



The Gospel According to Luke Wk. 22 "A Leper's Last-Ditch Effort" By Pastor Jody May

Luke 5:12-16

Jesus Cleanses a Leper

¹² While he was in one of the cities, there came a man full of leprosy. And when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and begged him, "Lord, if you will, you can make me clean." ¹³ And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, "I will; be clean." And immediately the leprosy left him. ¹⁴ 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." ¹⁵ But now even more the report about him went abroad, and great crowds gathered to hear him and to be healed of their infirmities. ¹⁶ But he would withdraw to desolate places and pray.

HEART or CONFLICT & CONVICTON

HEAD or CONFIDENCE:

HANDS or CONDUCT:

Last week we looked at and discussed what does the path of discipleship look like, what are those first few steps that Peter took because it will probably look like that for all of us.

1st We all should be seeking to take in the words of Jesus.

2nd We should be Obeying Him: "But at Your Word".

3rd We should be humbled by His Holiness and mortified by our sin. - *Regeneration*

4th We should treasure Him above all, leave the world behind, and follow Him.

That looks different for all of us but in the process of becoming a disciple you should at least in some measure have encountered those phases. Luke though also wants us to know that doesn't only deal with those that will be working directly under Him, don't forget His words from his first sermon in His hometown in **Luke 4: ¹⁸"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed,¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."** - (As quoted from Is. 61) Jesus has come to save those that would not have a chance throughout the current theological world of that day. Remember the Pharisees had a choke hold in the teaching in the synagogues throughout Israel teaching people to pursue personal holiness, but the flip side of that coin is if you were poor, diseased, outcast, it was most likely assumed to be a reflection of your spiritual condition and therefore it may be deserved. **PRAY & READ THE TEXT...**



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Luke shares with us now the story of Jesus and His encounter with a man that was at the lowest of lows in that society at that time. Luke describes him like this:

"¹² While he was in one of the cities, there came a man full of leprosy."

Leprosy in those days was not only a death sentence but it was the promise that you would be disfigured, thrown away like refuse and kept away from those you know and love. I am going to describe the disease in detail some here, and I warn you for younger more delicate ears in here it can be scary. 2 things I warn you parents of younger children: 1st don't look up the pictures of the disease on-line and show your kids for entertainment purposes only. 2nd we do need to understand that in Jesus' day this was common; children saw it and even suffered from it, it was a part of their life, so this story is meant for all ages.

Leprosy now goes by the name of Hansen's disease properly diagnosed in 1873 and then in 1940 the first cure was produced. This disease is caused by a bacterium that destroys the nerve endings of the host. Over time one cannot feel pain anymore in the extremities while at the same time the bacteria are slowly destroying the internal organs and causing blindness. Disfigurement happens from different ways that the disease attacks the body. One sign is that tumors develop on the face and head that looks like cauliflower giving another name to the disease called Lion's disease for it made people seem as if they were wearing a Lion's mane. Another sign because of the loss of feeling in the extremities people would offer suffer infections on their body because they could not feel damage to the tissue resulting in eventual loss of the area. The eyes would go white and sag, nose and teeth would fall out, need I go on?

As I said a cure was produced and now this disease can be cured in no less than two months BUT obviously, we can't reverse the effects of the damage that it causes. By God's Grace the disease is mostly under control with about 180,000 people affected worldwide every year currently being the poorer, hotter, and more remote the country the greater number of cases are reported. You should know you can't catch it by a one-time touch, but it takes a long period of breathing in the bacteria to develop the disease. Interesting to note between 100-200 cases are reported every year in the US and one of the main carriers is the Armadillo. Last fun fact it has been around for thousands of years and thanks to Egyptian mummification processes researchers discovered from ancient cadavers that the disease most likely developed first in that region. To sum it up is has been a devastating disease for multiple millennia.



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Lastly, you also need to be aware that this disease, back in that day and time, was viewed as a judgment passed down by God. In the scriptures you can actually find that with a few cases as with Naaman the Syrian general, King Uzziah, Azariah the chief priest, Miriam and Aaron; all had gotten this disease as a result of displeasing God. That all meant that along with it being a horrible disease that people had no idea how it could be passed down and **therefore it was viewed as a possible punishment sent directly from God**, these people were excommunicated from any civilized, protected, corporate life. They were left to live in what they called leper colonies, where you were dependent upon food from outside sources because you could not be in civilization to work. This also meant that you could not make it to temple nor could you see the local Levitical priest because there was no point, you were now permanently unclean. Basically, you were already living in hell, condemned and shunned. **You would die with the knowledge you could not offer sacrifice for your sin, Salvation was out of reach.**

Just in case you think that it couldn't get any worse, if you even tried to get into town you would be chased off with stones, if you did not leave you would be killed. If you had to walk near someone with the disease you had to yell out "Unclean" so people would stay away from you. Such a nasty disease that was met with nasty treatment. You see we need to understand all of this because this treatment really did not go away in the middle east. **There is something awful but real that when people look at other people down on their luck, when you believe it is because of sin, you feel better about yourself.** In fact, it makes you not want to help that person. You don't believe me?

One of the lowest points in church history in the last century is when the church viewed AIDS as judgment for homosexuals and instead of loving people with a death sentence, we pointed fingers and said you deserve this. **It is very easy to get caught up in thinking that your works makes your life better doesn't it?** The truth is family, we live in a fallen world where disease is a judgment, but it was given after the fall in Genesis for all of mankind; because none are without sin. Let's be reminded today family that when we see people in need of help, and they may look like the devil's very own **they are still made in the image of God**. Therefore, they are worthy of the treatment that shows a **GRACIOUS JESUS** for we are His image. Jesus came full of Grace and Truth and it is not time yet to live out a message of judgment church.

You see here is one area where the Leprous man has it better than us, HE KNOWS HE NEEDS JESUS! You and I have no clue until the uncleanness of our heart crashes in on us. In chapter 5 Luke is giving us examples of how people encounter Christ.



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- Last week it was Peter, didn't have a clue about his need for Jesus until Jesus acted on his behalf first.
- This week, it took physical deformation and loneliness to get this man desperate enough for Jesus.
- Next week you will see a guy that couldn't even walk to Jesus but had to have friends that had faith in Jesus first to get him there.
- In all of that you will see Pharisees that had no clue and did not want Him. - The ones that lived the purest **were the ones guilty of the unforgiveable sin, the rejection of the Messiah.** The cry of Luke in this text is please repent and live not by man-made righteousness for it will send you right to hell.

Who are you in all of this? Maybe today you are suffering because of disease, physical pain, addiction, chronic mental illness, could it be a blessing in disguise because without it you wouldn't know you needed Jesus?

Let us today learn from this story of Jesus and discover that not only does Jesus want to heal the lowest of lows, but let us learn from the leper how it is we should approach Jesus for help.

1. How to approach Jesus - With **FULL HUMILITY.**

And when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and begged him, "Lord, if you will, you can make me clean."

First this poor man broke the law! This is why we are calling this sermon **HIS LAST DITCH EFFORT.** He knew that approaching a clean man, a RABBI, without letting Jesus know He was unclean and go another way would seriously mean death. ESPECIALLY since Jesus always had crowds around Him who probably would feel 'in the right' to pick up rocks and throw at this man.

But this guy is desperate! He knows there is no hope already, he's been living that way for a while. Luke the physician wanted you to know that too. "He was *FULL of Leprosy*", that is Luke's way of saying that it was fully visible, the man was scarred, noticeable, there was no doubt he had been damaged by this disease. He could not hide it!



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Then we see him fling himself down and beg. **There is worship here before He ever received anything from our Lord.** There is a sense of Urgency for only in scripture has a man been made clean after having leprosy and it was by God. Could this man Jesus be the Messiah? WE see what it looks like to be so desperate to be led by the Spirit to a faith in Jesus. You see he knew Jesus could heal him, for him it was more of a question of 'IF' Jesus wanted to. This is a great picture of Humility.

This is where I think we need to take a good hard look at how we approach the Lord in prayer, and our requests. We often approach Him in the opposite way, "Lord I know that you want to answer this for me, but I just don't know if you can do it." Our desperation has not driven us to practice out real faith yet. We come to Christ many times with pseudo desperation but not real gut wrenching 'I have no hope'!

My friends I have to tell you that this is exactly how sinners are to come to Christ! Sinners don't come to God thinking I could use some help here, they come knowing that there is only one chance at this and it all hangs in 'will Jesus accept you?' You and I need to remember he never accepts you by your behavior or cuteness it is all left up to the decisions by His Father. All we can do is throw ourselves down on our floors and beg for Mercy! No other Way! As a matter of fact, if you have not done that in a while, if it seems vague for you, then you need to plead God to show you the sin lurking in your life.

Humility is the act of a desperate man and it should be the attitude of all of God's people because without Him there is no Hope. BUT HOPE is exactly is what you can receive from Him!

2. What to expect from Jesus - COMPASSION and RESTORATION

¹³ And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, "I will; be clean." And immediately the leprosy left him. ¹⁴ 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."

When you read the Bible too quick you always end up missing things in the text that the author wants you to know and that can happen here if you're not careful.

Jesus stretches out a hand and touches Him. Please understand this has not happened in a long time, to be touched by someone that was not afraid of you or cringed at your site. Jesus



The Gospel According to Luke Wk. 22 "A Leper's Last-Ditch Effort" By Pastor Jody May

doesn't break the law here by touching this man but fulfills for the man what was the intent of the law, to connect to God. The man couldn't get to Him, but God could come to Him, it was the physical example of what the Messiah was supposed to do, come to man in the flesh associating with those that were unclean.

He touches the man, heals this man by words showing His authority again like last week, and then gives the man a command. *'Don't tell anyone AND go show the priest'* (Lev. 14). There had been tremendous crowds already following Jesus, pressuring Him for what He could do not necessarily trying to hear what He had been saying. You know, come to think of it, that is all we have seen so far? Jesus does a lot of preaching in Luke and the only one we heard repenting was Peter last week!?

You know many times as sinners when we come to Jesus after an emotional trial we tend to get caught up in being delivered that we forget with that is the call to "go and sin no more". That's what was happening here, Jesus wanted the man to go by the law to be reunited with his people so that he may be a testimony in the right way, **when saved by GRACE law abiding becomes the natural way of life, you are no longer to be in rebellion.**

There is another thing that is in between the lines! Jesus sent the man to the temple to be seen by the Priest who would have to 'ok' with a physical examination. There was no way this man was going to get a clean bill of health based on his physical scarring, **so the healing would have not only had to be to do away with the bacteria but to restore the body.** This was Jesus blessing the man with new flesh so that he may be reunited with his clan.

GOSPEL - It is the same with us. We get so desperate for help, but we have no idea how to approach the Lord. The HS brings us to encounters with Christ all the time. We are reminded in our prayers, our reading of the scriptures, our discussion with other believers the state we were in when we found Jesus and when we discovered Him **on the cross bearing the physicality of our disease.** He was the one **wearing our deserved mutilations** so that we may be saved from an eternal death. We are **touched and sealed through faith by the HS** (Eph. 1:13) and we have been given the **command not to hold it in but to declare** (Mat. 28) to all as the blind man that was questioned from **John 9:25 ESV**, *"Whether he is a sinner I do not know. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see."*



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The desire of our Lord in healing us is to restore us to fellowship with the Father and His people, the church. If you have ever felt the compassion of Jesus, then you have most certainly experienced the restoration of fellowship with God and man. **Compassion and Restoration go hand in hand for us - just like the cross and resurrection; one acts kills the disease of sin and one act brings us into a new life.**

That's why it is important to obey, and do what he says, **repent and get over yourself** for our greatest testimony is the activity of constantly renewing our relationships praising what Jesus is doing in our lives. **Christian fellowship is just as much about sharing God's goodness with others as it is tasting it.**

3. Why we should trust Jesus - He does things RIGHT

¹⁵ But now even more the report about him went abroad, and great crowds gathered to hear him and to be healed of their infirmities. ¹⁶ But he would withdraw to desolate places and pray.

Again, so much here between the lines.

First, so many people come to see Jesus, to experience what He just did for themselves, but you notice that He withdraws, **He's never to be used by people.** It just goes more to show you that His encounter with this man, while that man thought it was luck, **was a God-ordained meeting by the Father, whereby the HS lead the man to Jesus for this encounter.** If you want to be done with that sin that keeps you from God that keeps you from fellowship with other Christ-followers, then I plead with you today please fall down and beg for Mercy because it is God that has led you to this place. Jesus' humiliation on the cross bought us the ability to worship Him in Humility with the promise of eternal life, his sacrifice is the call for you to throw yourself on your knees and plead to Him for help.

Secondly, Jesus shows how he fulfilled all of the law, He just knew where to be at the right times, it was by His constant attitude of prayer. Jesus never misses healing the people He should, but He is also never used by people in an uncaring way. Is it coincidence the Jesus touches the leper to heal Him but doesn't allow for people to touch him with unholy intentions? This process of knowing what to do and how to live works much the same way for us. We underestimate the power of prayer in our lives so much. If you are wanting to show God, your humility it starts with the first act of **going to Him on your knees asking for direction.**



The Gospel According to Luke Wk. 22 "A Leper's Last-Ditch Effort" By Pastor Jody May

Lastly, it's not a question of how we should act towards those that are far from God, but it is a question of **when that is going to happen for you**. Jesus shows His first disciples that we are to care for those that have no one to care for them because **among those far from God are those that are being called to His family**. Yes church, we have such a large calling here with so many younglings around us, but we **cannot omit our responsibilities to the socially isolated in our midst**. We will have some wonderful opportunities in the upcoming years not only to reach out to those isolated in our community but to teach our children how to do it as well.

What a great morning it has been to be here with you and talk to you about our Lord and our need for Him and it has been a blessing to learn by the Spirit how to approach Him for Jesus is already ready to heal and restore us. Now, let us model together what will help us in our calling to tell others about Him; Let us PRAY...

PRAYER

COMMUNION

BENEDICTION

Go in the name of the Father that arranges all of our supernatural encounters with the Lord.

Go in the name of the Son that heals with the touch of compassion and leads us to restoration.

Go in the name of the HS that helps us see how the Lord saves us and grants us the courage to reach out to those that are isolated as well.