



## “Touching The Untouchable”

### Luke 5:12-16

Jan. 30, 2022

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- Here is another incident.
- Jesus is in a city but we don't know which one. Does it matter? Not really.

**“man covered in leprosy”** – right away you have to ask, “What is he doing in the city?” Why would we ask that?

- Let's look at the disease of leprosy . . .

#### Description of Leprosy

“At first it was thought to be a disease that just ate a person because people with leprosy didn't have noses and didn't have ears and didn't have eyes and had great holes in their head and their extremities were gone and the assumption was that it literally ate the person. There is some sense in which the disease may cause some regression in the skin. There are some who believe that it actually attacks the bone marrow and has the tendency to shrivel the bones. It attacks the larynx, according to some medical sources, and affects the larynx so that the person doesn't even speak well. It does have some power to attack both internal and external parts of the body. It generally starts on the face with a patch, a white or pink patch of skin usually on the brow, most commonly, or some other part of the face. It begins to spread in all directions and then spongy, tumorous swellings grow on the face. And some people have even called it lion's disease because it turns a person's face into such disfiguration that they begin to appear like a lion. This disease then spreads from there, becomes systemic, gets into the internal organs. It causes a certain clawing effect of the extremities. So it may have that...that effect. But the hard work of a modern physician by the name of Dr. Paul Brand who has been associated with the leprosy hospital in Carville, Louisiana has brought to light the fact that this disease primarily attacks the nerves and it's an anesthetic disease. In other words, it destroys a person's ability to feel. It attacks also the teeth, every part of the body so that there is no feeling in these areas of the body. And what happens as a result of that is very, very frightening.”

- Geoff Thomas

“The average course of the disease is nine years, and it ends in mental decay, coma, and ultimately death. The sufferer becomes utterly repulsive both to himself and to others.”

- William Barclay

### **Life of a Leper . . .**

“There he lives. Without love. Without hope. Without the simple joys & dignities of life like being smiled at...being greeted on the street...buying fresh fruit in the market...talking politics by the public fountain...laughing...getting to go to work...operating a business...haggling over prices with a shopkeeper...getting a wedding invitation...singing hymns in the synagogue, celebrating Passover with family. All these were barred. Forever.”

- Ken Gire

“It might be superfluous to say that the leper’s life was a horror, but it might be helpful to identify with what their lives might be like. If one was found to be leprosy, he was “required to rend his outer garment, to go bareheaded, and to cover his mouth so as to hide his beard...”

“We are not told how this man discovered that he had leprosy, but it could have happened in the following manner. One day he came in from plowing and said to his wife, “I have a little sore on the palm of my hand. It bothers me when I am plowing. Could you put a poultice on it and wrap it for me?” His wife bandaged his hand, but the next day the sore was worse. In a few days they both became alarmed. His wife said, “You should go to the priest.” He went to the priest who put him in isolation for fourteen days. When he was brought out the priest looked him over and found the leprosy had spread. The priest told him he was a leper. The heartbroken man said to the priest “Let me go to my wife and children and tell them goodbye.” The priest replied, “You cannot tell them goodbye. You will never be able to take your lovely wife in your arms again. You will never be able to put your arms around those precious children of yours.” The man went off, alone. His family brought his food to a certain place and then withdrew when he came to get it. In the distance he could see his wife and observe his children growing day by day.” But he could never be with them.”

### **To make matters even worse . . .**

“The rabbi’s believed that leprosy was caused by certain sins. These sins were listed as follows; immorality, arrogance, robbery, bloodshed, false oath, slander, meanness, idolatry, gross indecency, blasphemy, haughtiness, an ‘evil eye’, selfishness, usurping a dignity to which one has no right, and contending against one’s master. Slander was considered the most despicable of all sins leading to leprosy.”

### **Life of a Leper cont’d . . .**

“The leper lived an isolated life, abandoned and feared by the world, able to peep from the brow of the hill at his dear wife and children in the valley below, but he could not sit with them. They were forbidden from greeting him as that might encourage him to go running to them. He lived as an outcast. If he turned the bend in a country lane, or if a shepherd boy searched for his sheep and came across him, then that leper immediately had to shout aloud, “Unclean! Unclean!” and drive the boy away. He would see people’s horror, hear their children crying in fear, witness all the people running off the path to get out of his way.”

“The group he ate and slept with were all suffering from leprosy. Every face he saw was a leprosy face, some in more advanced stages of the disease than himself, and as he looked at them he knew with dread that that was where he was heading.”

“Josephus says that lepers were to be treated as dead men. The rabbi said that next to touching a dead body, getting near a leper was the rankest form of defilement. In Palestine in Jesus’ time lepers were barred from the city of Jerusalem and any other walled city. And if a leper ever came into a synagogue, in a town or a village, he had to go to a small isolated room called a makitza. He couldn’t come near other people.”

Still 10 million in the world today.

### How much do you know about Leprosy in the Bible?

1. What leper of Bethany entertained Jesus in his home?
2. What king of Judah was a leper until the day of his death?
3. What captain of the armies of Syria was a leper?
4. What prophetess became a snow-white leper for a short time?
5. Who put his hand into his bosom and, drawing it out, found it leprous?
6. Who became a leper after he lied to the prophet Elisha?
7. Who told Moses to send lepers away from the Israelite camp?
8. What is the greatest number of lepers Jesus healed at any one time?

### Lev 13, 14 give us:

- the rules for the recognition of the disease.
- the preliminary quarantine periods.
- the ceremonial methods of cleansing.
- how a priest would detect it.
- the different strains.
- how long a person who might have leprosy had to be detained.
- what kind of garments a leper had to wear.
- how they had to keep their head uncovered.
- how they were to cover their mustache
- how they were to warn bypassers by saying “Unclean, unclean!”
- how they must live outside the camp.
- How, if they were thought to have been cleansed, they must go to the priest and be evaluated and if indeed they were clean, there would be a ceremony involving sacrifices and a proclamation by the priest that they were clean.

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- The man with leprosy should not have been in the city – violated Levitical law.
- He is “covered” or filled with leprosy. Advanced stages. It had affected his face, his arms and hands, his legs and feet. He was a mass of ulcers and sores. Smelled of decay.
  - He knew how terrible his problem was.
  - He knew most everyone thought his condition was hopeless.
  - He had no one who would or could take him to Jesus.
  - He had no previous example of Jesus healing a leper to give him hope.
  - He had no promise that Jesus would heal him.
  - He had no invitation from Jesus or the disciples.
  - He must have felt ashamed and alone in the crowd.
  - He was willing to risk all just to see Jesus.
- He apparently heard that Jesus was there and had healed all kinds of diseases.

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- In the sovereign providence of God, he sees Jesus.
- He falls to the ground in fear and respect.
- **“implored” – δέομαι** – to plead, to beg in desperation.
- Remember, he is not to say anything to anyone except, **“Unclean”!** **“Unclean”!**
- His request tells us a lot about him:
  - He calls Jesus, Lord. He knows He is God. He knows Jesus is the only one who can heal him.
  - **“if”** – 3<sup>rd</sup> class conditional **“if”**. Maybe willing, maybe not willing. No Jewish leper had ever been healed.
  - This is not about ability – **“if you are able . . .”** but about willingness. Is God willing?
  - So it requires humility because it is totally up to God. Not, **“I am willing and have faith that you will do it,”** but are **“You willing?”**
  - Nothing said about the man’s faith or sin in his life.
  - No name it and claim it.

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- Can't you hear the crowd gasp, **“No, no, don't touch him.”**
- Jesus is willing and so the command goes out for him to be healed.
- Once Jesus touches him, the man was no longer a leper. Therefore Jesus did not violate the Levitical law.
- How long had it been since this man touched someone?
  - **“immediately”** – no waiting period, no partial healing, no recovery time.
- No doubt there were Pharisees in the crowd watching this and so before their eyes Jesus shows He is the Messiah:
  1. Jesus heals the man. He is the only one able to do so. Rabbi's taught that only the Messiah would be able to heal leprosy. So, if the man is healed, Jesus must be the Messiah.
  2. By touching him, Jesus does not become unclean: but the man becomes clean.
  3. Jesus is greater than the Levitical law and greater than the priests that carried out the law.
  4. Jesus brought the entire issue of His Messiahship down to a simple touch. Jesus touches the untouchable.
  5. That touch brought into focus all that the Pharisees were against and everything Jesus is for: It was a small item with a big impact.

“Jesus will not storm Israel with his messianic claim”; instead he will “knock quietly at its door, leper by leper, little by little.”

- Emil Bruner

## He Touched Me

Bill & Gloria Gaither

Shackled by a heavy burden  
'Neath a load of guilt and shame  
Then the hand of Jesus touched me  
And now I am no longer the same  
He touched, oh, He touched me  
And oh, the joy that floods my soul  
Something happened and now I know  
He touched me and made me whole

Since I've met this blessed Savior  
Since He's cleansed and made me whole  
I will never cease to praise Him (to praise Him)  
I'll shout it while eternity rolls  
He touched me, oh, He touched me  
He touched me  
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"It's a strange fact that the one Jesus commanded to tell no one told everyone, and we who are commanded to tell everyone often tell no one."

- Dave Guzik

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- Why would the man be ordered to tell no one?
  1. So that he would not be delayed in going to the priest.
  2. So that it would not hinder the ministry of Jesus.

## Mark 1:44-45

44 and He said to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, as a testimony to them."

45 But he went out and began to proclaim it freely and to spread the news around, to such an extent that Jesus could no longer publicly enter a city, but stayed out in unpopulated areas; and they were coming to Him from everywhere.

- This man is Jewish.
- Going to the priest was a protection for the community. Full examination and investigation. Results given to the Sanhedrin. What are they going to do with the results?
- It also served here as a testimony to the priest and Sanhedrin, that Jesus was the Messiah. Jesus had done what no priest could do.
- It puts the priest in a tough spot. If declared healed – then Jesus did it and is the Messiah. If declared not healed – he is denying the obvious facts.

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- So the news spread.
- Larger crowds. More people. People coming from all over Galilee.
- To do what? to hear and to be healed.
- The healing pointed to the hearing.
- And the hearing was backed up by the healing.

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- Grand opportunities to minister do not justify an unbalanced life.
- Sometimes it is more important to talk to God about men than to talk to men about God.
- COME APART BEFORE YOU COME APART.