out. Be dead; and that is all you have to do for him. Everything else he does. Your faith is tainted with selfishness. Your faith is basically in your boring commitment to winning. It is so boring to be around people who are committed to winning. You can't really

talk to them because they are always trying to win, get an edge. They are always trying to prove they are right or find some kind of injustice to whine about. If you're trying to be a winner, you won't be around people who are useless to your purposes.

The thing we're called to do as lepers is to go and tell everyone about what we've found/

Luke 17:11-19 - the cleansing of the lepers. The place isn't important. It's on the way to Jerusalem, somewhere between Samaria and Galilee. This is an actual event - a story about losers who have been ostracized because of their affliction - their sin. You don't have to cover it up here. The lepers are double losers - they are lepers and they are not even Jews. They don't have any ordinary social life because they are ostracized.

They cry out for mercy, and Jesus tells them to go and show themselves to the priest. This was the ritual that was given for lepers. They were dead to ordinary life. Only the Syrian got healed. He was doubly ostracized from ordinary religion. The lepers, as they went, were healed. Nine of them went their own way. Nine of them were just like you and me. "Now I can be a winner because I'm socially acceptable. I've got a decent job, and God owes it to me as part of my salvation, I got a haircut and got rid of my backpack."

Jesus came to save sinners, not the righteous. Rich or poor it doesn't matter. When you're rich it's harder.

What do you owe Jesus? It depends how bad your case was. Were you starving outside the city? What did you gain from what you spent your faith on? The 10th leper sees and goes back and thanks and praises Jesus. He was a Samaritan - a twofold outcast, a double loser. Jews had no dealings with Samaritans. He's twice a dead loser. What was Jesus' reply?

Luke 17:17-19 (KJV) And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? [18] There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger. [19] And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.

The only one that came back was the double loser. (19) And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.

Jesus cleanses us lepers. Are you a leper? I can't make you a leper - I refuse. You can be one only if you like. Your previous living state was one of leprosy - sin. Now you have are entirely eternal, new creation. It sounds like the prodigal son. He finally realizes that he is dead and decided to go back - to return to some form of ordinary life, like the 9. His plan was to go back

as a servant. The father, who has been looking, sees him on the horizon and kisses him before he speaks a word. God kissed you in that his son was crucified before the foundation of the earth. When you see that God kissed you in Christ, before you were saved, while you were a sinner; and like the prodigal, you wanted to fake your salvation by being a servant; you were restored to the father through Jesus. The restoration of Christ is the death of the leper and resurrection to new life.

New life: Party, party, party! We are called to waste our goods, make a joyful noise so loud that the older brother gets mad. The party is based squarely on your death. "Let us eat and be merry for this my son was dead and is alive" is the perpetual reason for the party. Show yourself to the priest. What does the priest say? You should be bragging about your once having leprosy instead of hiding it.

Joseph's brothers, King David and the Apostle Paul didn't hide their leprosy. God's new leader was after the order of David; and Joseph's brother were so bad they certainly weren't mentioned in the Bible; and look what Saul of Tarsis was doing, killing Christians.

If you let Jesus kill you with his law; and Jesus preaches law far greater than Moses -now you only have to think it; and let him reduce you to a leper and not hide it, you'll brag about what God has done that is greater than our sin and leprosy.

When you come, you never leave anything behind, not even the worst thing, because when you see it in God's eyes all of it will appear as a glorious scar. He's turned it all around. We don't have to deny one smidge or stitch of our history. It used to be that we would brag to outdo each other in how bad we were. It didn't matter because it was much worse than that. Are you still hiding how bad you were, or are you bringing glory to God? Those who are forgiven much love much.

When you really get this right; all of your history you'll take with you as a glorious scar. I'm not ashamed of what I was. I don't have to hide it anymore, not here, in the fellowship of sinners. But the pious are so good you can't talk to them. You won't have to deny that you were a leper. The other nine went back to their normal winning ways. They denied what there were and what God did. They weren't forgiven that much, perhaps. The Samaritan goes away with his life saved. Like the prodigal son, he didn't put that life in the forgetting machine, but said, "Father, I have sinned, my sin led me to death - separation from you, and I'm not worthy to be called your son."

When you look at the cross; you can be sure that the thorns pushed into his brow are your evil thoughts, and the nails that pierced his hands are your evil works. He has to bring me down to death before he can entrust me with truth.

At Jesus' feet the leper sees himself as dead and risen - the double outcast now accepted; the leper now cleansed. He sees himself that way because like the prodigal, he hasn't hated the light. The older brother hates the light. The younger brother does not hate the law and God's Word that shines into his darkness. The light lives in you - you are the city on a hill. We can come to the light with the whole sum of our life. We bring the good, the bad and the ugly, and God creates something entirely new with his love.

The one thing to do is DROP DEAD. God doesn't have any other plan. Jesus tells his disciples to go and tell others that there is nothing left to do for he had done it all.

You might be rejected by a few people as you preach this. It's okay. It will be like the days of Noah. The people paid no attention to Noah. The sign of Noah - they were eating and drinking and doing all kinds of wild things and they wouldn't hear him. God used death to save the world. All of their plans to do this great thing or that great thing, or the next season, get a new car, etc, God destroyed with a flood. Lot's wife remembered not. She had a binge of nostalgia about the good old days in Sodom and Gomorrah. She probably had a little place of prestige in the Sodom social set. She wasn't like the rabble; twice dead.

Where do you find the Lord? Where the corpse is.

Luke 17:37 (KJV) And they answered and said unto him, Where, Lord? And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.

My favorite work is raising sheep from the dead. The living still have something to lose. They will never leave Samaria. If you get too allegorical, you'll co-opt this with your knowledge and will not see that you are the leper.

Luther - Thesis 28: The Love of God creates what is pleasing to it. The love of man comes into being through what is attractive to it. The first part [of the thesis] is clear because the love of God that lives in man loves sinners, evil persons, fools, and weaklings in order to make them righteous, good, wise, and strong. Rather than seeking its own good, the love of God flows forth and bestows good. Therefore sinners are attractive because they are loved; they are

not loved because they are attractive. For this reason the love of man avoids sinners and evil persons. Thus Christ says: "For I came not to call the righteous but sinners" [Matt. 9:13].

Do you avoid sinners? How? The love of Christ seeks them out. It is more blessed to give. To the TOG, sinners are a minus. And yet, someone might see you eating with them. Imagine if all your weird relatives came to a banquet here. When you finally receive your cleansing, you don't have to hide your past history. Not that I go around bragging about how evil I was, but it's so much worse than that. As you read the Bible, you'll know what I'm talking about.

The love of God is shed abroad in your hearts. What delivers you from distractions, worry and care, which is- importance given to certain things, and restless agitation - anxiety? God has to do something. Adam hid his guilt and stuffed it. He hid from God. He was separated from God. If I try to put on my own righteousness I'll hide from God - the God who lives in you.

1 Peter 5:7 Cast your cares upon the lord for he cares for you

Concern over the things that have no real significance in light of eternity. Courage to be (not giving yourself over to a lesser concern) caught up, grasped by what He has done in Christ.

The heathen strive after what they are going to eat, wear and most of all how they can protect their future. God deals with every one of us in death. Death, although it has no victory or sting, it is still a reality in this world. If you love the brethren, you won't even be worried about that. If you're caught up, you won't be shut up.

Isaiah 62:7 (KJV) And give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.

You can actually create beauty in your spouse.

The blood of the Lamb is what cleanses us from our leprosy. Death in scripture is leprosy.

Israel got into the desert and started worrying about things like water, meat, garlic, giants because they didn't do what Deuteronomy told them to do - remember. They forgot what happened to Egypt; what happened to Pharaoh and his army. Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world.

Those of you who are dead will be happy to know what's left to do - nothing. You can, if you like, go to a party - a celebration - God in you, to will and work of his good pleasure. God

invites the sinful to fellowship with him - they flee to him from day to day. The Word cleanses.

As you seek first the Kingdom of God this week, know this, all of your sins are forgiven for Christ's sake. How many of you get hit with, "Who does he think he is." Your sins are forgiven for Christ's sake. It doesn't matter if you believe or not. Your neighbors' sins are all forgiven, whether they believe or not, but they won't enjoy the party if they don't believe it.

In the world be legalistic; give men a full measure in everything you do, and love your neighbor. We have the same party the angels in heaven have. If you see one sinner in this church repent, you can rejoice.

The all-time hilarity - sinners are forgiven but not because they are good, or have good goals. God likes to be with dead sheep so he can raise them. Those who wait upon the Lord are like eagles, mounting up on wings.

This is where the heavenly city is, and it is a foretaste. You don't have to hide your sins from the light anymore.

1 John 1:9 9If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

How can anyone be serious at a party? The only one would be the older brother. "Who killed that calf? What's all this noise? What's all this waste?" Your brother is back and your father is throwing a party for him. "That creep, that sinner, that leper who brought reproach on the father is back?"

It will always be, "O Happy Fault." God could have prevented you from sinning. How many of you know that you've reaped - paid double?

There is a difference between the sins you commit every day, and deciding to live unto yourself and do what you want - sin if you want - rebellion. How can you walk in the light and have sins if you're a Christian? There are two of you. Don't defend your sins, confess them, and confess that you are a leper - twice a loser.

Why did the lepers go out and risk everything? They had nothing to lose. Ye are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God.

Don ended reminding us that we are now free to be about our vocations – our neighbors.

SOURCE

Sermon Notes - Don O'Connor - 3/13/05

(The message with Jennifer's spin on it.)