

SIMON THE LEPER ... who remembered to be grateful
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(MARK 14: 3)

At the end of his Gospel John wrote, " And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books which should be written." Thus in one glorious burst of exuberant eloquence, the be-loved disciple endeavored to express the unlimited scope of the ministry of his Lord. Christians of all acres have wondered about those unrecorded events, and possibly one of the un-written stories might concern Simon the leper.

His Grief

Leprosy! Dread word! The foul scourge had ruined the life of another Bethany citizen. Poor Simon had been driven from home and family, and had gone into the wilderness. Somewhere outside his town he erected a little shack, where he mourned his misfortune. He was an outcast! He was unclean! He was dead while he still lived. He was known to all the people of Bethany, and among, these were Lazarus and his two sisters. Did this family tell Christ about the unfortunate leper? Did the Master listen and go forth in search of the outcast? On the other hand, was Simon the man of whom the Gospels declare, "And behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean"? Perhaps our questions will remain unanswered until we reach heaven, and then maybe Simon himself will tell us his story.

His Gratitude

The impossible had happened. The Healer had performed the miracle. Simon was no longer a leper. Yet, to distinguish him from the other Simons of Bethany, the people still called him " Simon the leper." They shared his great joy, and were never tired of hearing, his testimony. But all the while deep gratitude filled the heart of this earnest disciple. He could never forget that, apart from the mercy of Christ, he would still have been living in the land of shadows outside the city gate. Yes, he would always remember Jesus of Nazareth. And every time the Master visited that other home up the street, Simon wistfully watched and hoped that some day the Saviour would come to his house. Probably Simon's home was a little shabby, for had he not been an outcast? And at last Simon had the courage to mention the matter to Martha and her sister, and his delight was boundless when they promised to arrange the visit. " Lord," they said later, " You remember Simon, the leper whom you cleansed? Well, he wants us all to go to his house to supper, and we promised to take you. Lord, will that be all right? You don't mind, Master, do you?" And Jesus smiled and answered, " Yes, I remember Simon, and I shall be very pleased to visit his home."

His Gladness

Simon was thrilled. The Master was coming down the street, and everything was in readiness for the party. Martha and her sister had helped, and this would be the greatest night of Simon's life. " Oh," he murmured, " if I can only show Him that I'm grateful! If I can only prove to Him that I love Him dearly ; that I would gladly give to Him all that I possess. . . . Come in, Master, welcome to my home. I am so pleased you have come." The Lord was smiling. His

SIMON THE LEPER ... who remembered to be grateful eyes were pools of delight. "Well, Simon, this is wonderful. Martha told me that you had invited us to supper, and Simon, how shall I ever be able to thank you?" "Lord, how shall you thank me? Oh, Master, it is I who will never be able to thank you. I was a leper until you came Ah, Simon, that was a wonderful day, wasn't it? Now I wonder whose delight was the greater, yours or mine?" The simple table was 'lavishly spread-Martha had seen to that ; but Simon was like a schoolboy at his first party. Heaven itself could not have provided greater joys than he knew that night. And when they gathered later in the sitting-room, to listen again to the words of the Lord Jesus, Simon re-lived the day when his miracle had been performed. He watched as Mary broke her box of very precious ointment ; he heard again the words of her lord. Of course he had no box of costly perfume, he only possessed a heart filled with praise ; a soul filled with gratitude ; and a simple hoi-ne filled with a great welcome for the Master. And when Jesus looked across at His delighted host, He smiled again, for He knew that Simon the leper and Mary of Bethany were twin souls. They had good memories. They remembered to be grateful. Have we?

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