

Pastors Blog March 30 The Man Without Hope

Jesus Cleanses a Leper Luke 5:12-16

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.

We are in unprecedented times as we daily hear about the rising cases and deaths of the Covid-19 both in our nation and around the world. In the passage we see a man with an incurable disease that made him and outcast, wracked his body in pain and drove him from all contact with family and friends. He was without hope until he met Jesus.

I. Full of Leprosy vs.12a While he was in one of the cities, there came a man full of leprosy
The term "leprosy" (including leper, lepers, leprosy, leprous) occurs 68 times in the Bible—55 times in the Old Testament (Hebrew = tsara'ath) and 13 times in the New Testament (Greek = lepros, lepra). In the Old Testament, the instances of leprosy most likely meant a variety of infectious skin diseases, and even mold and mildew on clothing and walls. The precise meaning of the leprosy in both the Old and New Testaments is still in dispute, but it probably includes the modern Hansen's disease (especially in the New Testament) and infectious skin diseases. The very word Leprosy terrified and destroyed all hope. This disease had no cure and always resulted in a painful death and it was a highly contagious disease...that required the ultimate in social distancing....you were separated from you wife, your children, you family, your friends and your were required to cry out "Unclean, Unclean" where ever you walked.

A. The Symptoms

Its symptoms start in the skin and peripheral nervous system (outside the brain and spinal cord), then spread to other parts, such as the hands, feet, face, and earlobes. Patients with leprosy experience disfigurement of the skin and bones, twisting of the limbs, and curling of the fingers to form the characteristic claw hand. Facial changes include thickening of the outer ear and collapsing of the nose. Tumor-like growths called lepromas may form on the skin and in the respiratory tract, and the optic nerve may deteriorate. The largest number of deformities develop from loss of pain sensation due to extensive nerve damage. For instance, inattentive patients can pick up a cup of boiling water without flinching.

B. The Diagnosis

"The crux of the matter lay in the degree of skin penetration which the disease had achieved. If it affected the epidermis or outermost layer of skin and did not produce pathological changes in the hairs, the affliction was not regarded as especially serious. As such it might consist of eczema, psoriasis, or some allied skin disease. But if the affliction had infiltrated the dermis and had caused hairs to split or break off and lose their color, then "leprosy" was to be suspected". This diagnostic principle also applied to disease affecting the scalp.

Leviticus13:29–37

29 "If a man or woman has a sore on their head or chin, 30 the priest is to examine the sore, and if it appears to be more than skin deep and the hair in it is yellow and thin, the priest shall

pronounce them unclean; it is a defiling skin disease on the head or chin. 31 But if, when the priest examines the sore, it does not seem to be more than skin deep and there is no black hair in it, then the priest is to isolate the affected person for seven days. 32 On the seventh day the priest is to examine the sore, and if it has not spread and there is no yellow hair in it and it does not appear to be more than skin deep, 33 then the man or woman must shave themselves, except for the affected area, and the priest is to keep them isolated another seven days. 34 On the seventh day the priest is to examine the sore, and if it has not spread in the skin and appears to be no more than skin deep, the priest shall pronounce them clean. They must wash their clothes, and they will be clean. 35 But if the sore does spread in the skin after they are pronounced clean, 36 the priest is to examine them, and if he finds that the sore has spread in the skin, he does not need to look for yellow hair; they are unclean. 37 If, however, the sore is unchanged so far as the priest can see, and if black hair has grown in it, the affected person is healed. They are clean, and the priest shall pronounce them clean

1. Seven Day Quarantine

The priest was called in to inspect the affliction. If "leprosy" was only suspected but not certain, the priest imposed a seven-day quarantine.

2. Seven More Days

At the end of this period the afflicted was examined again, and if no further degeneration was apparent he was isolated for another week, after which he could be pronounced healed.

If found to have Leprosy the Victim became disfigured, racked with pain, a horror to look at, and numbed to the pain of cuts or bruises conditions for which there was no relief or cure. He was a social and spiritual outcast.

3. The Victim Was Responsible for Their Own Healing

The priest, however, did nothing to promote the cure. His cleansing rituals were performed only after the disease had passed. It was the responsibility of the afflicted himself to:

a) PRAY I Kings 8:37–38a

37 "If there is a famine in the land or a plague or crop disease or attacks of locusts or caterpillars, or if your people's enemies are in the land besieging their towns—whatever disaster or disease there is—38 and if your people Israel pray about their troubles, raising their hands toward this Temple, 39 then hear from heaven where you live, and forgive.

b) Fast II Sam. 12:16

16 David begged him to spare the child and went without food, and lay all night before the Lord on the bare earth.

When we are sick, when disease and calamity threaten us do we seek God's faith through prayer and if we are able fasting or do we see God as being our ultimate Helper, Savior, Redeemer or do we see our doctors and our government as our Savior and Redeemer?

I am thankful for the wonderful health professionals that serve us sacrificially during these times of crisis. I am thankful for the scientific advances that bring us help and God willing a cure for Covid-19. I am thankful for the help our government offers to small business and those who have lost so much in the last few weeks.

But where does our faith ultimately lay in any crisis. What we can do? How we can save ourselves? How we can be saved by others Or in God our ultimate healer?

II. The Faith of An Outcast 12b And when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and begged him, "Lord, if you will, you can make me clean."

A. His Prayer "Lord, if you will, you can make me clean."

This was the cry of desperation and an act of worship. Jesus was the one chance for a cure. Jesus was the only hope for restoration. There was no pride in the man it had long since been knocked out of him. He had no concern about what others might think for the world had long considered him as good as dead. His one thought was God hear my plea. God answer my prayer.

B. His Faith

and said, "Lord, if you wish, you can make me clean."

Whenever/ any time you want to you can make me clean. This was not a question of Jesus being willing or not but a statement of faith on the part of this man. God had cured only two people in the whole OT of Leprosy. Miriam Moses' sister and Namann the Syrian.

The man was convinced that God could heal him but would God heal him?

I am waiting Lord for You to heal me whenever You desire to do so. What faith!

What absolute confidence! I am here and whenever you desire you can heal me. Not a demand but an act of submission.

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

The moment Jesus touched this man. He became a Leper in the eyes of the law. Why touch the outcast when a word would do? The disciples jumped back. The crowds moved back and watched. What would happen? Would there be a healing or two Lepers.

I am not only willing. I am delighted to make you clean. I will make you whole.

The Leprosy left him instantly. No signs of the disease were left. God delights in blessing us and make us whole. Not ever healing means the disease is taken away immediately. Healings can occur over time or healing can occur when Jesus calls us home. Jesus immediately took the Leprosy away and the man became whole

D. Ceremonial Cleansing As An Act of Obedience vs.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."

Leprosy was often associated with one who had disobeyed God. It was seen as a punishment on the rebellious of heart.

The prescribed ritual for the healed "leper" is of interest. Three separate ceremonies are required:

1. Day One

The first-day ritual is performed by the priest outside the camp or city from which the "leper" has been banished. Cedar wood, crimson cloth, and a live bird are dipped into an earthen vessel containing a mixture of fresh water and the blood of a second bird. The "leper" is sprinkled with this mixture seven times, after which the live bird is set free. The "leper" is admitted into the camp or city after he washes his clothes, shaves all his hair, and bathes, but he is not allowed to enter his residence.

2. Day Seven

That is permitted him on the seventh day after shaving, laundering, and bathing again.

3. Day Eight

On the eighth day he brings to the sanctuary oil and sheep for various offerings – whole, meal, purification, and reparation. The whole and purification animals may be commuted to birds if the "leper" is poor. However, the sacrificial lamb and log of oil may not be changed, because the blood of the lamb and the oil are needed to daub the "leper's" right ear lobe, right thumb, and right big toe.

By following the rules for ceremonial cleansing the man showed his submission to God and his submission to those who represented God.

III. Jesus Make Him Famous 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.

When Jesus heals you! When Jesus restores you! Who do you say that He is? Tell the world He is our redeemer and Savior!

Jesus,

Let us give ourselves wholly to You. Trusting you with our spiritual , physical and mental health. Let us willingly submit to the rules that the government has put in place to protect us and others from this deadly disease and when we are whole again when this virus has passed let us lift our hearts and voice in thanksgiving and praise for what you have done. Amen