



TO TELL  
THE STORY



LUKE ITALIANO

## Not Good Enough

Not good enough.

Ben-Hadad was never good enough. Not for his father who'd always demanded, "Better! Better! Don't be such a clutz!" Not for his mother who said, "You know why you won't get married? You're always stumbling over stuff!" Not for the owner of the shop he worked at. "Do it again, or you won't get paid. And stop running into things!"

So when Ben-Hadad's foot stopped hurting, he didn't think anything of it. He figured his body had finally learned to ignore all the pain he sent it through.

And then the sores appeared on his skin. And his eyesight got bad in his left eye.

And then everyone could see he wasn't good enough. It showed up on his skin, and there was no way he could hide it. Ben-Hadad had leprosy.

He wasn't good enough to stay in town. How could he? If he stayed, he'd get everyone sick. He wasn't good enough for a good-bye embrace. How could he be? He'd only get his family sick. So he went to the edge of town... to stay with the other lepers. The other people who weren't good enough.

He stayed on the fringe of society.

Ben-Hadad had thought finally, finally he'd be accepted because everyone here had leprosy; they were all in the same boat. And they did accept him. To a point. You see, these other lepers were Israelites. They were the people of God! And Ben-Hadad? He was just a Samaritan. A half-breed. Someone who wasn't even good enough for their God.

And so, even though they all had leprosy, they all knew that Ben-Hadad wasn't really one of them.

They all waited, without hope that someday they might go to the temple and be declared healed. And unless a priest inspected them and declared them clean, they would die... exiles.

The lepers were mostly alone, but even they had heard the stories – mostly from before they got leprosy – of this wandering healer, of this Jesus. Ben-Hadad had heard of him. He'd gone through a village – what was it? Sychar! – not too long before, and the entire village had proclaimed that Jesus was the Messiah, the one the Jews were waiting for.

But Ben-Hadad didn't have any hope. How could he? Jesus was a Jew. Ben-Hadad couldn't be good enough for Jesus.

And then they heard Jesus was passing by. And so the whole group cried out, "Jesus! Master! Have pity on us!" Even Ben-Hadad cried out, even though he knew he wasn't good enough.

And when Jesus saw them he said, “Go. Show yourselves to the priests.”

And you can bet all ten of them ran. They sprinted. They galloped!

As they ran, Ben-Hadad suddenly shouted, “Ouch!” He looked down. He'd stepped on a rock.

Wait.

He had felt himself step on the rock. His nerves were working!

Soon they were all smiling, and they were all pinching themselves! Not just to see if it was true, but to see if – they were healed! The splotches on their skin – gone! Ben-Hadad's eyes started working again! And they laughed! And they sang! And they ran to the temple to do what Jesus had told them to do.

But Ben-Hadad? He didn't. He turned around and went back to Jesus. You see, when you're not good enough, and someone gives you something that you would never expect, the only way you can respond is in loud shouts of thanksgiving!

And that is what Ben-Hadad did! He ran back to Jesus. Praising God in a loud voice, he threw himself at Jesus's feet and thanked him.

And Jesus, he shook his head. “Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Was no one found to return and give thanks to God except for this foreigner?” And then Jesus reached down and touched Ben-Hadad on the shoulder. “Rise and go. Your faith has made you well.”

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Now, brothers and sisters, today is Thanksgiving day! We're all told to be thankful!

But we are never truly thankful if we think we deserve what we get.

Like Ben-Hadad, we are not good enough for God's blessings. And yet he blesses us anyway.

And that is a miracle.

That is why we have much to give thanksgiving for today.

And this story is true.

Luke 17:11-19

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