



Black PRAISE Sermon outline

A Place to Be Made Whole

Luke 17:11-19

Theological Theme:

When we treat stigmatized people like Jesus did, the church and God's word will become a safe place where they can be whole.

Homiletical Theme:

Treat people living with HIV (PHAs) like Jesus would have done! Make this a place for all to be whole!

Introduction: Not in my backyard (NIMBY) Christians

- A. Today's society welcomes some people while alienating others
 - i. Groups of people who are scorned include those who were incarcerated and needing reintegration, people who struggle with alcohol and drug use, people who are homeless
 - ii. Unfortunately, Christians have adopted these attitudes to excluded groups
 - iii. In Jesus's time, people living with leprosy (or PLL) were shunned and stigmatized, and there was no real treatment for leprosy. Today, people living with HIV (or PLHIV) are shunned and stigmatized even though there are effective treatments for HIV (but no cure).
- B. People living with HIV (PHAs) fall into this category of excluded people
 - i. Stigma exists among all communities affected by HIV
Quote by Charles & Cindy from Southern Africa:
Cindy: And the stigma, you don't want the pastor to know that, in case the pastor is a pastor but he is also a human being. He might [ask] you . . . why you've got this disease . . . So also not wanting anyone to know . . . (Quotes provided by Orville Antonio Browne' dissertation: Assessing Healthcare Providers' Responses to African and Caribbean Families Living with HIV, 2008.)
 - ii. Christians from African, Caribbean and Black communities testify to their exclusion in communities once they disclose their diagnosis (quote or story)
Quote by Charles & Cindy from Southern Africa: **Charles: Yeah, it would, I mean like let's say you're here for the first time and you're a Christian and they just told you that you're positive. I'm sure if there is someone that can pray with you right there and then it would make a big difference.**
Cindy: Yeah [while husband is speaking]. Not even a Christian like a Rabbi, the Muslim they've got their . . .
Researcher: Imams
Cindy: Exactly!
Charles: That would make you feel less . . . like God has cast you away . . . Cindy: Once you leave this building, you're all on your own.
 - iii. Once they've revealed their diagnosis their family members and friends are also affected by stigma (quote or story)

C. Today we will learn important lessons about how Jesus treated the PHA's of his day

1. Locate yourself with PHAs (Luke 17:11-12)

A. Jesus on People Living with Leprosy's (PLL) (in between Galilee and Samaria)

- i. Although he was sent to the lost in Israel, he made time to engage outsiders
- ii. He was accused of associating with those society felt were "sinners" (Matthew 9:10, 11)

B. Identified with the ostracized living on the margins

- i. PLLs kept their distance even from Jesus

PHAs also keep their distance by not disclosing their diagnosis (quote or story): **Elaine from the horn of Africa: Yeah, too many people they are infected, so . . .**

before . . . just everybody die[s], they have to at least teach them . . . Even me, until now, until I am here I was never [taught]. I remember my cousin when she passed we were there. We didn't even eat. My mom she told us don't eat. Don't even take some clothes from the house. We gone.

Researcher: So your cousin had HIV.

Elaine: Oh, yeah! She had HIV, she was died in 1988.

- ii. They listen to the statements in the pews and from the pulpit and fear being misjudged as a "sinner"

C. In-betweenness experienced by PHAs is similar (quotes)

- I. PLLs found support from among each other despite the fact that they were from different cultural backgrounds
- II. PHAs are not fully members for they seek support from outside the church for the most important hurt in their life
- III. PHAs feel they belong with other who share their diagnosis, but less with church members

2. Look out for their well-being (Luke 17: 13-14)

A. Jesus sent PLLs to the priests (public health officials of the day)

- i. Jesus wanted to make sure PLLs were able to go back to their family members and friends
- ii. The priests were tasked with looking out for the wellbeing of people, so Jesus used the institution (quarantine) set up for this purpose in those days
- iii. PHA's are not comfortable talking to their priests about their diagnosis
- iv. **Elaine: I was crying in the chapel. I was crying there.**

Researcher: You haven't even told your priest or anything like that.

Elaine: No.

Researcher: So nobody in church knows.

Elaine: No. You know if I tell the priest. Because you know it's not like that.

Researcher: You don't have to confess?

Elaine: No. You just have to confess what you done that's it. When you take this uh, what you call . . .

Researcher: the host, the mass.

Elaine: When you take the mass you tell them what you done.

Researcher: So how is your faith now in God?

Elaine: Oh, . . . He is the One who keeps me . . .

Researcher: So you haven't lost your faith but you struggled with it for a while.

Elaine: Still.

B. On the way to the priest, God cleansed the PLL by His power

- i. The 10 PLLs were cleansed as they exercised their faith in Jesus' word

- ii. The word cleansed here refer to their skin being cleared
 - iii. Medication is available to treat HIV, but the inner spiritual scars caused by stigma needs inner healing
 - iv. Medical treatment is a gift from God that should be made available to all PHAs, and used by all PHAs God's power provides inner healing
- C. It was the PLLs' interest to be integrated as members of the family of God
- i. Jesus realized that PLLs need a home, a place where they belong
 PLHIV don't even belong at home:
Elaine: Yeah! I don't want to. From my own family I have hide it because . . . just [based on] what came from their mouths—the word. How you think . . . for outside person you know?
Researcher: A stranger . . . So you have no plans of telling anybody.
Elaine: No! No! . . .
Researcher: And your husband feels the same way?
Elaine: The same way.
 - ii. As Jesus suffered when he came to his own and his own rejected him, so PHAs feel rejected when seeking to belong in church:
 - iii. **Charles: There were other things like when we're here we're like in a new church [We] still are getting used to the life and things. So I guess maybe we didn't have that relationship with the pastor to be able to go to him and say, Look, this is what we're going through. But I believe that maybe if we had done that I think it would've helped us, you know what I'm saying. But sometimes when you're going through grief, you just like . . .**
 - iv. By belonging they are healed, the next word used in the story

3. Loved stigmatized people into the kingdom (Luke 17: 15-19)

- A. The Samaritan had nowhere to go, but he obeyed by faith
 - i. The Samaritan PLL went to get tested even if it didn't make any sense for the priest wouldn't test him anyway
 - ii. He was stigmatized because of his race and his diagnosis
 Quote from Charles: **I'd like people to know is that we're so ignorant; it's amazing . . . The same prejudices I used to have before I knew about this. It comes up in everyday conversations when you're talking to people . . . For example, here a friend of ours is also from Africa where we come from. And she was talking about someone that was HIV-positive and she says. She was just speaking, she doesn't know anything about us and it's like she was too promiscuous, that is why she got HIV . . . And you just look at her and saying, my Lord, you don't know what promiscuous mean[s]. The thing is like it's what [is] out there, despite the education that many people still think it's homosexual and it's junkies and it's the prostitutes . . . things like that. And I guess, cause we . . . were also prejudiced like that. So when you suddenly find yourself in that situation, you don't want to talk to nobody because . . . it's how everyone thinks. I think maybe we still need more education**
 - iii. **. . . There are some White people here they think it's a Black thing, so I don't know. I think that's what I'll say mostly.**
 - iv. However, Jesus valued Samaritans whether they were sick or well.
 - v. Story of the good Samaritan or the Samaritan woman at the well are examples of this
 - vi. PHAs suffering is similar (quote), and so they and their families need ethnically and faith-specific care (a place to belong)

vii. Cindy added: **Yeah, I want people to stop . . . the stigma that if you're HIV positive you're . . . or that's the worse. That [is] why people are so ashamed of it. And also the mentality that if you have it you're going to die. That's the thing out there and that's why it's so scary to people. I want people to learn more about that.**

B. Returned to Jesus praising God after being healed

i. This PLL had good news to share and needed a place to share it (he found the place in the presence of Jesus and his followers)

ii. So PHAs need a place where they can testify to the good news of Jesus's grace

a. How the Lord guided them to be tested!

b. How he released them from depression about their death sentence to hope for a long and fulfilling life! **[Elaine: So one day maybe just I'm hoping also one day there will . . . [be] Researcher: A cure, a cure!**

Elaine: Long time ago, how many people to die even after . . . they are gone already, but after 1999 they found at least . . . the best medicine you know. At least to keeping the people longer. So you never know in the future what will be . . .

Nobody knows only God . . . For now is like she is like normal kid. She's OK. She's active. She's doing whatever . . . [a normal child] is doing? So I am not worried. Check up for [or after] check up she's coming, on coming on.]

c. How the Lord, through the medication, brought down their viral load and boosted their immune system

d. How they are able to have children who are HIV negative!

e. The many miracles they've experience by the loving mercy and grace of God in their lives!

f. How they've received culturally specific care at AIDS service organizations!

g. Like the Samaritan Living with Leprosy found a place to praise the Lord, PHAs are looking for such a place **[Cindy: Yeah, and mostly like for this baby. He signifies our future.**

We're a young family. I mean, before this HIV thing we're planning on having children, and raising them, and getting our careers, and all of that. So now we're continuing with that. This HIV thing, I don't want it to stop our lives. So we'll have a family. I don't know about another child, maybe. But we're going to adopt my niece, we have Mark, this one is coming. Maybe we'll have another one and [laughter]. Researcher: You're blushing there but you're smiling.

Charles: You know I like to listen to her dream . . . 'cause I believe that a person with no dreams is dangerous . . . It's good to dream, to be flexible now and then. It could happen it could happen . . . cause God willing, God willing!]

h. A place without judgement where they can share their pain and their joys: their full story

i. A place where no one questions how they were infected, but are more concerned about their healing and their soul's salvation

C. Welcomed and saved or made whole at the feet of Jesus

i. The Samaritan found that place at the feet of Jesus and in the presence of his disciples

ii. They welcomed his praise and affirmed his gratitude for the way God was working in his life

iii. It was in this context that Jesus declared him as whole

a. The word Jesus used was saved

b. The Samaritan man found salvation as he was welcomed and accepted as a child of God

c. The place of belonging became a place to be made whole

4. Conclusion/Appeal

This congregation needs to be such a place: When you treat stigmatized people like Jesus did, you'll become a safe place where they can be whole.