**Jesus and the Leper**

**The Word**

Read together Luke 5:12-16

**The Big Idea**

This broken and isolated man with leprosy displays a bold and audacious faith. And Jesus offers his healing, cleansing, and hospitality by restoring this man to health and to community. As Jesus followers, this story is a reminder of the forgiveness Jesus offers us as well as the privilege to offer his compassion and hospitality to those in the world who desperately need it.

**Questions for Discussion**

1. Most of us have considered biblical stories involving lepers before. What from Sunday’s message was new or what helped you to appreciate the healing of leprosy in a deeper way?

2. Consider holiness from the perspective of the religious leaders (holiness = separation from sin and sinners) and from the perspective of Jesus (holiness = compassion and love). What issues and questions does this raise in your mind?

3. Like the man with leprosy, we all have a spiritual disease that renders us “unclean” apart from the forgiveness and salvation of Jesus. For many of us, there are still areas in our lives where we feel unclean and we need to hear those words of Jesus, “I am willing. Be clean.” Practically speaking, how do you navigate those areas of shame or “unclean-ness”? What does your relationship with God look like in those challenging areas?

4. As you consider offering compassion and hospitality to others in Jesus’ name, are there any people or types of people that come to mind for you? What would it look like for you to lean into that at this time?

**Digging Deeper: Sermon Outline**

I. Consider this man who is “covered with leprosy”

A. The physical implications: Hanses disease (leprosy) causes disfiguring skin sores and creates nerve damage in the extremities. It was ugly, degenerative, and incurable.

B. The social implications: because it was thought to be so highly contagious, leprosy was possibly the most relationally isolating disease in the ancient world. This man may have lived years without any human touch

C. The spiritual implications: this man was considered “unclean” in an ancient Jewish culture. In the Old Testament, God’s command to “Be holy as I am holy” carried with it ritual laws to keep the people pure and to remove all that was unclean from their midst. See Leviticus 13:45-46. In the first century, there was a general connection between physical disease and spiritual sin in most people’s minds.

D. So this man had his entire world stripped from him and he lost his identity as anything other than “unclean.”

E. This man displays bold, audacious faith in Jesus. He shows up where he is unwelcome and lays it all on the line, putting his trust in Jesus as the only one who can help him. He is a model of true faith.

II. Consider Jesus

A. He has a heart of compassion: “I am willing.” (v. 13). Mark’s gospel mentions that Jesus was “filled with compassion.”

B. He reaches out and touches this man

1. To the crowds, this touch would have rendered Jesus “unclean.” And to all common sentiment, when clean comes in contact with disease, the disease spreads to the clean, not vice versa. But with Jesus this works in reverse.

2. To the man, this may be the first time he has received physical touch in years. This touch communicates Jesus “physical hospitality,” his acceptance, closeness.

 C. He sends his man to the priest to be examined and declared “clean.”

Jesus not only heals this man, but more importantly, he brings him back into fellowship with his family, friends, and spiritual community. It is an act of hospitality.

 D. Jesus regularly welcomes the “unclean” and unacceptable into God’s family

1. The story of calling Levi in Luke 5:27-32 is a companion story in that Jesus is taking another “unclean” and unacceptable person and welcoming him into God’s family.

 2. What is the true meaning of holiness?

a. For the religious leadership, holiness is defined in terms of separation from all that is unclean

b. For Jesus, holiness is defined in terms of compassion and love for those in need.

III. Consider ourselves today

 A. Where do you see yourself in this man with leprosy?

 1. Sin is like leprosy of the heart: a degenerative disease, deadly, incurable

2. We all experience feeling “unclean” in certain areas and wonder if we can ever be forgiven and made clean.

 3. The gospel is that Jesus says, “I am willing. Be clean.”

 B. Where can you be like Jesus to those in need?

1. Who are the “untouchables” in today’s society or in your own mind to whom you can extend compassion and hospitality rather than avoiding and remaining separate from?

2. Who are the isolated, lonely, burdened in your own life who you can love in simple ways?