

It's such a joy to be able to come and visit with you again, Tapestry Community Church. It's been a joy to continue to come and visit and meet with you. It's a joy because as I look out, there's less and less strangers and more familiar faces. So I'm glad to be here this morning. Today we're going to be in a relatively brief story in the Gospel of Luke. Luke chapter 5, verses 12 through 14. Luke 5, 12 through 14.

But before I read God's word, would you pray with me? Heavenly Father, I thank you so much for your word. I thank you for sending your son Jesus to come to this world to rescue, to save, to cleanse. Heavenly Father, I ask even now that you would pour your Holy Spirit out into this room. Would you soften our hearts, open our minds, make us receptive to your word, So we might not only hear, but then we might respond with obedience. I thank you and I pray this all in the name of your son, Jesus. Amen.

So Luke chapter five, verses 12 through 14. While he, that being Jesus, 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. And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, I will be clean. And immediately the leprosy left him. And Jesus 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.

The human soul is so fascinating. And one of the reasons it's so fascinating is because it can just feel an absolute array of different emotions. It can feel those typical ones that we might consider normal, you know, the first emotions that come to mind when we think of emotions, things like fear, anger, sorrow, joy, basically all the characters from inside out. But it can also feel very complex emotions. that can change how we view the world, how we view other people, complex emotions that change how we view ourselves and God. I once had a friend that I was regularly meeting with, the disciple, and as we were meeting, it came out that he felt a particular strong and complex emotion.

He felt dirty. He felt gross. All the time. It's just the way he saw himself. Like if someone would give him a compliment, just instinctively he would think to himself, if they really knew who I was, they wouldn't say that. He actually did not do very well in school, not because he wasn't bright, but because he was afraid that if he actually tried, people would see what he was really made of. And he, in his own mind, he already knew what he was made of. He was inadequate, shameful.

He would put up a fake persona, he would just wear a mask wherever he went, and he lived in constant fear that someone might find out and discover the truth, right? That he was fundamentally tainted, broken, gross. And this feeling, it was just like the constant background noise of his heart. It was as true to his soul as true was that the sky was blue and the grass was green.

Someone who was trying to disciple him, how do you help someone with such a complex emotion? What help does Jesus give to someone burdened with these feelings? Well today, as we look at Luke

chapter five, we're gonna see if Jesus has anything to say to such powerful feelings. And we're gonna do that by looking at the plight of the leper and the power of Christ. Let's look at two points. The plight of the leper and the power of Christ. So first, let's spend some time looking at the plight of the leper, starting in verse 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. And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, I will be clean. And immediately, the leprosy left him. So here we see a story of Jesus' power as God.

A man comes to him who has not just leprosy, but our text says that he is full of leprosy. He has an incredibly intense case of leprosy. And when the Bible talks about leprosy, it's referring to a whole manner of skin diseases, but all of them were contagious. And Jesus shows his divine power as God by healing the man of his leprosy.

Every other person who ever heals in the Bible does so either by praying to God or in the name of Christ, but Jesus displays his divine nature, his divine power by healing according to his own power, an act that only God can do. Jesus wills, and so the man is healed. But that's not the only thing that's going on in this text. There's another layer of what's going on here that Luke wants us to see.

Because what does the leper say? Does the leper ask Jesus to heal him? No. The leper asks Jesus to make him clean. Now, why would the leper ask him to make him clean? Like, why would he use that phrase? Well, to understand why he asked Jesus to make him clean, we need a little bit more background to the Old Testament system of worship.

So in the Old Testament, specifically laid out in Leviticus and Numbers and Deuteronomy, there are these two categories that are presented that are really important for temple worship. And those two categories are clean and unclean. And things that were unclean were not allowed to enter into the temple. They weren't allowed to draw near to the presence of God in the Old Testament temple. Now there are a lot of things in the Old Testament that can make you unclean. Things like coming in contact with a dead body.

You could become unclean if you come in contact with blood or if you have a contagious skin disease like leprosy. And in a lot of ways, this does make sense. We still have these categories in some way to this day. I think the closest parallel to being unclean is being sick. When kids get sick, we keep them home till they get better, and in part so that they don't get other kids sick at school. And then as soon as they get better, back to school they go.

But what happens when you're contagious forever? What happens when you're contagious to the touch? How do you live when you can never get better? And so in those days, a leper was forced to live a certain lifestyle. Leviticus 13 says, the leprous person who has the disease shall wear torn clothes and let the hair of his head hang loose. He shall cover his upper lip and cry out, unclean, unclean. He shall remain unclean as long as he has the disease. He is unclean.

So lepers had to let their hair grow long and be left unkempt. They had to wear torn clothes so that at a glance people would know that they were lepers. Lepers could not live in town with everyone else. They had to live isolated from everyone. They couldn't work.

And whenever a leper would travel by foot from one place to another, if they ever got within shouting distance to another person, they had to scream, unclean, unclean. And a leper was not allowed to go to the temple. So this is why the leper doesn't just ask Jesus to heal him, he asks him to make him clean. The leper did not only want to be healed, he wanted to be able to return to the temple. He wanted that thing that is separating him from God to be taken away. Can you imagine how this kind of life as a leper would feel?

Unclean. Unclean. The isolation, No friends. No family. The hopelessness. I mean, why live? Why get up in the morning? Your body is breaking down and it steals a sense of purpose. The self-hatred. The shame. You know, Shame is a word that we don't use as often in our culture, but that doesn't mean that it's not an emotion that we still feel. If honor is that feeling of respectability, that feeling of living nobly, shame is that feeling of deep embarrassment. If honor makes a person feel respected, shame makes a person feel unworthy, and it seeks to hide. Shame and guilt are often kind of used very interchangeably around sin, but there are honestly some slight differences between the two. If guilt says, I hate what I've done, shame says, I hate the kind of person that it makes me. Shame hates itself and wishes it was different.

It has a tendency to feel gross and unworthy of good things. Shame feels like the belief, I am unclean. Have you ever felt that weight of shame? Like this leper, have you ever felt unclean? Like you're too dirty or gross or messed up to approach God?

Have you ever sinned and knew you messed up and then just lost all the motivation to do the things of God? I can't read my Bible now. I can't pray to God now. Have you ever sinned on Saturday and the next morning you just felt, I can't go to church. Not like this. I've felt that. When you'd rather crawl away and hide than draw near to God. isolated like a leper?

Now maybe some of you in here really don't know what I'm talking about. Maybe you're thinking to yourself, I don't know if I've ever quite experienced the shame like that of what you're talking about. Well, that's not a problem because I'm quickly going to walk through an exercise that will make you all feel shame right now. And don't worry, this will make you very uncomfortable, okay?

So, just imagine with me that we had a large projector in the middle of the room set up in church, and there's a large, you know, screen behind me. And we're all sitting here in church together, but what's playing on this projector behind me is every sinful thought you've had in the last year. Minute after minute. Hour after hour, we're just watching all the thoughts that have crossed your mind.

How does that make you feel? Does it make you feel uncomfortable? Like you'd want to hide? That makes me uncomfortable. That makes me want to run away and hide. Our sins have made us unclean. They have filled us with shame. And there's all sorts of things that we try to do in response to our sin and shame to clean ourselves up. And maybe you don't even realize that that's what you're doing. You sin, you know you made a mistake, you feel shame, and so for the next week or so, maybe you're beating yourself up.

Maybe you actually withhold good things from yourself as a form of punishment. You refuse to let good things come your way as almost like penance for your sins? Or maybe that's actually when you really read your Bible. That's when you really push into God.

You know you failed and you sinned, so now you have to be extra good to feel clean again. Or maybe you just spend a little time away from God. Just need to take a break, just a week or two. You sinned and you just need to create some distance between you and that sin. And then once the sin feels like it's far enough in the rear view mirror, now you can approach God again. What about you? How do you try to clean yourself up after you know you've sinned? How do you try to make things right with God?

What's ironic is that all of these attempts to clean yourself up, they actually reveal a deep misunderstanding of sin. because all of those attempts to clean ourselves up, it assumes that we can clean ourselves up. It assumes that our problem of sin is so small that a week's worth of beating ourselves up, or being better, or staying away from God, that that sin is enough to wash it away from our account, to make ourselves right with God. But our problem is not that small. Our problem is like the leper. Sin is like a chronic disease that we don't have the power to heal. We don't have the power to wash our sin and our shame away. So what does the leper do in the face of uncurable uncleanness?

When he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and begged him, Lord, if you will, you can make me clean. The plight of the leper drove him to the power of Christ. Verse 12, when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and begged him, Lord, if you will, you can make me clean. And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched

him. I love this. The Lord does not call Jesus mister or sir or even rabbi. He calls him Lord. He does not see him as simply a teacher or a spiritual guide. He sees him as something more.

One who is the power to undo what cannot be undone. To fix what cannot be broken. And Jesus stretches out his hand, just as God in the Old Testament stretched out his mighty hand again and again, and he touches the leper. There's another thing you need to understand about things that are clean and unclean in the Old Testament.

Unclean things make other things unclean when they touch them. And again, this really makes sense to us, right? If mud got splashed on my clean shirt, the cleanness of my shirt would not make the mud clean, right? The uncleanness of the mud makes my shirt dirty. Even more so in Old Testament times when someone has leprosy and their skin disease is contagious to touch them would be to be made unclean. It's the whole reason this leper is living the way that he is. It's because his uncleanness isn't contagious to the touch. But Jesus chooses to reach out his hand and touch this leper who is unclean and contagious. Jesus didn't have to do that. Jesus could have spoken and made the man clean.

In other places in the Gospels, Jesus commands demons to flee and they go. He rebukes a fever and the person gets better. Jesus rebukes a storm and it ceases. He commands death to flee and people rise from the dead. But here, Jesus chooses to touch a person separated from God's people. He shows his compassion, his love, and his power by reaching out and touching him.

And you see, what's amazing about this is God is totally unlike any other being in creation. He is holy. His moral perfection is so pure and perfect that it makes him unlike anything else in existence. God's holiness is unlike anything else because the unclean cannot tarnish the holiness of God.

We cannot mar his perfection with our uncleanness. Not only is Jesus not made unclean at the touch of the leper, the leper is made clean by the touch of Jesus. This is the hope of everyone who feels unclean, dirty, shameful. You do not make God unclean when you touch him. God makes you holy when he touches you. God's holiness is such that all who come in contact with his gracious love, they don't make him filthy, but they are made clean. This is the hope of all the unclean.

All who come to Jesus are made clean by his holy and mighty touch. And Jesus is still reaching out his hand, filled with power to cleanse from all sin and shame. How does Jesus cleanse us from our sin and shame? He trades us. He trades our sin for His perfect righteousness. On the cross, all of your sin was counted onto Christ. As first Peter says, he bore our sins in his body on the cross.

Every single sin, every single thing that would have played on the projector earlier, and everything outside of that, all was counted onto him. Everything that made you feel shameful, or gross, or unclean. It was sponged away onto the soul of Christ. And what did God do after counting all of our sins onto him? He poured out onto Christ all the punishment those deeds deserved. All your sin has been absorbed by another. All God's judgment has been imbibed by someone else. So if Christ took all your sin onto himself, what are you in Christ before the Heavenly Father? If something unclean has all its uncleanness removed, what does it become? As the Lord says in Isaiah 1, though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool.

Jesus not only took the record of all your sin, he also counted onto you his perfect record of sinless perfection. If you could go into heaven and open the record books of heaven, for all those who trust in Jesus, if you go next to their name, it would say, as righteous as Christ. No matter how you feel, it's just true of you. Your sin has been counted onto Jesus. His perfect righteousness has been counted onto you. God sees you as if you are perfect, even though you aren't. Because Christ's perfect record is counted onto you.

Does that seem too good to believe? Too intense of a word, perfect? Hebrews 10, 14 says, by a single offering, that's Christ being sacrificed in our place, God has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified, who are growing in holiness. And this trade is yours if you trust in Christ.

If you turn from your sin to him, it's all gone. Sin, wrath, punishment. In the eyes of God, all your sin was put onto Christ. It's not what defines you anymore. Christ's work to wash your sin away, Christ's touch to cleanse you from sin, that is who you are now.

I'm at a point in my life where sadly all of my grandparents have passed away. But my wife, Kat, she is blessed in that she still has all four of her grandparents. And truthfully, it's a huge blessing to me because it's like having grandparents all over again. And Kat adores her grandparents, which is easy to do. They're incredibly lovely. And actually, all of Kat's jewelry has come from different family members and different grandparents.

Except for her aura ring, the one that's like the smart ring that tracks like her health and stuff, that's not from anyone. And many pieces of her jewelry aren't just gifts from her family, they were actually owned by her grandmothers. Rings that were held and owned by her grandma. In fact, her wedding ring was the one worn by her grandmother for decades.

Now, if the cat were to lose any of her jewelry, we would have the money to replace the metal and the jewels, but I could never truly replace them. Because they aren't just metal and jewels, they are special because of who they're from. Those rings are special because who handled them, who touched them,

who they're associated with, who possessed them, who they belong to. That's what makes them invaluable. It's what gives them an honor more than metal and stones.

If you trust in Jesus, you have been touched by Christ. You are his possession. You are not something that's unclean or even something that's common. You have the honor of belonging to him. His righteousness counted on you, has washed you clean. and your uncleanness hasn't made him unclean. His imputed righteousness has made you holy before the Lord. He has counted all your sins upon himself. He's counted you with his righteousness.

1 John 1 says, but if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from all sin. The leper bows before Jesus and says, Lord, if you will, you can make me clean. And Jesus stretches out his hand and touched him, saying, I will be clean. And immediately, the leprosy left him. Do you trust that Jesus will cleanse you if you ask him? That if you go to him, he'll respond by saying, I will be clean.

This is important because if you don't truly trust and believe that Jesus can and is willing to make you clean, what you're saying is, I believe that my sin and my uncleanness is greater than Christ. You are saying that there is a depth of uncleanness that God's love is not powerful enough to love. You're saying there's a depth of sin that Jesus isn't powerful enough to wash away. And that is simply not true. No sin is mightier than Jesus' power to wash. No uncleanness is so filthy, is so filthy that it's mightier than the power of God through Jesus on the cross. No sin is strong enough to turn away the avalanche of God's love. Not what you've done, not what you're struggling with now. Do you have faith that Jesus has washed you clean?

Shame desires to hide. It fears being exposed. It feels like it deserves nothing good, but only contaminate whatever comes close. And so truthfully, it can be hard to rise to your feet, to come and bring these things that make you feel unclean before Jesus.

But just imagine, imagine what this leper experienced, sitting in the filth of his daily life, hair enclosed messy, body covered in sores, no friends, no hope, But then he hears a rumor of someone who cares and has power. When he hears the news of Jesus coming, he gets up. His steps begin to quicken when he sees Christ is near. Hope and desperation mixes as he sees Jesus. If he wills, I can be made clean. He wills. Join this leper.

In another story, Jesus was walking in a crowd and all sorts of people were running into him and a woman, desperate for healing, snuck forward and just touched the very edge of his robe and was healed. And Jesus, feeling that power had gone out from him, turned to his disciples and said, who touched me? And they're all like, Jesus, what are you talking about? Like we're in this huge crowd. A

whole bunch of people are bumping into you. There is a danger. There is a danger of not being like the leper, of not being like the woman who touched the edge of Jesus' cloak, but instead of being like the people in the crowd, bumping into Jesus, but never knowing his power.

Of course I know Jesus. I bump into him all the time. I listen to worship music. I go to Bible study. I go to church. I've grown up in church. Christianity is all I know, and praise God for that. Those are wonderful things that Christians do and should do. But a Christian truly is someone who has gone to Jesus. fallen before him, put their faith in Jesus that he has forgiven their sins by dying for their sins.

Someone like the leper, they trusted Jesus and he has made them clean of all their sin. And I love how this story with the leper ends. He is made clean. Jesus charges him not to tell anyone about this miracle, most likely because it wasn't yet time for Jesus' mission on earth to be fully known. And then Jesus tells him to go and make the sacrifice that lepers were to make if they ever got better. Jesus tells him to return to that place that the leper could not enter. He tells him to return to the temple of God, to see the people of God, this leper gets to enter again into the place of worship because he was made clean.

Let me close in prayer. Heavenly Father, I thank you that you love us and you know us. that you see us and nothing is hidden from your powerful sight. And I thank you, Lord God, that you love us with an immense love. Thank you that you sent your Son, Jesus, to wash away what could not be washed, to fix what could not be made unbroken, to make us clean, to give us a new identity not bound or defined by what we have done, but what ashames us, but by your cleansing power. Heavenly Father, I pray for everyone in this room that if they, for those who do not know you, that they would come to trust in you, and I pray for all those who do know you, that you would just further encourage them, strengthen them in the powerful cleansing work of Christ for their souls. I thank you and I pray this all in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.