

PP Summer in Galilee: Jesus, the God Who makes us clean
Part 8, Luke 5:12-16

7/13-14/2019

Matthew in his gospel, gives us a detail that is very interesting about the event we are seeing:

PP “When He came down from the mountain, great crowds followed Him. And behold, a leper came to Him” Matthew 8:1-2

He had just preached the *Sermon on the Mount*, and **‘there came a man full of leprosy’ 5:12**

Now when we consider leprosy, we think of it as an ancient disease, right?

Maybe you recall the Valley of the Lepers scene in Ben Hur with Charlton Heston overacting?

The truth is, as recent as 2017, there were 211,009 new leprosy cases registered globally according to official figures from WHO gathered from 159 countries

The Greek word here for **‘leprosy’** means *scaliness*, but it covered a wide variety of skin diseases from rashes, infections to the most serious bacterial leprosy

In fact, all of Leviticus 13 was dedicated to its identification and treatment for the protection of the community of Israel

Leprosy, called Hansen’s disease, can be contagious, spreading through droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes

It usually starts with a white, pinkish patch of skin, typically on the nose, ear, forehead or face As it spreads, the eyebrows and eyelashes disappear, then spongy tumorous growths begin on the face and then becomes systemic and spreads around the body

It progresses and attacks the larynx so that the voice becomes hoarse grating

It invades bone marrow preventing blood supply, so the nose, toes and fingers begin to be reabsorbed into the body

Eyes go blind, and teeth fall out, but terribly, it gets even worse

Leprosy is so destructive because it attacks the nerve pathways so that neural impulses cannot be transmitted to the brain

In short, lepers lose the ability to feel pain and injury

A small pebble gets in the sandal unaware, opens the skin and infection worsens into gangrene

Lepers live together and daily check over each others’ bodies for unfelt cuts and wounds

Luke was a doctor and he wrote in verse 12 that this man was **‘full of leprosy’ (5:12)**

He had advanced leprosy: tumors, absorbed extremities, oozing sores, hair loss, terrible stench So it’s not difficult to feel his desperation as **‘he fell on his face and begged Him’**

But physical suffering was only one part of a leper’s misery for there was a social suffering too

If you contracted leprosy, you were not allowed into any walled city or town

You couldn’t come into the temple, into a synagogue, your only companions were other lepers and those who would help you

You’d be separated from your family for the rest of your life, for the ancient world knew no cure

You would have to cry out **‘Unclean! Unclean!’** when people neared

Judaism commanded that a leper could not approach nearer than 140 feet to a person downwind, and 6 feet to a person upwind

In fact, some Rabbis forbade people to even greet or wave to a leper

In fact, an ancient rabbinical writing has a rabbi boasting that he threw stones to drive them away

Of all people, rabbis should have been the most merciful, but they withheld it more than any

That this leperous man came into **‘one of the cities’** and came to the feet of Jesus is shocking

And it leads us to some deeper truths that impact us today as well as show us the glory of Jesus!

PP 1-The deeper priority of Jesus

The Apostle Paul taught Timothy that Jesus had a priority He held on to when He came

PP *“The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.” 1 Timothy 1:15*

He was singularly focused on saving sinners, making them right with God, and this is where we see an incredible spiritual truth in leprosy

And we can see it in a story I’ll share with you, one that so vivid that it snaps our eyes open to the deeper picture seen in this leper’s life

The Christian English journalist Malcolm Muggeridge, while in India on a hot evening went to a river to swim, and across the river he saw a woman who had come to have her bath. He impulsively felt the temptation of the moment and as he began to think about it, he began to swim furiously toward the woman, trying to outdistance his conscience. His mind fed him the fantasy that stolen waters would be secret and sweet. As he got two or three feet away from her, she turned around and all the temptation was instantly gone from him, replaced by a horror. He wrote of that moment, *“She was a leper....This creature grinned at me, showing a toothless mask.”* Angrily, he muttered under his breath, *“What a dirty, lecherous woman!”* But at that moment, this shocking truth dawned on him—it wasn’t the woman who was lecherous; it was his own heart.

The physical leper before him mirrored the spiritual leper in him...a sinner in need of cleansing! Friends, each miracle Christ performed was a portrayal of the gracious work of God in this world When Jesus miraculously fed the 5,000 men, and the next day the people were looking for Him,

He said, **PP** *“Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves.” John 6:26*

We say *You can’t see the forest for the trees*, but Jesus said *They can’t see the sign for the miracle*

The miracles of Jesus point to deeper truths

When we encounter leprosy in the bible, we are seeing a perfect metaphor of our own hearts

Leprosy deadens the ability to feel pain, but sin deadens the conscience to feel guilt

Just as lepers emit a foul and unpleasant odor, sin brings a stench to the nostrils of God

And like leprosy, sin spreads, and defiles us and separates us from God and others

We all have been or are spiritual lepers, born into this deadly condition

PP D. Martyn Lloyd Jones, that great Philadelphian preacher wrote that *“until you realize that your trouble is that you yourself are wrong, and that your whole nature is wrong, until you realize that, you will never have need of a Savior.”*

Disease, earthquakes, death and theft all have their origin in that terrible moment when Adam and Eve disobeyed God in the garden of Eden, seeking their way above His way

An alien presence called sin slammed itself firmly into every inch of creation, distorting and perverting all of God’s work in this world, binding up every human heart into disobedience and rebellion

The price of this rebellion is the wrath of God and eternal punishment and it is save us from that punishment that Jesus came into this world to die

He is the only antidote to the leprosy of our souls

That truth brought this desperate leper to the feet of Jesus for healing, but what would He do?

PP 2-The merciful heart of Jesus

Is that true in us as well, who have been shown such great mercy?

Can't you almost hear the raspy words of the leper: ***"If you will, you can make me clean."***

Are you amazed or appalled that this man would come to Jesus with this pleading?

What faith in this leper, but incomplete faith!

Jesus, I know you can heal me from this loathsome death sentence, but are you willing?

Do you see me the way everyone else does, as a repulsive object of horror?

Jesus always demonstrated the good news of the gospel through the miracles He did

He had just come down the mountain from giving the greatest sermon ever preached

And that leper, standing far off, had heard it I'm sure

And here are two things he would have heard from Jesus in that sermon

PP *"Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you."* Matthew 7:1-2

PP And *"Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?"* Matthew 6:26

And all of sudden his faith was united with hope and he acted on it and Jesus responded:

"And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, "I will; be clean." And immediately the leprosy left him." Luke 5:13

Friends, we must feel the shockwave of those watching

It is like accidentally stabbing yourself with a syringe used to draw blood from an AIDS patient

Nobody touched a leper, and if you accidentally did, not only might you contract it, you were spiritually defiled by the laws of the Jewish people

Jesus ***'stretched out His hand and touched him'!***

Leprosy takes time to advance, 10-20 years to progress to death

Can you imagine no one lovingly touching you for 10-20 years?

I want to encourage you to look closely at what moved Jesus to heal this man

One faith healer expressed his twisted doctrine this way:

PP *"How can God choose not to heal someone when He already purchased their healing? Was His blood enough for all sin, or just certain sins? Were the stripes He bore only for certain illnesses?...There are no deficiencies on His end – neither the covenant is deficient, nor His compassion or promises. All lack is on our end of the equation."*
Bill Johnson

Those who believe this take scripture out of context: **PP *"He himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By His wounds you have been healed."*** 1 Peter 2:24

This verse refers to spiritual healing-forgiveness and peace-not physical healing

Johnson went on and said, **PP *"Take risk – pray for people (NOT – "if it be thy will" kind of prayer. In the thousands of people I've seen healed, I've never seen anyone healed from that kind of prayer.)"*** Bill Johnson

Yet as we return to the leper of **Luke 5**, what does the leper say?: ***"Lord, if you will, you can make me clean."*** 12

And the answer of our Lord was, ***'I will, be clean'*** 5:13

Why did Jesus heal this man?

Because the man had great faith, or asked in just the right way?

Mark gives us the answer in his account of this story: ***“Moved with pity, He stretched out His hand and touched him and said to him, ‘I will; be clean.’”*** Mark 1:41

This phrase ***‘moved with pity’*** is one word in the Greek, and it is often translated, *‘compassion’*. It means to feel in the deepest part of your being, and be moved to action

Jesus saw this poor leper kneeling before Him, begging, and He was moved emotionally and healed him, not because He was amazed at this man’s faith, but because this man was suffering so terribly

PP 3-The incredible power of Jesus

Jesus commanded the man’s ravaged body to be clean, ***‘And immediately the leprosy left him.’*** It didn’t happen slowly with hollywood drama, like Deadpool or Wolverine with their healing factor in the Marvel Universe

But instantly, the man was clean, whole, skin healthy, able to feel the breeze on his face. Only two people in all of biblical history before this were healed of leprosy: Naaman and Miriam. Yet look again at what Jesus said, ***“I will; be clean.”*** ***And immediately the leprosy left him.***

And He charged him to tell no one, but “go and show yourself to the priest, and make an offering for your cleansing, as Moses commanded, for a proof to them.” 5:13-14

‘Clean’ and ***‘cleansing’*** were words that move us back to the religious system of the Jews. You see, Judaism was a system of commands that they believed made a person ‘clean’, and being

clean meant to be righteous, undefiled, pure, holy in the eyes of God

To be unclean was to be unrighteous, and under God’s wrath, and a leper to the Jews was considered the 2nd greatest unclean person, just after a dead body

That level of uncleanness they believed, earned a person the wrath and judgment of God

But remember, all His miracles pointed to deeper spiritual truths

‘clean’ is what the blood of Jesus makes the believing sinner, all the way to the depth of the soul. There is no disease of the body that Jesus cannot overcome if He wills

And there is no sin He cannot cleanse you from, even the worst, most unimaginable terrible act you committed even 33 years ago

Immediately Jesus puts this former leper on a mission, giving Him purpose, to testify, not to the people, but to the priests

Mark tells us that this man disobeyed Jesus and told everyone and we think, who could blame him, after all aren’t we supposed to testify of Jesus wherever we go?

Yet this man’s disobedience interfered with the mission of Jesus, which was to preach throughout all of Galilee, all 240 towns there

Now, Luke tells us, ***“even more the report about Him went abroad, and great crowds gathered to hear Him and to be healed of their infirmities. But He would withdraw to desolate places and pray.”*** Luke 5:15-16

Instead, Jesus told him ***“go and show yourself to the priest, and make an offering for your cleansing, as Moses commanded, for a proof to them.”*** 5:14

The priests needed to see evidence that would prove that God had indeed come in the flesh. No person with Hansen’s disease had ever been healed, but for Naaman and Miriam

This was to awaken the priests, who were the health officials of the Jews, to convict them, to indict them for their unbelief

Let them know, the Great High Priest of God has come, the One Who will make men right with God by offering Himself as the sacrifice for the leprosy of their souls

Friends, what remains is for me to ask if you have realized realized that you are a spiritual leper? Have you then fallen at His feet for mercy?

Can you trust that His heart will move with mercy toward you, and He will take away your sin and make you clean?

He will forgive you, that is why He died on the cross

He died to make us clean, right with God, so we can receive His favor and not His wrath

Come to Him, fall before Him, and ask for forgiveness, and be healed and have eternal life!

Pray