

The leper

Welcome and Opening Scripture

Hymn: MP 1337 - Not To Us O Lord - Chris Bowater

Bible Reading: Isaiah 42:1-13

Prayer of adoration and praise.

Children's talk Boomerang **surely your sin will find you out** Nu 32:23

Songs MP 1086 Light of the world, & &

Notices Halloween leaflets

Main reading: Romans 5:12-21 (p1132), Matthew 8:1-4 (page 972),

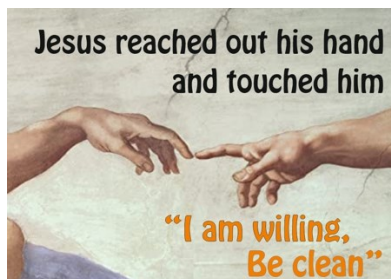
Hymn: MP 499 O happy Day

Sermon Grace – “I am willing”

Hymn He touched me

Close -----

Listen to today's sermon by clicking on the link at www.knbc.org. The audio file is [21_10_31.mp3](#).



Exordium

■ It is really no problem if you haven't been to Rome, but if you can go then it is definitely worth it. On the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel is the famous Michael Angelo painting showing the hand of God reaching out to the hand of man x2. The Question is: "Is man reaching out to God?"

Here with the leper we see both. As we continue to look at those Jesus met let us consider the Leper recorded in Mt ch. 8. (also found in Mk 1 & Lk 5)

We will focus on the Matthew account so do have your Bibles open. Fingers!

Matthew places it directly after the Sermon on the mount. The opening line is **1. When he came down from the mountainside, large crowds followed him.**

It parallels in reverse what we read at the beginning of the Sermon in Mt 5:1: **Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him.** Then he started to teach them.

Mountains were then important, they symbolised the presence of God. Moses went up the mountain and met with God. The idea being you go up to meet with God, or God comes down to meet with you. Isaiah pleads **Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains would tremble before you!** Isaiah 64:1

Moses went up to receive the law from God. Jesus speaking on the mountain is giving the new Law, it is all about the kingdom of Heaven. He speaks about what this Kingdom is like and how to enter it. The Pharisees could not see it, nor could they enter it they even stopped others entering it. Jesus speaks to the heart confronting the religious people of the day who heart was far from God.

Jesus teaching is a new and radical teaching, yet like the ten commandments it cannot be obeyed without the filling of Christ's righteousness and power.

You should finish that sermon – and perhaps every sermon – breathless and distraught – pleading “Jesus fill my poor, wayward, empty, needy, sinful heart with your grace and power.

✚ So when Jesus comes down the mountain the leper approaches him - we see the man at the bottom meeting the man from the top. x2

The Leper in his miserable state dramatically illustrates the lost man, the dead man, the hopeless man. Here he has no name **2 A man with leprosy** x2

He is a man, any man, indeed in Adam he is every man, every woman, you, I, every boy and girl born into this world without God and without hope.

This man is in stark contrast to the man from heaven, the Spirit filled man – Jesus the author of life, the creator and sustainer of all things. The life giver.

What is Leprosy

Let me remind you of what leprosy is like. It is a horrible disease, a rotting disease of the flesh. It comes on progressively causing gross disfiguration, it is humiliating, the one with leprosy ceases to feel, this loss of the sense of feeling results in more damage to skin and flesh.

This disease is used in the Bible as a picture of sin. And like sin it disfigures, it numbs so we become insensitive to sin and sin more and more, going from bad to worse, so leprosy takes over the person more and more until painfully the sufferer faces the inevitable - encroaching death.

In medicine we take an Xray or scan to see what is going on inside, here on the outside it is brazenly obvious – revealing the true inside of the person. Leprosy like sin is contagious and therefore affects those around. We need to re-educate our individual mind-sets to realise that my sin affects others.

Because it spreads lepers were kept apart from everyone to limit the transmission and infection of our family and those we meet.

- Like a 'lockdown' except it was more like being told to self-isolate for the rest of your life – with no hope of it ever ending - can you imagine that.

So sin is antisocial, it ostracises, it separates, it breaks up the family and those around producing great distress and sadness of heart.

On another occasion there were ten lepers who we are told **stood at a distance** or as the AV says they **stood afar off**. The disease of sin means we are far off from God. A great invisible gulf separates the sinner from God who is Holy and righteous. That is the true problem.

- ✚ Here are all the characteristics of sin. It is the curse of Adam. The marks of leprosy are the marks of our true self, all of us in this world.

How it is used in the OT?

Firstly with Moses who is learning to trust God. When the Lord sends him to Pharaoh he tries to gain confidence in God's call and power. God says put you hand in your cloak and it comes out leprous, he puts it back in again and it becomes clean. He sees God's power to do both, curse and heal.

Then we see Miriam, Aaron and Moses' sister who rebels against God **When the cloud lifted from above the Tent, there stood Miriam—leprous, like snow. Aaron turned towards her and saw that she had leprosy;** Nu 12:10

So it is a picture of God's judgment - With Naaman (in 2 Kings 5) it was the sin of pride. As the Military Leader of Aram he had everything– but he had leprosy. In other words the greatest and the grandest if seen – not through the eyes of man but through the eyes of God are as if leprous, their goodness their righteousness is as if dressed in filthy rags. When told what he needed to do he became angry and went off in a huff, his pride welled up, simple trust was beneath him. But when he simply trusted the God of Israel he was made clean – what a clear picture if ever there was one that righteousness and cleansing is a gift. It is yours through faith – believe in Christ, take him at his word as did the Centurion. Trust yourself to him, simple obedient trust as a child has - and you will be clean. **So he went down and dipped himself in the Jordan seven times, as the man of God had told him, and his flesh was restored and became clean like that of a young boy.** 2Ki 5:14

There is a warning here for us all, if you know of God's grace do not become hard. Gehazi, Elisha's servant saw God's grace in Naaman, but instead of seeking grace for himself he sought self-advantage. He was told **"Naaman's leprosy will cling to you and to your descendants for ever."** Then **Gehazi went from Elisha's presence and he was leprous, as white as snow.** 2Ki 5:27

This curse is judgment - and this judgment is graphically show in leprosy

Then there is King Uzziah **"After Uzziah became powerful, his pride led to his downfall. He was unfaithful to the LORD his God, and entered the temple of the LORD to burn incense on the altar of incense. When challenged it says Uzziah, who had a censer in his hand ready to burn incense, became angry. While he was raging at the priests in their presence before the incense altar in the LORD's temple, leprosy broke out on his forehead. ... the LORD had afflicted him. King Uzziah had leprosy until the day he died. He lived in a separate house— leprous, and excluded from the temple of the LORD.** 2Ki 15:5, 2 Ch 26:16-21 in parts

The curse of God is shown in leprosy – But Christ, to show that he came to turn away the wrath of God by taking away sin, began with the cure of a leper.

The Leper's need was obvious, - with sin still some won't see it.

- I remember having an absys in a tooth, it caused great trouble. The problem was that I didn't know I had it - so it became worse and worse - and eventually had to be pulled.
- ✚ That doesn't happen with leprosy - you can't miss it.

Yet there are those who break God's Holy law, give little concern to His ways, put their own ways before His, are dishonest, gossipy, greedy,

All around is blatant immorality. I have visited many a home where this is the case and the proverb jumps back at me: **"This is the way of an adulteress: She eats and wipes her mouth and says, 'I've done nothing wrong.'** Pr 30:20

Leprosy was used by God as a warning sign. What are the warning signs today, strife, arguments, people who can't get on because God has frustrated the relationship in the household, his curse brings discord and disagreement, there's one disaster after another. Yes, physical illness and also deep misery and emptiness of heart. This is the modern day leprosy. The physical manifestation of a life lived with no fear of God.

They tread the warn pathway to the doctors to receive medication, the doctors can see it is more, but No we mustn't moralise. x2 Sorry a life obviously at odds with God's Holy law – which is written on every heart - will show itself in these ways.

Ah it is just what everyone else is doing, maybe. What would we think if everyone had leprosy? That it is normal and therefore fine? Yes everyone sins - so is sin fine? No.

Even if there's no stain of open sin God in his love makes sure we have no reason to miss the truth of our real state

How long can someone with leprosy live in denial? Not long - you will soon know - and it will show! Leprosy could not be hid.

- You can imagine that hospital letter that dreaded diagnosis, late stage cancer, that interview with the consultants - Is it that serious? the minimizing, it is not hurting so it cannot be THAT BAD! Sorry it is!

There's initial unbelief, do I really have it? No not me. Just as those dead nerves stop the person feeling, so sin likewise dulls the senses until no sense of sin is felt. **Sin blinds us to the sinfulness of sin.**

- ✚ Mary Slessor said: There is no escape from the reflex action of sin; broken law will have its revenge. Sin is loss for time and eternity.

This man is acutely aware of his true state

This leper refuses to deny the obvious. Luke the doctor tells us was **covered with leprosy** – He sees his true state, He acknowledges his great need.

So what does he do?

Those ten lepers **stood at a distance and called out in a loud voice, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us!"** Lu 17:12-13

This leper **came and knelt before him** records Matthew. Mark says he **came to him and begged him on his knees**, Luke says **When he saw Jesus, he fell with his face to the ground and begged him, he begged him,**

- ✚ Here is the right response - The right action

Have you seen your true state as a sinner separated from God and heading to judgment - then do what he did, here we are here we have it!

Don't trust in people, in friends, family, the doctor, the QE. Many reach out but to all the wrong people – Nor are you to look out and up in the hope that there is someone there somewhere, that is not faith based on understanding, it's a random shot in the dark.

- ✚ Look to Jesus and Jesus alone - there is One, He is the One.

This man looks to Jesus, and he knows who Jesus is: **"Lord, he says Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean."** If you,x2 you can x2

- ✚ Reach out in faith to Jesus, do that and the response is not silence, No

3 Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. Jesus in touching the leper would have sent shockwaves to be felt by everyone in the crowd.

"See this leper?" - All of you are like this man - this leper stands for the crowds, he stands for all the crowds since Adam. Every man in Adam,

See how this man has come to me? So you are to come this way to me - and if you do you will hear me say **"I am willing,"** x2 he said.

Yes Jesus is willing, he came to this world willingly, he went looking for the lost willingly, he searches high and low to those trapped to release them.

Like the prodigal father he comes out looking for returning wanderer.

- Like those Chilean miners, they drilled down to reach them and now they are free.

So God comes down, love came down, -Yes God leaves his home on the great rescue mission to earth. **Here life meets death.** x2.

Yet Jesus entered this world of sin and death to be the friend of sinners. Jesus reaches out to touch that unclean leper, the unclean sinner

3 Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man What a sign of mercy what a display of grace. Sin is the leprosy of the soul; it shuts us out from communion with God, But Jesus responds to his faith **"I am willing,"** x2

The willingness is matched by the command - **"Be clean!"** x2

The man's leprosy does not come to him – No His life comes to the leper x2

Jesus could not be infected, he could not be made 'unclean'

Why does he say **'be clean'** not 'be healed'?

Jesus says when he is made clean: **go, show yourself to the priest and offer the gift Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.**" They are still under the law of Moses. In Leviticus it says **"When anyone has an infectious skin disease, he must be brought to the priest."** **"The priest is to examine him,** Le 13:9,10a ... and depending on what he finds he is to declare him 'clean' or 'unclean'

Every disease is both the fruit of sin, and a figure of it as the disorder of the soul, yet the leprosy was especially so for it corrupted and polluted the man. The leper could not come close to the holy things, so it is treated, not as a sickness, but as an uncleanness. In De 24:8 we read **In cases of leprous diseases be very careful to do exactly as the priests, instruct you. You must follow carefully what I have commanded them.**

It was believed that this disease – as we have seen - came immediately from God, so also it was supposed to be removed immediately by his hand, and therefore it was not attempted to be cured by the doctors, instead you went to the priests the Lord's ministers, who waited to see what God would do.

In the meantime **"The person with such an infectious disease must wear torn clothes, cover the lower part of his face and cry out, 'Unclean! Unclean!'** As long as he has the infection he remains unclean. He must live alone; he must live outside the camp." Le 13:45-46

This priest - this priest Jesus - is not only able to see whether he is clean – but can make him clean. Jesus our great high priest is the one who was crucified outside the camp away with the filth and far from God – there he took the curse of sin on himself so that the sinner you and I can be made clean. He can make clean because he became dirty - **CROSS** - The transfer.

That is why the willingness is matched by the enabling **"Be clean!"**

Christ took my cursed so that I may now live in God's favour and blessing.

Jesus's words are always matched by his power - **Immediately he was cured of his leprosy.** This working of Christ is immediate profound and complete. Such is the change Jesus can do in a man's life.

- This is the experience of every Born Again man or woman, comment on my change. I wanted to tell everyone..... so why does Jesus say...

Peroration

4 "See that you don't tell anyone. - Why not?

When Jesus was with them he wanted people to come and see, come and see for themselves - how many would have heard twisted reports and become sceptical and cynical.

Yes the invitation is for all **"Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."** And where do I go to do that?

Where do you come and see today, where do you meet Jesus today? - Through preaching, you find Jesus through his word and his word preached.

As the Apostle Paul says **how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? - Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.** Ro 10:12-20

Preaching is God's chosen way. - Preaching therefore always confronts. If it does not confront then it is not preaching. If it doesn't it is no more than a Bible study and a poor one at that. No preaching always had some 'rub'

Jesus' Sermon on the Mount is an assault on our natural way of thinking and living. It's a call to repentance. Man's way is to try to progress up, No God's way is down. If I see myself as rich then I am far from God, if poor them able to receive from God. Will you see yourself as a needy pauper?

That is what preaching does it puts you in a right place so you can receive.

1. Want to see that illustrated? Jesus did with the Leper.
2. Want to hear of God's grace in Jesus – Jesus showed you that with the leper.

Do you want to be made clean they ask Jesus to wash you? Be like Naaman whose servant told him to listened and simply obey God's word **'Wash and be cleansed'?**" 2Ki 5:13 - he did and he was!

- "Wash me!" was the anguished prayer of King David. "Wash!" was the message of John the Baptist. "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me," said the towel-draped Jesus to Peter. Without being washed clean, we all die from the contamination of sin. For God's sake, wash.

Summary

Here today we have seen a man touched by God, Has that happened to you? Do you know it? Have you done what the leper did? Is your experience the meeting of sinful man or woman made clean by a Holy God - the curse of Adam lifted by the Grace of God.

END