

Jesus Cleanses a Leper

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[0:00] So, simple story we're going to unpack and it's really fun, but really I want to fast forward a little bit just to take a peek. So if you're following me, chapter 5 verse 17 says this, and the power of the Lord was with him to heal.

And the power of the Lord was with him to heal. So we talk about the Holy Spirit as we're going through the book of Luke and how really the gospel is spread. You see actually even Jesus as he begins this message, as he's anointed with the Holy Spirit, it's that spirit, it's that power that allows him to heal.

And so we see him as he's healing. We're really going to talk about healing and this is a hard one because I have no doubt that we all have things that we would like God to heal in us.

Actually, maybe we have people who, in our families, our loved ones, who we would love for him to heal. And the truth is we see Jesus healing a lot, but he doesn't heal everyone.

So the question really is, we ask this question and we get this a lot. And maybe in the Chinese culture especially, I mean, health is just such a crucial, crucial thing.

[1:03] It's the thing that we really, maybe especially as a culture, we hold on to the most. And actually we also, maybe some of us know that when you are dealing with ill health, when you are dealing with sickness, how in tune with your own futility you are.

I was just talking to Rachel earlier, just when, when just imagining someone going through a chronic illness and just the challenge that they must face, knowing that actually they may never get better. I know that we have doctors in our midst as well.

And we have a case here which Jesus does heal. And actually there's another example in John 5 where he does heal. He heals the cripple who's been crippled for 38 years by the pool waiting to be healed. And he goes and heals that person and you're like, great, Jesus does all the healing.

But then he only heals that person and then he leaves. There's a whole bunch of other people who have been dealing with things for the whole of their lives and he doesn't really heal them. So this question of does Jesus heal and how does he heal, who does he heal, is actually a very perplexing one.

And I'm here to tell you that I don't truly know the answer, but I can tell you a little bit more about why. As I look at the scriptures, I look at Jesus is trying to tell a story. He's trying to teach us something. Last week I asked you, why did he even perform miracles in the first place?

[2:08] It wasn't just because he wanted to grab attention. He did it because Nathan told us last week, just because he can. But really what he's doing is he's revealing to us a deeper reality. That there is more to this world than we can see.

Those of us who practice medicine, you'll know that you've been studying that actually the human body works in such a way. But what you see is that there's laws to the way the body works. But every time Jesus does a healing, he's basically peeling back the curtain and saying, but there is more.

I'm not fine. I'm not restricted by the laws of nature here. I can come in and I can do whatever I want. I transcend those laws. So he's revealing a deeper reality that there is more than what we can see.

And then he's also revealing his authority. He's displaying his authority saying, I have power even over these things. Jesus often told stories. He was one of the greatest storytellers. He would tell stories through parables.

And actually Keller was the one who said that actually Jesus told stories through healing. Because he doesn't heal everyone. But through the healings that he does, he's trying to tell us something. He's trying to teach us something.

[3:12] Another quote that I heard was, Jesus heals because healings preach. Jesus heals because healings preach. Through the healing, he's trying to show people something.

Are you tracking with me? When he's choosing to heal someone, yes, he does care about their overall just health. But he's trying to do something more. He's trying to show something more. Jesus is more concerned with our eternal dwelling as opposed to just our earthly well-being. When we're thinking about this whole topic of healing, we have to recognize that actually there is something bigger here. Often, often for us, God gets our attention the most when we have physical struggles.

When we have ill health. When we have mental health challenges. And it's in those moments we're asking God, can you heal? And he heals in his own time. Sometimes he heals well, immediately. And other times, seemingly, he doesn't heal at all. And we're here to unpack, well, what is that really all about? And if we zoom, zoom, zoom, zoom, zoom, zoom out, what we see here is that actually there was never supposed to be death in the first place.

[4:15] He created Adam and Eve for just communion with him. But at the moment, they turn their backs on him. They introduce sin. And what does sin lead to? Sin leads to death. And of course, Jesus doesn't heal everyone.

Because if he heals everyone, then none of us would die. Because it's our bodies slowly breaking down. But he has something that he's more concerned with. And that is our eternal well-being. You see, even the Apostle Paul says, three times I've asked God, can you take this thorn in the flesh away from me?

And yet he doesn't. And what does he say? My grace is sufficient. His power is made perfect in my weakness. His grace is sufficient for me. So we're going to unpack that a little bit and go through this.

So we start, verse 12. While he was in one of the cities, there came a man full of leprosy. So Luke's a little bit vague. It's just one of the cities. There came a man full of leprosy.

Now, so leprosy, I'm not a doctor. But I'll tell you a little bit about it. And it was a skin infection. Actually, in the Bible, it was a series of skin infections. And then as I was thinking about looking more into this, I was actually, you know what?

[5:23] We have some doctors in our midst who actually are maybe even much more informed about this. I've got Dr. Wendy right there, who's a dermatologist. I didn't dare ask Dr. Wendy, but I decided to ask her daughter, Annabelle, who sang for us today.

So I'm going to invite Annabelle up to actually share with us a little bit. Give her a round of applause. Hey, Annabelle. Yes.

So Annabelle has graciously agreed to share with us a little bit about this topic of leprosy and the case of leprosy. Just for us to paint a picture, she was like, do you want me to bring slides?

I was like, no, no slides. No slides. But we also did say, if you are really interested, feel free to Google whilst we're talking about leprosy.

But anyway, let's start. Annabelle, what area of medicine are you in? So I'm an infectious disease specialist, so this is really up my stream. So thank you for inviting me. And I didn't bring slides, unfortunately.

[6:21] What compels one to go into specializing in infectious disease? I think infectious disease is one of the few medical specialties you can cure. Because a lot of medical specialties like diabetes, heart disease, you take medicine and you kind of control it.

But infectious disease, you can get rid of the infection and the patient can just walk out without just medicine free. It takes a while, but it can get kind of disgusting sometimes.

But I think, for me, it gives me that satisfaction. Okay. And so those of us who have grown up in the church will have heard of leprosy a lot. Oh, yeah, the guy with leprosy.

But it's not something that we really hear in kind of modern-day world. So what is leprosy? And tell us a bit more about it. Okay, so leprosy, okay, a bit of biology background here.

Yeah. So in the world, we have something called bacteria. And bacteria are microscopic organisms, like things that infect our bodies.

[7:26] And leprosy is actually caused by a bacteria called *Mycobacterium leprae*. So *Mycobacterium* is in the same family of bacteria as tuberculosis, which you've probably heard of, TB, and also other very slow-growing bacteria.

And leprosy, the root of the name leprosy is actually for scaly in Greek. Because when you get leprosy, your skin starts to become very scaly and thickened.

Because it's a bacteria that infects not only your skin cells, but also deeper. It can infiltrate into the layers of tissue under your skin, even nerves, and even bone.

So it's a very, very slow-growing thing. And if you get it, you may only start developing visible symptoms maybe like six months to a year later.

And lepers are easy to spot because obviously your skin gets infected, and the face is especially affected. So lepers have things called leonine facies.

[8:34] So leonine facies, it's also Latin for being like a lion. So the skin of the face can be infected to the degree that it's so thickened that you look like a lion.

Basically, you look like really thick skin. They affect the nose. They affect the bridge of your nose. So the bridge of your nose kind of collapses, and you have this like the saddle of your nose collapses.

So you have a flat nose, and then you get like blobs on your face. And then it just, it's very easy to spot because your face is disfigured. Now, I mentioned that it also infects the nerves.

So we have nerves all over our body, down to the tips of our fingers. And if the nerves are affected, you can't feel anything through your fingertips or your toes. So that's how people actually, if they walk, or when we walk and when we touch things and when things are hot, we withdraw a hand because it can hurt us.

But if people's fingertips are nerveless, then they don't feel it and they get hurt. So lots of lepers actually have lost fingers, have lost toes, have lost the tip of the nose or tips of the ears, the entire ear.

[9:46] So it's actually very visibly deforming. And we've, I'm assuming it's very painful and itchy. It's probably not as painful because you have lost all sensation.

But it's painful psychologically because you are stigmatized. You are, because in the past, leprosy is almost as taboo as the plague.

So you would, actually, leprosy is still very prevalent in the world. There are about 200,000 new cases every year, especially in Southeast Asia. And there would be things in the past called leper colonies where they would isolate lepers and they would put them in colonies where they wouldn't live with normal people.

And they would live with one another and just make a living or just survive by themselves. And there are still leper colonies in the world. I think probably there are a few.

There's one that I searched is in Romania and has like 50 patients still. Yeah. And how does one contract leprosy? So leprosy is actually not as easily transmitted as we thought.

[10:55] So till now, we don't exactly know the route, but we suspect that it's caused by respiratory droplet transmission. So if you cough into someone or if you like sneeze and you kind of share the same like handkerchief, towel or you sneeze.

But it's not transmitted by sitting next to one another, hugging, sharing meals. It's usually by like very close contact.

And when I say close contact, I mean maybe like taking care of someone with leprosy, maybe with like more than 40 hours of contact per week, something like that. Yeah.

Maybe final question. And do people who suffer from leprosy end up recovering or what's the likelihood? Okay. So in the modern world, back in maybe 50, 60 years ago, there was no cure.

But in the modern world, you can take medicine to try to treat it like tuberculosis. There are three medicines, like in a combination therapy, and it takes six to 12 months depending on the severity of your disease.

[11:56] And it's six to 12 months, not just that. Yeah. Well, thank you. Round of applause for Dr. Annabelle Choi. Thank you. And just to – I wanted to have Annabelle share a little bit because it's something that we hear about and then we kind of just gloss over.

Someone who has leprosy and then you kind of just – you move on. But something that maybe – that you mentioned the most, just the psychological pain that came with it. It was back in that time, especially a social and spiritual death sentence because you're sent away.

There is stigma, and actually you were told, hey, actually, you can only be admitted back into community once you are completely healed. And it had to be a priest that actually checks, examines you, and then approves you back to go into community.

And in the meantime, you are sent out of the city. You're not even allowed in the city. And wherever you are near people, you would have to shout, unclean, unclean. You had to warn people about this. And actually, if you wanted to find out a little bit more, there are very detailed instructions from God to the Israelites in the Old Testament in Leviticus chapter 13, which talks a lot about what they have to do and how they have to be quarantined.

And quarantined, the word is still pretty fresh on our minds in terms of what it meant. So actually some of the stigma there. And the stigma really is like the plague or maybe now is like AIDS. There was lack of understanding.

[13:13] There was a lot of fear. And people would just be completely kicked out of society. So it's in that context that we have in mind as we move on here. While he was in one of the cities, there came a man full of leprosy.

So we can only imagine that this was someone who didn't just have a mild case. He was full of it. So he was covering all over his body. And he was sent out of the city. And just to even stop there for a second, and I've really not paid attention to this before.

There came a man full of leprosy. And I started, wait, how did this man even get there? He was supposed to be outside of the city. He's not actually supposed to be allowed in the city.

So how did he arrive? Or rather, what did he have to risk to get there? I can imagine what would have happened if he'd heard about this Jesus. Heard about these healings that were happening outside of the city.

And they were, hey, did you hear about that guy? He healed so-and-so's nephew. He healed that auntie from this. And then so he's hearing about these things. He's like, oh, I would love, I would love to meet this rabbi who can heal.

[14:16] You can sense the desperation, though, in the fact that he even made it into the city because that would have been a huge gamble. Now, no one would have touched him because they didn't surely understand the disease. So him taking that gamble to go into the city wall probably would have risked being stoned to death.

So you can imagine he sat outside the city wall going, do I go in? Do I not? I need to. I'm desperate to. But can I? Should I? What will happen to me if they catch me?

What if I cover up and I run in and don't look at anyone? Hopefully no one will catch me. And of course he gets there. So even just that term, sometimes we look at scripture, we're like, oh, yeah, it's just a story about a leper that gets healed.

But then those of us who have been through serious health conditions, you know, this is not quite as simple. When it hits you, it becomes a very real story. Someone who is completely isolated from society takes this risk, risk of being stoned to death, runs into the city walls to try and find this man. And when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and begged him. This is the second time now in a very short space of time we see a man falling at the feet of Jesus. For different reasons, of course, I guess.

[15:26] Peter was aware of his spiritual state. The leper was aware of his physical state. But there's a humility that comes with that. There's a humility that comes when you approach Jesus, you fall at his feet because you know that this person is different.

You know there's something different. And so if you walk towards Jesus and you approach his throne with your head held high, with your chest puffed out, then you've got a misconception of Jesus there. And I talked a little bit about this last week.

There's a humility that is required. It's the only entrance requirement into the kingdom of heaven is where you go to Jesus falling at his feet, recognizing that his throne is filled with grace and mercy that awaits you.

And so he falls at his feet and he begs him, Lord, if you will, you can make me clean. Interestingly here, my second thought was, wait, he actually doesn't say, Jesus, can you heal me?

No, he says, Lord, if you will, if you want to, if this is your desire, you can make me clean. He doesn't even dare ask him, can you make me clean? He's just stating the fact that you can do it.

[16:29] You can do it only if you're willing. Just contrast that with the desperation that he would have had to have had, the fear that he would have had to live with running into the city.

And when he gets to the feet of Jesus, he still doesn't demand a healing. He falls at his feet and says, if you will, if you want to, you can heal me.

And then he stops there. Once again, the humility that is involved that actually for me, sometimes we get, God, why me? Why am I still suffering from this? Why have you allowed this to happen? When really, if we really think about that, well, why not? This world, the moment sin entered this world, it was destined for decay and death. Why not us? We have an entitlement sometimes when we go to God that you should be doing good things to me. You're good. And you should be good to me. But this leper just goes, no. [17:26] If you're willing, you can make me clean, but I'm just going to leave it there. Because it really is up to you. Are you willing? And then the next thing. And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him and saying, I will be clean.

That word clean there, I just want to hold on to just for a little more. Because he didn't say, Jesus, can you come and heal me of my leprosy? Because it's really inconvenient. He's saying, make me clean.

What is he saying? What's the thing that he's actually hungry for the most? He's hungry for that moment where he can be declared clean again. Because when he's declared clean again, what is he allowed to do? Go back into community.

So he's not saying, Jesus, heal me of this disease. He's saying, let me get back into community. Let me get back into being with my people, being with my family.

Because isolation is killing me. The psychological pain is killing me. The spiritual and social death sentence that I'm experiencing is killing me. Declare me clean so I can go back into my community, so I can be accepted again, so that I can belong.

[18:34] This is way deeper than just a physical healing that he's after. And Jesus says, I will be clean. And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him.

If you know Jesus, by this point, you'll know that he doesn't need to touch anyone or anything to do any healing. He can just say the word.

He doesn't even need to say it. He can just think it. And the miracle will happen. He didn't need to put his hand into every water jar to turn it into wine. There wasn't a little dance or ritual that he had to do to do it.

He could just do it because he transcends just everything in this world. And yet he decided to stretch out his hand and touch. And now we know that actually that is something that, at least in that time, would have been completely frowned upon.

Why did he do that? What was he trying to show him? What was he trying to show the people?

What was he trying to show his newly recruited disciples? Have a think.

[19:35] What was he actually trying to do there? He's trying to show them he's not scared of anything. He's not scared of doing this.

He's trying to show them he's actually he's here to reach out to those who are the outcast, to those who are the weak. He's trying to show that he knows the thing that the leper desires the most is connection.

And he was here to give it to him. He was here to stretch out his hand and touch. Isn't it fascinating?

As I just two verses in, I've just seen so much of what Jesus is actually wanting to do here.

Something else that would have been interesting would have been Peter, James and John, who had just followed him. Who would have known about leprosy, been afraid of leprosy. And they see Jesus reach out and touch this leper.

And they were like, what do we do? But they're starting to get a glimpse that the man that they decided to follow is very different.

[20:43] He doesn't have the same fears. He doesn't do things in the same way. And he reaches out his hand and touches the leper. What's even interesting about that is the moment he touched the leper, what would that mean for Jesus?

He himself would now be excluded. He himself would now need to be quarantined for seven days. And in that one act of saying, hey, I will be clean.

He touches the leper and basically swaps places with the leper. Isn't that powerful? I don't know if I was truly aware of that before. Because at that moment, he would now have had to be banished out of the city.

Because he's touched and they would be scared of him. And yet he didn't care. He didn't have to. He could have just clicked his fingers. And yet here we have a Lord who was reaching out, paying the price and doesn't care what people think.

And then the next thing here is, and immediately the leprosy left him. I like this and I like the wording in this because the leprosy left him. The leprosy was never supposed to be part of him. [21:51] Some of us have sicknesses. Some of us have things that we're facing that we have taken on to be our identity. We have become a permanent leper. When actually, that is never really what our identity actually is.

The moment Jesus touches us, that part that was never supposed to be leaves us. And we're now back to our own identity. I don't know what you're going through, whether it's depression and you've allowed depression to be the thing that basically you have identified with.

That you've even lost your own name because you just think, I'm just someone with depression. Or I'm just someone with this. Or I'm just someone with that. And you see here, the leprosy left him. Whatever you're struggling with, whatever sickness you have, that is not who you are.

So allow Jesus to bring help. Allow Jesus to separate you. Let us not make it into our identity. So we've just talked about the man who is full of leprosy.

To continue to talk about the man who heals. Verse 14. And he charged him to tell no one. Well, let's just stop there. We've seen this. We've heard this before. Jesus does a miracle.

[22:54] And then he says, hey, I know you're happy now. I know you're cool. I know you want to put it on your TikTok. But don't.

Keep quiet about it. Why does he do that? Why does he do that time and time again? A little bit of interaction. Two minutes. Turn to the people next to you.

Why does Jesus time and time again keep telling people, hey, don't talk about this. Don't share about this. Wait. Go on. Have a go. And then ask some questions. Go. All right.

Okay. Let's hear some stuff. We've got Brayden who's going to answer the first. Give us the first answer. Go on, Brayden. Brayden. Like, Jesus is not trying to clout chase.

The young people laugh. And the older people are perplexed. Clout chase. He tells them not to tell other people because he doesn't want to clout chase. Can you define to us in kind of normal language what clout chase is?

[23:57] What clout chase is? It's like... It's like chasing after followers or like fame. Chasing after followers or fame.

So he says, hey, don't tell people because if you do, then I will gain clout. And I don't want no clout. You're laughing at me.

Okay. Right. All right. What else? Ellie, what else comes to mind? Okay. He shared that... Can I share what you said?

Of course. You can share what Dr. Sigmund said. So she said it's because of humility he wants us to remain humble. Hmm. And she feels that it's because he wants us to focus on the Son of God. Wow. Wow. So there's a humility involved because he knows that he will gain clout. And the clout won't be about who he actually is. It will just be what he can do. And so he decides to actually keep it quiet because he wants people to follow him as opposed to the things that he can do.

[25:02] That is interesting. One more over there. Let's go. Darren. Darren. Darren. What have you got? Your wife is just laughing at you. Jesus doesn't want to be objectified.

Jesus doesn't want to be objectified. Yeah. That's brilliant. And I think that's right. I think there's... Just imagine. You're struggling with something. And you hear about this guy who can basically take it away. You're obviously going to go see.

I don't blame the crowds for gathering. Because I'd be like, oh, I... He might even be able to help male pattern hair baldness. I'm going to go and... Maybe he'll touch me and... Maybe that will work. You would go. You would go because of just what he can do. And not really any interest in who he is. Interested in who he is at all. And part of that is not wanting to have that hype. The other thing is because the moment he gets that hype, he knows he's getting a lot more attention from the authorities.

[26:06] And it's not what he's here to do. And it goes back to that same thing. He's not here just to perform tricks. He's not here just to do healing. He's not here... He's not just concerned with your earthly well-being. So you will be healthy and fit.

But he's here to try and preach the good news of the kingdom of God. That there is something bigger than what is here on this planet. And that he's pointing people to that. Now, he will use healings when he wants to.

Because they will be the things that help him preach. But it isn't the final goal. It isn't really what he's here for. And then he says something really interesting here. We're carrying on. Thank you for all those who've answered.

And he 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. So he's saying, don't tell anyone. Don't put it on TikTok. Don't want no clout.

But yet, here we go. I want you to go and hand in the paperwork. I want you to go and follow the laws that actually you have known all this time. It's just, again, it's fascinating.

[27:00] Because there were people there who really wanted him to be the leader of the revolution. That, hey, if you can click your fingers and do this. Then we want you to be our leader. And you can maybe click and the Roman Empire can disappear.

Maybe if you can. That will be amazing. And that we can be the rulers of the world. And he's saying, don't do that. Actually, you need to follow the laws. So he could have constantly have this kind of. He could have really bought into the hype.

And the spirit of revolution. Yeah, you don't need to. You don't need to see the priests anymore. I'm here. I am the one. I am him. Forget the priests. They don't really know what they're talking about. And yet he respects the law.

He says, continue to follow the law of Moses. Continue. Go to the priest and let them approve you. And let them admit you back into community. He wants them to do that.

He wants him to do that. The leper to do that. Because then that person with the leprosy can go back into community. Because without that piece of paper. Without that priest saying, okay, you are now healed of leprosy.

[27:58] He won't be allowed back to be with his family. Like we, again, it's back to that same thing. We reduce him to just a leper. When this man probably had a family. Maybe a wife.

Maybe children. Maybe elderly parents to look after. Maybe just friends. We all need people. And so that leprosy, it isn't just a physically crippling thing. This is a socially crippling thing.

So how desperate he would have been to be clean. So that he can be declared clean. So he can go back into community once again. And so Jesus says, let's do it properly. Yeah, you can go back in and you can prove it.

But let's just do it properly. Okay. Again, you just see here. The person that they were trying to basically overthrow all authorities. Was still telling them, hey, follow. The humility that's involved. The patience that's involved in all of that. And again, but sadly, his clout does build. Because his, I'm totally using it in the wrong way, I think. But now, even more, the report about him went abroad.

[28:59] He got a lot of followers. And great crowds gathered to hear him. And to be healed of their infirmities. There we go. People still hear. People still catch on. People still have sicknesses.

People still want to be healed. And so they chase after him. And here is the final one that actually, I think, really proves Dr. Sigmund's point over there. Verse 16. But he would withdraw to desolate places and pray.

This is the exact opposite of what we would do if we were trying to build a reputation. As the hype was building. You can imagine Peter, James, and John. Who, of course, whose friends and family are still like, wait, what did they do?

Did they just give up our whole fishing business to follow this random guy? What are we going to do? What's Zebedee going to do? He's just going to have to fish to the old age. And then that's it. They would have loved to tell them, hey, see?

Our decision to follow this man is now vindicated. Look at all the attention he's grabbing. Look at our status rising. Look how many followers we have. And yet their leader decides to disappear.

[30:01] Completely just goes. As the hype builds, he disappears. He withdraws to desolate places to pray. It tells me about something is, actually, I think that gives us a glimpse into where Jesus even gets the power to do what he does.

Because, yes, he is filled with the Holy Spirit. And so he could just go around just constantly just healing people. Left, right, and center. Building the hype, building a follower. It would be easy, honestly, if you had someone, if you had that power.

And yet he goes. He disappears. And it makes me think, actually, where do I get my strength from? Where does Sam get his strength from when he's playing his piano? Where does Mehi get her strength from when she's leading us in worship using musical song?

Let me just keep riding that wave.

Let me just keep taking advantage of every step and every door that's opening. But Jesus keeps going away. Stepping away and going, no, it's not even about that. It's about him. I'm going to go back to those places and pray.

[31 : 33] It reminds me of another incident. In Mark 9, there's the Mount of Transfiguration where Jesus goes up and hangs out with his heavenly beings. And then Peter, James, and John are shocked. And they want him to build a tent for him to stay there.

They don't. We have to come down from the mountain because we're not supposed to stay on the mountain. We have to go back into the valley because there is need in the valley. There is pain in the valley. There is healing that's needed in the valley. So they go back down.

And then there's this whole commotion because they're not able to perform the kind of miracle that they want to perform. And what does Jesus say? Jesus does it. And then they ask him, hey, why? How did you manage to drive that evil spirit out and not us?

What was the difference? Does anyone remember what Jesus says? Go on, Gabs. You're whispering. He's like, this kind of thing can only be cast out by prayer.

What he's actually saying is this kind of power can only be displayed and used when you are deeply connected to the source of that power. It is not your own gift.

[32 : 35] It is not your own power. It is if you are connected to the source of the power, then you will be able to do these things and more. And so we see here he constantly goes back away from the attention and withdraws to spend time to pray.

So as I conclude here, this little story about this man full of leprosy, filled of desperation, charges into the city, falls at the feet of this rabbi, says, if you will, you can make me clean.

You can help me get back into community. You can help me get back to be with my family. But only if you will. And then he receives the touch of Jesus that he didn't have to.

And that he is. And then he goes, he's told to go, hey, observe the law. Follow the instructions. Get yourself back into community in the right way. And then the hype builds and this man runs away from the hype and goes to pray.

Realize on the source of the power and not just benefits from the power itself. The simple story about a leper meeting a savior.

[33 : 39] What does this tell us about us? I think number one, it's got to tell us, hey, let's go to God humbly. Whether it's Peter, whether it's Leper, do we every time go to God with a sense of humility, going, God, I need you.

Because if you are filled with yourself, then he won't be able to heal you. Then you won't be able to save yourself. If you think you can do it by yourself, then you won't be. Then it goes against what even the gospel is about.

Are you willing to humble yourself and say, God, I chose the wrong way. I need you. Are you willing to have that sense of humility as you approach him, acknowledging that you can't heal yourself?

And then acknowledge that he can heal you. He can. But whether he does or not in that exact moment is up to him. He will be the one that decides. Knowing ultimately, though, that he will bring healing.

Complete healing. He's promised it in Revelation chapter 21 that there will be no more sickness. There will be no more death. There will be no more tears. That we will get back to that point again.

[34 : 42] So he will bring healing at some point. But right now, would you trust him? Would you trust him? And would you allow him, allow him to form you with the greatest priority in mind?

Not your earthly well-being, but your eternal dwelling. That's what he's trying to do. That's what he's trying to form. Also, will we remember that our sickness, our challenge is not our identity.

That it is separate from it. It is something that we are struggling with. It is something that we are suffering through. But it is not who we are. Whatever you are going through does not define who you are.

It can be separated. Allow the Lord to be the one. The great physician to be the one that separates. And that our deepest desire is actually connection.

We just want to be with people. We just want to be accepted. We just want to belong. And Jesus knows that. And comes to deliver that.

[35 : 41] By stretching out his hand. And finally, what does it even tell us about God? He cares. He cares. He cares about the challenges that we go through. More specifically, he cares about the

weak.

The outcast. Maybe as we sat here in Hong Kong. In Admiralty. In a tower overlooking the harbor. Maybe there are less of us here who truly understand what it means to be an outcast.

To be weak. To be vulnerable. Or we really do, but we're just trying to fake it and pretend that we don't. God cares about our challenges.

And he cares about those who are weak. Who are sick. Who are the outcast. When he made that mic drop announcement, he said, I am here. The spirit of the Lord is on me to preach this good news to the poor, to the captive, to the broken.

To the blind. God cares. I don't know what you're going through. I don't know what sickness you have. It is not your identity and God cares about you.

[36 : 47] And he desires to bring healing to you. Would you trust him? Would you trust him? The leper takes a gamble and travels into the city.

He's like, you know what? He's probably saying, you know what? My life isn't worth living anyway. If I can't be with people, if I have this sickness, then I might as well give this a go. And if I get stoned to death, I get stoned to death.

It's a win-win. So he has nothing to lose. And he makes that jump and travels into the city. And he thinks that he's the one who has chased Jesus down.

When now we know, many thousands of years later, that actually it wasn't us chasing Jesus down. Jesus was the one chasing us down. The leper may have taken that step from outside the city into the city walls.

But now we know that Jesus Christ took the step from heaven into humanity to dwell among us. That's the beautiful moment in our Christian journeys when we've been chasing after God.

[37 : 47] When we finally realize it's actually been him who has been chasing us all this time. And so God reaches out to us and brings healing. And of course, that moment where he touches the leper and basically swaps places.

Hey, you be included. I'll be excluded. If there was one miracle, maybe this is Paul in all his genius, why he loved this miracle the most. Because this miracle in these short few verses basically sums up the whole gospel.

That he who was rich became poor. He came to swap places with us. He suffered the estrangement of the leper from God.

So that we could be included into the kingdom of God. In that one act, in that one moment of stretching out and not needing to touch him, yet still touching him. He's saying, hey, you take my place.

You swap with me. Hey, you're about to die. Let me die in your place. And so that in me you can have life and life to the full. Isn't that beautiful?

[38 : 56] Isn't that just the gospel summed up in just this nice little piece? And we see it. When Jesus, he's on the cross. He quotes Psalm 22. He says, my God, my God. Why have you forsaken me?

Psalm 13. Why have you turned your face away from me? He who was in the form of God, who had complete unity and communion with God, decided to step out of that so that we could come in.

That is exactly the story of the leper right here. Forgiving our sins and giving us life. So when Paul has his thorn in the flesh that he just wants to be rid of, he's saying, but his power is made perfect in me.

His grace is sufficient. Juyun sound joy. And why? Because he has the cross to look to. He looks at the cross and goes, I should have been the one there.

I should have been banished. I should have been excluded. And yet praise be to God. And the grace that Jesus Christ showed me, that he would swap places with me.

[40 : 10] The beauty of the story is that we realize that we are the leper. That we are the one that was excluded. That we are the ones that have no way in saving ourselves. That we are suffering through a sickness, an illness, an isolation, an exclusion.

That we had no way of coming back around ourselves. And yet someone reached out to us and touched us when we were the most in need, most desperate.

And yet turned things around completely. That is who you are. You are good. What can that be our response?

To any and every circumstance? Whether in sickness or in health. God is good.

And that is who you are. And we cast our eyes on you. We know you can. We know you care. That is who you are.

[41 : 23] That is all we need to know. Your power is made perfect in our weakness. Your grace is sufficient. It was sufficient 2,000 years ago and it continues to be sufficient right now.

Thank you Lord. it's in your precious powerful name we pray Amen