

Lost & Found Center Teaching Series



# JESUS, THE LEPER AND YOU

## **Introduction**

Today we're going to look at the story of Jesus healing the leper. This is an important story because it is about transitioning our perspective. Once we transition our perspective, the word of God starts to reveal more and more to us. What am I talking about? Well we need to walk through the story so I can make my point.

**When he came down from the mountainside, large crowds followed him. A man with leprosy came and knelt before him and said, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean." Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" Immediately he was cured of his leprosy. Then Jesus said to him, "See that you don't tell anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the gift Moses commanded, as a testimony to them." Matthew 8:1-4 NIV**

This is a well know passage of the Bible. And it seems pretty straightforward. What happens here? First, Jesus has just spent the last few hours doing what has come to be known as the Sermon on the Mount. We see in Matthew 5:1 that Jesus "went up on a mountainside" and then not until Matthew 8:1 does it say "he came down from the mountainside." So before we talk about his experience with the leper, we need to lightly touch on what he was doing on the mountainside.

We could make the Sermon on the Mount into a study in itself, but not today. We'll try to look at it just enough to help us understand the encounter with the man with leprosy. Read the Sermon on the Mount and you could think: Wow, this is going to be a tough Christian life if I have to be this way. Did you hear what I said? This kind of perspective we need to transition away from. Let me make a statement about the Sermon on the Mount. The goal of the Sermon on the Mount is all about demystifying God. You could say it sets the record straight on God. Jesus was seeking to clarify what God was like, first in words, then, as we'll see later in actions.

Read Matthew 5 through 7 today and see what I mean. He talked about what God and the kingdom of God is really like. It's a place of compassion and fairness. He talked about how God cares for those who are not cared for. God cares for those who are hurting. He talked of the graciousness of God; how God loves those who are merciful and who are peacemakers. He talked about the spirit or the intent of the law and how the letter of the law is not enough. He talked about how cursing is akin to murder. He talks about how mercy is part of the fabric of God and how loving your enemies is emulating God. He talked about how important people's needs are to God and how God will take care of them, if they trust him. He talked about being genuine with God and not phony; not pretentious. Some say he was being revolutionary. I guess you could say that on one level. But what he was really doing was demystifying God. He was showing what God is really like. Maybe truly representing God is revolutionary.

Maybe because some of us were just so focused on the law of God that we lost sight of what God was really like. If we're not careful, the law can de-humanize ourselves and de-personalize God. At the time of this event the law had de-humanized people, so that people thought those who were suffering and hurting were not important to God. They thought that those who were hurting deserved it. Jesus was setting the record straight.

Where are we today? Unfortunately we're in a similar place. We allow the law to de-humanize people and to de-personalize God. We need an army of people like Jesus that go around demystifying God, showing people what God is really like.

The Lord desires to raise up a people whose lives reflect the reality of his touch, not merely a discipline of living.

So after saying all this, Jesus, the good Jewish rabbi, went down the hill with a crowd following him and a man with leprosy came before him. This was a dramatic scene. There is nothing to put into proper perspective what's going on here. There is no modern equivalent of a type of disease that would cause people to run in fear, or worse, to pick up stones and kill someone because their presence caused danger.

But that's what leprosy was at that time. It was the greatest threat to people, more terrifying than Roman soldiers. This man represents the bottom of the barrel of the de-humanized, the outcast. What would a good rabbi do in this case? Would he protect the people? Would he follow the law and have him stoned? What an "in your face" experience after having just described what God is really like. This is one of those "put up or shut experiences."

Now, let me take a quick conventional sidetrack here. It is conventional view but a sidetrack for our purposes. In a sense we are the man with the leprosy. We have a death sentence because of our sins and it is only through coming to Jesus, because of his death and resurrection, that we can be cured.

**But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.** Ephesians 2:4-5 NIV

We were the leper no doubt. But look at this above verse. God "made us alive with Christ even when we were dead." This means that our current experience is "alive with Christ." Our past experience was "dead in transgressions." Alive today. Dead yesterday. Here's what I meant when I said this passage is about transitioning our perspective. We used to identify with the leper but what do we do now? Where or to whom do we transition to? How about we look at this story from Jesus' perspective.

The idea is that we need to look at Jesus the way he needs to be looked at, in order to more fully understand him and learn from him. Here is a strange statement.

*We can't let the fact that Jesus is God distort our image of him.*

### **New Prototype**

Well what I mean is when we look at Jesus we need to remind ourselves that he is the new prototype of man. The Bible compares Jesus to Adam in the following verse:

**So it is written: "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit.** 1 Corinthians 15:45 NIV

That means, and I've said this before, that Jesus is our true destiny. He is what we're slated to become. He is what the Holy Spirit inside us is at work transforming us into. That is the plan. If that's the plan then look at Jesus and see the new man at work. See what the new man does. See yourself as the new man. I'm being serious.

**For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.** Romans 8:29 NIV

Jesus is the first of a new line. God has planned that all those in Christ will be re-made according to this new standard. See Jesus. Watch the new standard at work. Do you see that the new standard is more about the character of God and the reality of God than just the rules of God? Do you see the new standard is more about demystifying God and showing his true compassion?

### **Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man.**

A good rabbi would never think of touching a person with leprosy. That would make him unclean. The rabbi would be responsible for making sure the person with leprosy stays in isolation.

**"The person with such an infectious disease must wear torn clothes, let his hair be unkempt, cover the lower part of his face and cry out, 'Unclean! Unclean!' As long as he has the infection he remains unclean. He must live alone; he must live outside the camp.** Leviticus 13:45-46

Was Jesus breaking the law here or was he demystifying God. The letter of the law was to avoid. The spirit of the law was to remain clean. But if you have the power to make clean, then you may appear to be breaking the letter, yet you uphold the spirit. We are

people of the spirit and the character and life of God. Therefore the goal is not to become a master of the letter, but of the spirit of the law. Do you see this?

### **Jesus and the Holy Spirit**

The Holy Spirit is the key to the new prototype. This is next point to remember when we see Jesus in action.

**As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."** Matthew 3:16-17 NIV

The key is the Holy Spirit. When we see Jesus, see then what a man can do with the power of the Holy Spirit. The Bible says that Jesus removed his inherent advantage as being God.

**Who, being in very nature God,  
did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,  
but made himself nothing,  
taking the very nature of a servant,  
being made in human likeness.** Philippians 2:6-7 NIV

Consider then that Jesus only used what is available to us as he walked the earth. See this and believe this. Understand this and you have to draw a very important conclusion. The Holy Spirit is much more powerful than we give him credit for.

**But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.** 2 Corinthians 4:7 NIV

The indwelling, transforming Holy Spirit is the new and different piece of the human experience. It makes us superior to everything that has come before. The Holy Spirit makes the “new” Adam so much more superior to the “old” Adam. I hope the words I use don’t scare you. The spirit of God in us gives us the greatest potential than man has ever had.

When Jesus says:

**I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.**  
John 14:12 NIV

He speaks directly to the potential, not of us, but of the Holy Spirit inside us. See Jesus in action; see the Holy Spirit at work. See yourself in action – with the same spirit.

**Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" Immediately he was cured of his leprosy.**

Is there a but in the teaching? Why then can't we go around healing people? Who said you couldn't? The question should be, why don't we? That goes to the purpose of this study. We need to begin to transition our perspective when we look at Jesus. But there's more to it than that, because Jesus was special.

### **Jesus the Fullness of the Spirit**

The Bible says this about Jesus:

**For the one whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God gives the Spirit without limit.** John 3:34 NIV

Jesus we could say operated in the fullness of the gifts of the Spirit. Now scripture indicates that collectively those in Christ make up his body. That means that we may not all possess all the gifts. This is a bit paradoxical, although we have the potential to do all that Jesus did, we may not because our gifts could manifest in different ways. That's what Paul alludes to when he says that we aren't all functioning as the same body part.

**But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body.** 1 Corinthians 12:18-19 NIV

Is this an excuse? Absolutely not. But let me clarify. This means that individually we may not be able to do everything he did, but collectively we can do all and even more. He has taken from what he had and distributed it amongst all of us. As we watch him closely we can see most of these gifts in operation. That's how we are to look at him. See your gifts in him. See your gifts in action. Learn from him.

**And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.** Ephesians 1:22-23 NIV

### **Jesus Followed**

Lastly, Jesus followed. This is maybe the weakness in the Christian experience today. Jesus followed. How do we know this? Because Jesus told us:

**So Jesus said, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am the one I claim to be and that I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me. John 8:28 NIV**

Jesus said that he did not do things on his own but he was directed by God.

**For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it. I know that his command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say." John 12:49-50 NIV**

After Jesus got baptized, do you remember what happened?

**Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert, Luke 4:1 NIV**

The Spirit led Jesus. What do these verses mean to you? This is how Jesus operated. This is us in action. Can you see it? If this is the case, then Jesus is not acting on his own initiative is he? Jesus is not speaking his own reality into being is he?

Watch this. His step of faith is doing what the Spirit directs.

God is not backing Jesus up here. Jesus is backing God up. This is not about the power of Jesus' will or your will or my will. This is about Jesus, you and me following God's will through the Holy Spirit. That's where Jesus is. That's where we want to go.

You don't speak your own reality. You echo God's reality. His life is in you. His words in you. His spirit in you. If you think that's boring, you have no clue of the awesomeness, the majesty, the height, the depth, the breadth and the immensity of God. Follow the new standard.

### **What Would Jesus Do**

Okay, so if you believe that last section answer this question. When the leper came to him why did Jesus do the following:

**Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" Immediately he was cured of his leprosy.**

Why did Jesus touch him? Why did Jesus say he was willing? Why did Jesus speak the words "be clean"?

Here's the answer. And it will be the same answer whenever we see Jesus in action. Jesus touched the man with leprosy because the Holy Spirit directed him. This is not something that you would normally do. Jesus answered him that he was willing because those are the words the Holy Spirit gave him. Jesus spoke "be clean" over the man because he was directed to. Easy enough.

Jesus isn't trying this; he's following. He's not making this up; he's walking in the spirit. So what would Jesus do? He'd do what the Holy Spirit told him. I call this the "back story." We see Jesus touching a leper and we think we need to go around touching lepers. Bad idea. That's copying the wrong thing. Our goal is to emulate the backstory, what's happening behind the scenes not the "frontstory." When we emulate the frontstory we act like everything is based on magic. Use these words or do things this way and we think we'll get the same outcome. Wrong.

Copying what Jesus does makes no sense at all. Live like the new standard.

**Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.** Galatians 5:25 NIV

Get this. Speaking words you want to come to pass is meaningless. That's wasted faith. Listen for his words. How do you do this? Give up what you want. Seek what he wants. Seek him. The reality of him is much more valuable than anything you could imagine.

## **Conclusion**

The time is here when we need to start transitioning from identifying with the leper to identifying with Jesus. Like Jesus, God is calling a people who are to demystify him. He is calling a people who will demonstrate what he is like in his heart and character - to set the record straight so to speak. Who do we look to in this transition? Jesus.

We start by seeing Jesus as the new prototype of man. We start by seeing Jesus as our new destiny. He is what we will become. If He is what we will become, then we watch him closely. He speaks and acts to the reality of an experience with God. That's what we want to do. We see him as living on our terms with the Holy Spirit as his guide. How should we live? He's showing us. He lives by the Spirit. What is that potential? He's showing us. It's off the chart. Please reapply your faith here. Amen.

Notes

For Questions or Comments please respond to [lostandfoundcenter@yahoo.com](mailto:lostandfoundcenter@yahoo.com) and visit [www.lostandfoundcenter.org](http://www.lostandfoundcenter.org) for additional information.

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