

Sunday School Notes 13 Feb 2022: Prisoners will be set free! (Luke 17:11-19)

What was Jesus talking about when he said this? Jesus didn't unlock the doors of any prison.

No, just as the 'poor' he talked about were not those without money, so the captives were not actual prisoners. These words are used as a picture of people whose lives are spoilt because they are 'imprisoned' by illness or by sadness or perhaps even by drugs or crime.

In Jesus' day, lepers really knew what it was like to be 'imprisoned'.

If someone got a disease like leprosy which was highly infectious, the laws didn't demand 'lockdown' but 'lockout'. To prevent the disease spreading these people had to leave their homes and their families and to live outside of the cities and villages on their own or with others who had this disease. If they saw people coming near to them, they had to ring a bell and shout out "Unclean! Unclean!" warning people not to come any closer. Imagine how terrible that must have been: Not only were they not allowed to be hugged or to touch anyone, but they also lost all the comforts of home. And this could go on for years and years. They would get more and more ugly with the sores on their bodies and they would probably also become more and more dirty and unkempt as they didn't have the comforts of home.

We can understand this kind of treatment if we think about those who got Covid, although today the rules are not so tough. When people get Covid, they are able to stay in their own rooms or homes with their TVs, their books and their own food for the few days they are sick. It is hard because they can't hug anyone or see their friends and family. But it is a whole lot easier than it was for lepers.

Yet Jesus loved the lepers and cared about them.

One day a group of ten lepers shouted out to him, begging him to help them. On other occasions Jesus had healed lepers by touch, but this time he simply told them to go to the priests who acted as the health authorities and ask the priests to check them over as they were cured. Once the priest had OK'd them, they would be able to go back home.

They trusted Jesus' word even though there was no sign of healing yet. They hurried off towards the temple. And as they went, the sores healed and the men became healthy again. It sounds like a 'happily ever after story' doesn't it. They were freed from the prison of illness and isolation.

Sadly in their excitement, only one of them stopped to thank Jesus. The others just rushed on their way. I am sure they were freed physically of leprosy, but only this one leper became doubly free. He gained his freedom from sin too as he recognized Jesus's power and bowed before his greatness. I am sure he became a follower of Jesus – free from the power of sin forever!

Do we know that thankfulness and that freedom?