

Mark 1:40-45

40 And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

41 And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean.

42 And as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed.

43 And he straitly charged him, and forthwith sent him away;

44 And saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man: but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.

45 But he went out, and began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places: and they came to him from every quarter.

KJV

I have never met a leper. Leprosy is a chronic, infectious disease characterized by sores, scabs, and white shining spots beneath the skin. The shining spots look like bright pimples, a little depressed, turning the hair white, and spreading over the skin.

"The scab comes on by degrees, in different parts of the body; the hair falls from the head and eyebrows; the nails loosen, decay, and drop off; joint after joint of the fingers and toes shrink up, and slowly fall away; the gums are absorbed, and the teeth disappear; the nose, the eyes, the tongue, and the palate are slowly consumed; and, finally, the wretched victim shrinks into the earth and disappears, while medicine has no power to stay the ravages of this fell disease, or even to mitigate sensibly its tortures"

Lepers were to rend their garments, let the hair of their head hang down disheveled, cover themselves up to the upper lip, like mourners, and warn off every one whom they happened to meet by calling out "Unclean! Unclean!" since they defiled every one and everything they touched. For this reason they were also obliged to live in exclusion outside the camp or city (Lev 13:45, 46; Num 5:1-4; 12:10-15; 2 Kings 7:3, etc.). "The very entrance of a leper into a house," according to the Jewish canons, "renders everything in it unclean"

Leprosy was considered to an awful punishment from the Lord (2 Kings 5:7; 2 Chron 26:20), which they wished all their mortal enemies (2 Sam 3:29; 2 Kings 5:27).

In our culture, it could be argued that there is no discrimination against a people that is as great as there was against a leper when Jesus lived in Israel!

Any contact with a leper defiled the person who touched him.

It is therefore no wonder that the Jews regarded lepers as, **“The Living Dead!”**

Jesus touched him.

41 And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and **touched him.**

Jesus touched him in spite of his condition; in spite of his social status; in spite of the risk to his own reputation.

Jesus touched him. It was not a popular decision. It was one of those decisions that earned Jesus this reputation.

Matt 11:19

19 The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, **a friend of publicans and sinners.** But wisdom is justified of her children.

KJV

You want to be his disciple. What is your reputation?

If you are going to be known as a friend of publicans and sinners you are going to have to touch lepers.

You are going to have to make them feel genuine love. For this to occur you will have to develop more than a casual relationship with them. You will have to touch them.

But before you will touch them you must first be moved with His compassion.

41 And Jesus, **moved with compassion,** put forth his hand, and touched him.

To have compassion means to have great sympathy and inward affection and tender mercy. It causes the kind of emotion that brings tears to your eyes.

We have seen why Jesus had compassion. This was his sheep. This was his son. This was his brethren. And he was a leper.

You would feel the same way about one of your children if they were a leper; or even one of your animals. You will never have compassion until you have this perspective. You may say all the right things about reaching the lost but your heart will be unmoved.

There will be no lasting change in your relationships with those who are lost until you have compassion for them.

When Jesus touched him he did not just make contact and withdraw his hand. He laid it his hand on the man and there it rested.

There is really no way to know that last time this man had been touched by anyone. Perhaps it was as a child with his mother. Perhaps it was with his wife before he left their home for the last time. Or maybe it was his son or daughter.

When Jesus touched this man it sent a message to him. It gave this man a sense of belonging. It let him know that Jesus believed he was important. It indicated to this man that Jesus wanted a relationship with him. It let him know that Jesus was not afraid of him.

The healing suddenly became secondary to the feeling of being loved; and this man did not even really know who Jesus was or what Jesus was going to do for him in the future.

After this leper was healed, Jesus told him to first go the priest for his ceremonial cleansing but the man could not contain himself.

His cries of unclean, unclean, turned into shouts of praise to for Jesus!

This caused a throng of people to come to Jesus.

Now, you were that leper!

Your soul was so marked by sin. From God's perspective there was nothing beautiful about you that appealed to Him. Sin came on you by degrees starting when you were just a small toddler. It started invading your desires and eventually your thoughts and finally your emotions.

Left unchecked, this disease of the soul started destroying your relationships with others. Your evil reactions and treatment of others started causing significant people to keep their distance from you and causing you to keep your distance from them. You understood loneliness and what it felt like for people you love to consider you unclean. You discovered that this disease could end a great friendship. If you married, you eventually discovered that this disease could even destroy a life long covenant. It can cost you your job and even destroy your physical health.

To God you were the living dead. But He considered you to be His. He felt compassion for you. One day you came to Jesus beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

He reached out and touched you and you were cleansed of your leprosy.

For some of you, this happened when you were a young child and you never experienced the full effects of your disease. But it happened nonetheless. You should be grateful for what Jesus saved you from ever experiencing both in this life and the life to come.

For some of you, this happened when you were a youth. You had started experiencing some of the effects of your disease. You know loneliness and shame and bitterness that are caused by sin. You should even be more grateful for what Jesus saved you from in this life and what He saved you from in the life to come.

For some of you, this happened when you were older. You felt the full force of this disease. It brought you such great sorrow and loss that you do not have words to describe the grief you have known. You should even be more grateful for what Jesus saved from in this life and what He saved you from in the life to come.

What we all have in common with all who are believers is that we were all lepers at one time and we were all touched by Jesus and saved from our leprosy.

This leper that Jesus touched could not contain himself. He blazed abroad the matter. This means that he spread the fame of Jesus.

Now you do this all the time with other people that you admire or appreciate or like for some reason and for such insignificant reasons. Did you see? Did you hear? Do you know?

You also do this all the time with various products that you appreciate or prefer. Super bowl commercials may move some people to try a product but every good businessman knows that word of mouth is the only way their product will be sold to the masses.

So, who are the healed lepers in your family? In your neighborhood? At your school? At your place of employment? You should know them? They should be blazing abroad about the matter. If you are one of them, others should know you.

So you do not want to appear to be a fanatic? (Use T-shirt illustration.) It is amazing how professing Christians are willing to appear fanatical for name brand clothing, sports teams and schools, and various stars, but they are not willing to appear that way for Jesus. It is amazing how professing Christians are willing to offend people for certain causes but not for Jesus.

I don't say this to condemn you but I do want to offend you.

“What is the difference in what you are willing to offend people over?”

The difference is what is in your heart. Jesus said what ever is in your heart will find an exit from your mouth. (Illustration of John Worlund-Pictures one and two.)

If there is not a great love in your heart for Jesus, perhaps you have never been touched by Jesus to heal your leprosy? Perhaps you have never faced the reality that you are leper to God and that you need to be touched by Jesus?

Jesus is willing to touch you today if you are willing to do what this leper did.
40 And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

Here is what I know. Jesus said He who knows he has been forgiven much, loves much. That love inspires you to blaze abroad the matter that Jesus healed you.

Perhaps you had this love at one time but it has grown cold.

- **You are not a leper but you have acted like one.** That will cause your love to grow cold.
- **You have become too rigid about your religion and over protective.** That will cause your love to grow cold.
- **God or other Christians have disappointed you in some way and you have never resolved these disappointments.** That will cause your love to grow cold.

If you are ready to blaze a new trail then come to Jesus and he will show you why your love for Him has grown cold. Then it is up to you accept His perspective and change your heart.

On one occasion Jesus healed ten lepers, but only one returned to thank him (Luke 17:11-15).

From my perspective, that ratio has not changed. Only about one out of ten new converts demonstrate to others that they are grateful for their salvation by blazing abroad what Jesus did for them. Let's pray that the ratio will change at Western Hills in the next few months.