



grow. pray. study.

January 19, 2025 *Afflicted with Leprosy*
The People Jesus Loved
Leviticus 13:45-46 (NRSV) and Matthew 8:1-4 (NIV)

To Jesus, No One's Untouchable

MONDAY 1.20.25 Matthew 8:1-4

Verse 3 may sound like a normal, caring response to us. In Jesus' day, it was an utterly shocking act. "The Greek term is *lepros*, sometimes translated 'leprosy,' but used to describe a range of skin diseases and only rarely true 'leprosy' (Hansen's disease)... people with a skin disease [were] ritually unclean.... Their unclean status was contagious, so they were supposed to avoid contact with other (clean) people." * What people "avoided like the plague" (literally) was touching such a person.

- Skin diseases in Jesus' day were often regarded as divine judgments on sin, as were many other physical ailments (cf. [John 9:1-2](#)). People feared both the physical and spiritual consequences of contact with such people. It took courage born of desperation for this man to even approach Jesus (which makes it plausible for *The Chosen* to picture the disciples drawing weapons to keep the man away). In what ways was Jesus' lack of fear a startling model for his followers in that world?
- The dialogue Matthew reported was striking. The man said, "Lord, if you want, you can make me clean" and as Jesus touched him (making a statement by that action) he said, "I do want to." "Jesus wants people to be restored to wholeness." ** How did that desire shape all of Jesus' ministry? How has it shaped his followers' mission through the centuries? What did that simple response tell all of us about the heart of God?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank you for wanting me to be whole, restored, healthy. Guide me in seeking to share your restoring power with others who need it. Amen.

* Eugene Eung-Chun Park and Joel B. Green, study note on Matthew 8:2 in *The CEB Study Bible*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013, p. 19 NT.

** *Ibid.*

Deep Fear of Disease Isolated People from Society

TUESDAY 1.21.25 Leviticus 13:1-3, 45-46

In ancient Israel, skin diseases like leprosy brought devastating isolation. The Levitical law gave priests detailed instructions for examining suspicious skin conditions. Anyone diagnosed with leprosy had to live "outside the camp," wearing torn clothes and calling out "Unclean!" to warn others. These rules may seem harsh, but they aimed to protect the community's health in an era without modern medicine. This social isolation and stigma created deep suffering, which Jesus engaged with deep compassion when he touched and healed those branded "lepers."

- The priests' role in examining skin diseases showed they were to care for both physical and spiritual well-being. Their methods seem primitive to us now, but at their best, they took seriously their duty to protect public health. When have you seen faith communities step up to help address modern public health challenges in practical ways? What does your church do, or could you do?
- Living "outside the camp" meant complete separation from family, friends, work, and worship. The emotional and spiritual cost was as devastating as the physical symptoms. Sadly, those not affected often saw those terrible costs as "not our problem." What groups of people face similar isolation or stigma in our society today? How can you help bridge those divides with Christ-like compassion?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, in our recent history we saw AIDS sufferers treated much like Biblical "lepers." Guide us to avoid letting uninformed fear cause needless suffering for people already suffering. Amen.

God's Inclusive Love Made People Angry

WEDNESDAY 1.22.25 2 Kings 5:1-14, Luke 4:23-28

Today's readings highlight God's healing love crossing human boundaries. In 2 Kings, Naaman was a powerful foreign commander with a skin disease who found healing through Israel's God. In Luke, Jesus reminded people in his hometown synagogue about this story, pointing out that God's healing reached beyond Israel to help a Syrian. What angered Jesus' listeners? "Israel's God was rescuing the wrong people." * Jesus was the God with a heart for healing and reaching all people, whatever their background.

- Naaman almost missed his healing because he expected something more dramatic than simply washing in the Jordan River. Pride and preconceptions about how God should work nearly kept him from receiving what he needed. When have your own expectations or assumptions created barriers between you and what God offers?
- Jesus used Naaman's story to challenge his listeners' belief that God's favor belonged exclusively to them. This truth made them so angry they tried to harm Jesus. What makes it difficult for you to accept that God might be working through people in ways you didn't expect, or for people you dislike or consider unworthy of God's love and help?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, shape me into a person whose heart breaks for what breaks your heart. Keep me from anger when your love and healing extend to people outside my natural affections. Amen.

* N. T. Wright, *Luke for Everyone* (New Testament for Everyone Book 4) (pp. 47-48). Westminster John Knox Press. Kindle Edition.

Jesus' Command: Heal Even Society's Outcasts

THURSDAY 1.23.25 Luke 9:1-6, Matthew 10:8

Jesus sent his disciples out with specific instructions: heal the sick, cast out demons, and proclaim God's kingdom. Matthew's account emphasized that this healing ministry must include people with skin diseases ("lepers")—society's most feared outcasts. Jesus wanted his followers to freely share the same healing power and compassion they had freely received. This mission showed how radically inclusive God's love is, reaching beyond social barriers to touch and heal those whom others avoided.

- The disciples received clear instructions to extend healing to everyone—even those their society rejected. They couldn't pick and choose who deserved help. Jesus expected them to cross even established social boundaries just as he did. What social or cultural barriers make it challenging for you to show Christ's love to others?
- "The healings the disciples were to perform, important as they were for the people concerned, were signs of something more important still: God's new life breaking into the life of Israel, beginning the new day that was dawning with Jesus." * God wants to feed and heal people's physical, spiritual and emotional needs. That's why Resurrection emphasizes linking the "social gospel" with the "evangelical gospel." How does this follow Jesus' ministry model?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you cared about people, about me, as whole beings. Guide me to care for others in that same holistic way. Amen.

* Wright, N. T., *Matthew for Everyone, Part 1: Chapters 1-15* (The New Testament for Everyone) (p. 113). Westminster John Knox Press. Kindle Edition.

Only the Messiah's Power Could Heal the Outcast

FRIDAY 1.24.25 Luke 7:20-23

John the Baptist sent followers to ask if Jesus was really the promised Messiah. Rather than just say "yes," Jesus pointed to his actions--healing the sick, giving sight to the blind, and cleansing those with leprosy. These actions grew from specific promises about what God's Messiah would do. Jesus' identity as Messiah was not "just talk." His acts of healing and mercy that reached society's most excluded people were strong evidence that he was indeed the one they had been waiting for.

- Asked about his identity and mission, Jesus pointed to concrete evidence of God's healing power at work through him. His actions spoke louder than words. What evidence of God's work in your life could you point to if someone asked about your faith and your life's purpose? How has God's power brought healing or restoration to your life?
- John was in jail for rebuking Herod Antipas' marriage to a woman who was both his niece and the former wife of his brother Phillip. Jesus didn't scorn John's question. He simply said healing people with leprosy was a key sign of God's kingdom breaking into our world. He was defeating lasting evils even worse than the temporary Roman puppets of the Herod family. What ministries does your community need that take patience to see how they advance God's kingdom?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you pointed John's vision beyond his current situation to the eternal glory he will share when God remakes our world. Give me patience and faith when you don't seem to be fixing things all at once. Amen.

Doubly Excluded, yet the only one to give thanks

SATURDAY 1.25.25 Luke 17:11-19

On his way to Jerusalem (cf. [Luke 9:51](#)), Jesus met ten people with leprosy who lived on the border between Samaria and Galilee. “Are they Jews or Samaritans? Since people with skin diseases are excluded from normal society, their ethnicity doesn’t matter.” * We know at least one, a Samaritan, faced double exclusion—he was both a “leper” and a Samaritan, an outcast for both health and ethnic reasons. Jesus healed all ten when they called out to him for mercy. Yet the reason we know one was a Samaritan was that he—a man most Jews would have considered spiritually “unclean”—was the only one who returned to thank Jesus. Jesus highlighted this man's gratitude, asking about the other nine who didn't return to give thanks. Once again Jesus' healing love crossed all social and religious barriers. The one person society would have considered least worthy showed the most appropriate response to God's grace.

- The nine who didn't return to thank Jesus probably followed proper religious protocol—going straight to the priests as instructed. “Perhaps, once they’d seen the priest (the priest who lived locally had the responsibility to declare when people were healed from such diseases), they were afraid to go back and identify themselves with Jesus, who by now was a marked man.... Luke doesn’t say that they were any less cured, but he does imply that they were less grateful.” ** The Samaritan chose gratitude over ritual, returning first to thank Jesus. His outsider status may have made him more aware of the gift he'd received. “It is not only the nine ex-lepers who are shown up. It is all of us who fail to thank God ‘always and for everything’, as Paul puts it ([Ephesians 5:20](#)).” *** How might your own struggles or difficulties make you more appreciative of God's blessings? What blessings have you forgotten to thank God for?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, for continuing to love me despite all the “thank you’s” I’ve left unsaid, thank you. Nurture in me a heart that overflows with gratitude for all your faithful love. Amen.

* Richard B. Vinson, study note on Luke 17:12 in The CEB Study Bible. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013, p. 147 NT.

** N. T. Wright, *Luke for Everyone* (New Testament for Everyone Book 4) (p. 206). Westminster John Knox Press. Kindle Edition.

*** *Ibid.*

Prayer Requests – cor.org/prayer *Prayers of peace and comfort for:*

To **Rick Bartley** following the death of **Sevene Bartley** (Wife), who died 12/20/2024.

To **Michael Springer** following the death of **Elizabeth Springer** (Mother), who died 12/30/2024.

To **Nancy McKeever** following the death of **John McKeever** (Husband), who died 1/1/2025.

To **Chuck Bloom** following the death of **Mary Bloom** (Wife), who died 1/2/2025.

To **Kelly Shorten** following the death of **Scott Shorten** (Husband), who died 1/7/2025.