



Sermon: [When Jesus Touches You, Jesus Heals You](#) – Todd Goldschmidt
Sunday Service 10:15 am – February 12th, 2012 – At [Living Hope Lutheran Church](#)

Lesson/Sermon Text: Mark 1:40-45 – (NIV 1984)

A Man With Leprosy

⁴⁰ A man with leprosy^[a] came to him and begged him on his knees, “If you are willing, you can make me clean.” ⁴¹ Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. “I am willing,” he said. “Be clean!” ⁴² Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cured.

⁴³ Jesus sent him away at once with a strong warning: ⁴⁴ “See that you don’t tell this to anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them.” ⁴⁵ Instead he went out and began to talk freely, spreading the news. As a result, Jesus could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside in lonely places. Yet the people still came to him from everywhere.

^a 40 The Greek word was used for various skin diseases affecting the skin – not necessarily leprosy.



Sermon: [When Jesus Touches You, Jesus Heals You](#) – Todd Goldschmidt

Sunday Service 10:15 am – February 12th, 2012 – At [Living Hope Lutheran Church](#)

Do you remember Ryan White? He was born December 6, 1971 and died on April 8, 1990, one month before his high school graduation. Ryan was a teenager from Kokomo, Indiana who became a national poster child for those diagnosed with HIV/AIDS because he was expelled from his middle school for being HIV positive. A hemophiliac, Ryan contracted the AIDS virus via a blood transfusion in 1984. At first he was given only six months to live. Although his doctors stressed, emphatically, that Ryan posed no risk to others, students in his school, their parents and even some of the teacher rallied against his return to the classroom. Ryan White appeared frequently in the public media with celebrities like Elton John, Michael Jackson and Phil Donahue. Ryan surprised even his own doctors by living five years longer than expected.

In our text we read about a “man with leprosy.” Just like Ryan White in the misinformation that surrounded the infancy of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, this man was an outcast in his society—an emotional, physical and even spiritual pariah. In stark contrast to the judgment and complacency of His society, Jesus looked on the man with compassion, reached out His hand, touched him and healed him. In our day, too, Jesus reaches into the stench of our human condition—beyond the judgment and complacency of those who will not—and brings comfort and healing to people in need. Our goal today, as we meditate on this biblical account, is that each of us who has been touched by Jesus would believe that we are cleansed by Him from every sinful spot and stain, and that we might be motivated, in response, to reach out with His healing touch to others. May God the Holy Spirit work through this Word of God to accomplish His work within each of us!

The plight of a leper in Jesus’ day and age was extremely pitiful. Under the restrictions listed by God’s prophet, Moses, in Leviticus chapter 13, lepers had to live separate from the rest of God’s people. The corresponding Hebrew word for the Greek word “leper” has as its root a word which means “to strike down” or to “scourge.” Leprosy was considered God’s scourge upon the sinner, a disease that was dreaded not so much for its hygienic implications as for its spiritual ones. In fact, so closely was leprosy associated with sin that the leprous man literally “begged [Jesus] on his knees, ‘If you are willing, you can make me clean,’” rather than imploring him to “heal” him or “cure” him as we might expect. The very fact that this poor man prostrated himself before Jesus was an act of worship. He knew, by faith, that Jesus was fully capable of cleansing him of his horrific skin condition—that is, if He was “willing.” That expression, too, demonstrated his trust in Jesus’ decision making ability as to what was in his best interests. This Spirit-filled leper humbly resigned himself to the will of the One who was infinitely wiser than he.



“Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. “I am willing,” he said. “Be clean!” Jesus deep-seated compassion for this “unclean” believer moved Him to do something that was totally unacceptable in Jewish society: he physically “touched” the leper. In Jewish society, leprosy was one of the “fathers of uncleanness.” Touching a leper stood second only to defilement from touching a dead body. Alfred Edersheim wrote in his book *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, “No one was even to salute (a leper) . . . No less a distance than six feet must be kept from a leper; or, if the wind came from that direction, a hundred was scarcely sufficient. Rabbi Meier would not eat an egg purchased in a street where there was a leper. Another Rabbi boasted that he always threw stones at them to keep them far off, while others hid themselves or ran away.” Yet Jesus, the Rabbi from Nazareth, didn’t recoil from touching this lowliest leper in order to cleanse him and bring him back into fellowship with God’s people. His merciful touch was accompanied by His omnipotent imperative, “Be clean!”

Miraculously—“Immediately”—“the leprosy left him and he was cured!” It would’ve been more consistent with the original Greek text if the NIV would’ve translated the verb as “he was cleansed,” as the New American Standard Bible—the NASB—and other translations do. At any rate, this once leprous outcast was instantly restored to physical, emotional and spiritual health! He could once again participate not only in society, but far more importantly, in the worship life of God’s people Israel. That’s evident by Jesus’ subsequent actions and words. We’re told that He “sent him away at once with a strong warning: ‘See that you don’t tell this to anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them.’” His command sounds very similar to the words He spoke to the ten lepers who “stood at a distance” and appealed to Him for mercy. “Go, show yourselves to the priests,” Jesus instructed them. “And as they went, they were cleansed” (Luke 17). Those lepers—and the one in our text—knew what Jesus meant by His command that they show themselves to the priest. Only priests could certify that a leper had been completely cleansed and could therefore return to worship at God’s temple and offer the prescribed sacrifices to God for their gracious healing.

Of course, there’d be a double-bonus in this case: 1) this leper could be certified as “temple worthy” once more; and 2) the man’s cleansing would serve as a powerful “testimony” to those priests that Jesus really was the long-promised Messiah. It would take an awfully hard-hearted priest to deny Jesus’ miraculous power. Ironically, most of the religious leaders of His day had ossified souls and petrified consciences. The scribes and Pharisees, the teachers of the law and the Sadducees, were often on the receiving end of Jesus’ words of judgment and condemnation for their hypocrisy and for being blind spiritual guides, leading God’s people further and further from the truth and deeper and deeper into a “works-righteous” approach to their eternal salvation. But why would Jesus sternly command this cleansed leper: “See to it that you don’t tell this to anyone”? Hasn’t He commanded us to “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation” (Mark 16:15)? What’s up with His prohibition here? Our text tells us: “Instead” of obeying Jesus’ command, the newly-cleansed leper “went out and began to talk freely, spreading the news. As a result, Jesus could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside in lonely places.”



The unfortunate result of this man's well-intentioned disobedience was the Jesus' kingdom work was temporarily impeded. He could no longer enter a town conspicuously, but instead was forced to conduct His ministry in desolate areas much like John the Baptist had done before Him. Yet in the same way that folks flocked out to see and hear John and to be baptized by him in the Jordan River, so "the people still came to" Jesus "from everywhere," hungry for His healing touch. Jesus knew that there was risk involved when He cleansed this leper. He knew that the man's nascent sanctification might not be up to the challenge of remaining silent about his cleansing. He realized that His ministry might be stalled or thrown off course temporarily. Yet His compassion for this man overrode those concerns. He set aside personal risks and social stigma to reach out and touch the untouchable. Jesus' touch & word made the most foul clean. They still do today.

They have with us. Now as far as I know, no one here this morning has leprosy. But so often in Scripture physical leprosy represents the spiritual pickle that we're all in by nature. Isaiah's words apply to each of us equally. He said that the "leprosy"—if you will—of our "iniquities have separated us from our God" and the festering wounds of "our sins have hidden his face from us, so that he will not hear" (59:2). He won't hear you, or me, when we make excuses for our immoral behavior, blame others for the evil we do, or gloss over the good we fail to do.

Fact is, Paul wrote in his letter to the Romans: "Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that *every* mouth may be silenced and the *whole world* held accountable to God. Therefore *no one* will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin" (3:19-20). What can we say in our defense? Absolutely nothing! God—who sees through our flimsy facades as if they were the emperor's new clothes—has every right to condemn us to hell because of our sin. He's holy; we're sinful. And that situation being what it is, we cannot stand in His judgment much less abide in His eternal presence. Christ gave us this vision of heaven in His revelation to the aged Apostle John: "Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful (21:27a).

Well, that leaves me out of heaven. It leaves you and everyone else out, too. Had God the Son not left His heavenly home for the mess we've made of this world, we'd be forever out of luck. But the Bible says, "Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death" (Heb. 2:14-15). When Jesus died on the cross, He died with all our sins and guilt charged to His account. He stepped in front of the Judge, took the punishment we'd earned and the condemnation we deserved, and said, "Lay it all on me instead." He died in your place, as your Substitute, and by His Spirit He called you to faith in Him as your Savior. No you have God's assurance that "there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." Why? "Because all of [us] who have been baptized into Christ"—no matter how young we were when that miracle took place—"have clothed [ourselves] with Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:26-27). At that moment, our adoption into God's family was finalized, and our "names" were indelibly inscribed "in the Lamb's book of life" in heaven (Rev. 21:27b)!

Sunday Worship Service: 10:15 A.M. (Sunday School/Adult Bible Class 9am)

7305 208th Ave NE, Redmond, WA 98053

(425) 868-9404 - www.lhlc.org, pastortodd@lhlc.org

Page 4 of 5



More names need to be added to that book before Judgment Day. The “predestined” must be “called” to faith in Christ through the gospel, so that they can be “justified” in God’s sight here in time and ultimately “glorified” at our Savior’s side for all eternity in Paradise. We’re God’s agents, His ambassadors, to take that glorious good news out to the spiritual “lepers” who are all around us where we live and work and recreate. Jesus is both willing *and* able to answer our prayers in their behalf and to give us the very words we need to witness effectively for Him. Our words in His behalf can be quite simple. And if they’re His Words that we share, as they should be, they possess the power to create not only sorrow over sin but also joy in the truth of God’s pardon! Tell others that God loves them. That He sent His only Son to be their Savior. Relate to them a Jesus who is relatable—a Savior who had so much compassion for lepers and prostitutes, tax-collectors and sinners, social outcasts and societal misfits that His enemies said of Him in disgust: “He even welcomes sinners and eats with them.” What a compliment! In Jesus, we each have the Deliverer we so desperately need: One who loved us enough, despite our sins, to die for us on the cross and rise again so that we can live forever with Him in heaven. That’s the Savior we want to tell others about, and let the Holy Spirit take it from there! Amen.