

The Kingdom Arrives... against all odds

Mark 1:40-45

Pastor Jeremy Peters

A man with leprosy came and knelt in front of Jesus, begging to be healed. "If you are willing, you can heal me and make me clean," he said.

Moved with compassion, Jesus reached out and touched him. "I am willing," he said. "Be healed!" Instantly the leprosy disappeared, and the man was healed. Then Jesus sent him on his way with a stern warning: "Don't tell anyone about this. Instead, go to the priest and let him examine you. Take along the offering required in the law of Moses for those who have been healed of leprosy. This will be a public testimony that you have been cleansed."

But the man went and spread the word, proclaiming to everyone what had happened. As a result, large crowds soon surrounded Jesus, and he couldn't publicly enter a town anywhere. He had to stay out in the secluded places, but people from everywhere kept coming to him.

A Highly Provocative Encounter

Leprosy was a _____ condition that had physical, social and spiritual implications.

Physically... a contagious _____ disease with no known cure

Socially (Leviticus 13:45-46) ...the result is complete human _____

Spiritually... people believed someone with leprosy was _____ by God and therefore _____ from worship

THE KINGDOM IN ACTION

December
9
2012

A Highly Provocative Response

Jesus addresses the total condition of the leper, addressing his physical, social and spiritual needs.

Physically... Jesus literally _____ the leper and heals him

Socially... Jesus' healing enables the leper to re-enter _____ life

Spiritually... the leper is now free to _____ and is no longer considered cursed by God.

A Great Reversal

For the first time in history, when clean and unclean come together, the _____ is made _____.

Isaiah 53 foretells of a day when a *Suffering Servant* would _____ places with us and our _____ leprosy would be cleansed.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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- 1) What from this passage and Sunday's teaching stood out to you?
- 2) When the leper approached Jesus to ask for healing he said "if you are willing, you can make me clean." He didn't demand, barter, negotiate or try and manipulate Jesus into doing something for Him. He simply stated "if you are willing..." and threw himself at the mercy of Jesus with no strings attached. His need was great, his approach was simple.
 - a) How do you approach Jesus when you want Him to meet a need in your life? Is it always appropriate to ask Him for what we want? When does this become an attempt on our part to try and manipulate or negotiate getting our way instead of humbly asking, 'if you're willing?'
 - b) What can we learn from the leper as we consider how we choose to approach Jesus?
- 3) In this passage we see the leper make a 'mad dash' for life. He comes to Jesus at great risk to his own personal well being and safety. He is willing to risk it all because he so desperately needs the restoration that only Jesus can give to his total condition.
 - a) What kinds of barriers do you think keep people from coming to Jesus? What might perceived physical, social and spiritual barriers look like in 2012?
 - b) How can we help people overcome their real or perceived barriers?
 - c) Are there any barriers in your own life that currently make coming to God a challenge? (Perhaps shame or disappointment over something.)
 - d) Be sure to pause and pray for one another and for any people in your spheres of relationship who you know are facing some kind of barrier or obstacle that is preventing them from coming to Jesus.
- 4) Jesus' physical act of touching the leper (who perhaps hadn't experienced physical touch for years) spoke of his love for him in a way that words couldn't.
 - a) If actions (often) speak louder than words, how could you this Advent season demonstrate the unconditional love of Jesus to those you are in relationship with (and for some of you, that might be some challenging in-law relationships!)
 - b) How might you be able to engage your Hamper recipient more fully? Pastor Jeremy suggested having them into your home to 'Share a meal' as a way of more deeply demonstrating the love of God to them. After discussing (and making some plans), be sure to pray again for those who received Hampers. Perhaps ask Jesus if there are any physical, social, or spiritual barriers that you can pray to be removed.