

## Sermon Series: Spurred on to Holiness (and Power) by Immersing Ourselves into the Life of Christ Through the Eyes of the Apostles – A Harmony of All Four Gospels

Sermon Title: Only Jesus Can Heal Leprosy of the Soul.

July 1, 2018

Theme verse: Acts 4:13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus. (ESV)

Introduction: The time I visited a dying AIDS patient. Should I wear a mask? What if he sneezed on me? Would I contract the dreaded disease as well? In those days we knew very little about AIDS and its ability or inability to spread. What I want to focus on was the young man's inability to equate his present suffering and pending death with any sinfulness on his part.

Context

Exegesis

Include Barclay's description of NT leprosy.

Main point: Our Lord is ready to welcome and cleanse the foulest of souls, but the person who needs to be cleansed must first realize they are polluted before cleansing can be done.

1. The man full of leprosy was painfully aware of his own impurities and sin. *came to him, beseeching him; and kneeling down, he fell on his face and worshiped, saying, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean."*
  - Do we ever find Jesus healing anybody who didn't want to be healed or who thought they didn't need to be healed?
  - The leprosy made him an outcast from 1) society as a whole, 2) his own family, and 3) from access to God's house and God's altar.
  - The same could be said of Zaccheus or Mary the prostitute, or the demoniacs. They all knew just how defiled they were. *Luke 18:10–14 [10] "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. [11] The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. [12] I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.' [13] But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' [14] I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted."* (ESV)
  - Unlike this leper, many people today have leprous hearts but are unwilling to

seek cleansing from the only one who can cleanse them. *Romans 1:28–32 [28] And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. [29] They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, [30] slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, [31] foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. [32] Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them. (ESV)* The point is these people are aware of their sinful hearts and leprous souls. What's the difference? Is it the degree of pain and suffering? May have a lot to do with it, but there were other lepers who could have come but didn't. So, in the end it is God's sovereign choice according to *Ephesians 1:3–4 [3] Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, [4] even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. (ESV)*

2. Our Lord welcomes with open arms even the foulest of sinners. *And Jesus, moved with compassion, reached out his hand and touched him, saying to him, "I am willing; be cleansed."*
  - Here is a message for any who feel they are too far gone to be accepted into Christ's family. The man was full of leprosy – it had spread all over his body. Nothing more repugnant than this disease, yet Christ touched the man.
  - Did Jesus break OT law by touching the leper when the law clearly states no contact? No, Jesus can do whatever he wants with the law since he is the lawgiver. And what applies to man does not apply to God. Murder is wrong for all men but the taking of a life for whatever reason is not wrong for God. The Creator can do whatever he wants with His creation.
    - There seems to be great confusion today about the covenants. Are there OT laws we are to keep? Are there some we don't?
      - Galatians 3:25 [25] But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, (ESV)
      - Galatians 4:21 [21] Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not listen to the law? (ESV)
      - Matthew 5:17 [17] "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. (ESV) plyrow = complete or bring to completion.

#### Application

- Are we really as welcoming, gracious, inviting to those whom the world would prefer to

discard in their arrogant pride?