

ESF, Lord's Day Service Message
3/6/2016

The Healing Touch

Luke 5:12-16

12. While Jesus was in one of the towns, a man came along who was covered with leprosy. When he saw Jesus, he fell with his face to the ground and begged him, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean."

13. Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said "Be clean!" and immediately the leprosy left him. 14. Then Jesus ordered him, "Don't tell anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them." 15. Yet the news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sickness. 16. But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.

At the time of the Korean War, there was an important discovery of the basic human need of touching. After the war there was an overwhelming abundance of orphans. The orphanages were bursting at the seams, and there was no possibility of the staff adequately caring for the all of the children. Consequently, the death rate for children in orphanages was extremely high. Quite by accident, some staff members of one of the orphanages discovered a way to lower the death rate among the children. They found out that those infants whom they touched for even a short period of time everyday had a higher survival rate. They discovered the human need for touch.

But in our lives, we often miss that basic need. There may be many different reasons why we lack touch. There are times when people have flu or other contagious disease that we don't want to touch them because their illness may hurt us. We may not allow others to touch us as a defensive mechanism. We don't want others to get too close to us, or they might discover some things about us that we don't want them to.

The key element in this story about Jesus and the leper is that Jesus reached out his hand and touched the leper. It was thought at that time that touching a leper put one's life at risk. Lepers were outcasts. To touch a leper made one socially and religiously unclean.

However, Jesus went against such taboo of the day, and broke the rules. He reached out and touched the leper. By doing so, He communicated awareness, acceptance, love, and a power to heal the untouchable.

Do you feel weak today and need strength but do not know what to do? Are you hurt and lonely today and need comfort and healing? In this text, you will find how you can be stronger and healthier by receiving Jesus' touch.

The Giver of Hope

Of all diseases which can afflict the body of man, leprosy appears to be the most severe. It affects every part of the body at once. It brings sores and decay upon the skin, corruption into the blood, and rotteness of the bones.

Then it kills the sense of pain. While every part of the body is decaying, a leper cannot feel pain. Pain warns us against danger. But when a man loses the sense of pain, there is no way to avoid danger. Also it is a contagious disease.

In the first century, lepers in Israel were removed to a remote place and should live outside of community (Lev.13:46). They should wear torn clothes, let their hair be unkempt, so that people could recognize them. When they were out in public, they had to cover the lower part of their faces, and cry out "Unclean! Unclean!" so that people could avoid them from far away (Leviticus 13:45).

They were rejected people. They were untouchable people. They were lonely people. While healthy people are sharing their dinner together and

comforting each other with family members, lepers have to stay alone in a solitary place. While healthy people are making friends and enjoying their lives together, the lepers have to stay in an isolated place. Loneliness was their daily food. Most of all, leprosy was an incurable disease. There was no hope for cure.

The leper in this text had been suffering from all these things. He was living day by day without any hope.

Although we may not be such a hopeless leper in the physical sense, we may live with similar pains and hopelessness in another sense. Because of other physical ailments, mental or emotional sickness, we may live hopeless lives. Because of our financial incapability we may live hopeless lives. Because of some kinds of fears or worries which we cannot overcome, we may live hopeless lives. Most of all our sins make us sick and senseless. Sin starts with little pain. It seems to be pleasurable. But as it is with leprosy, it is progressive. It goes on its slow malignant way draining and sapping the very life stream until it mutilates and deforms both body and soul.

Then should the leper live such a hopeless life until he dies? Was there no hope at all? One day he heard that Jesus had healing power for incurable diseases. When there was absolutely no way of a cure and no hope from anything or anywhere, he put his last hope in Jesus. He came out from the dark dungeon and went to the public place where Jesus was. He needed courage to approach Jesus, because he was forbidden to approach other people and even to be at the place where other people lived. Many people were following Jesus. Jesus was in or around a town where people lived. When he approached Jesus and said something, many people could have rebuked him or compelled him not to come near to them.

Yet, he came out toward Jesus. He spoke to Jesus what he wanted. But Jesus did not reject him. Jesus accepted him and his request. Jesus honored his courageous faith and healed his leprosy.

Have you tried everything in this world to find hope for your life? Have you found anything? If you have not found a hope learn from this leper. Come to Jesus and ask Him to give you a hope. Jesus invites you to a sure hope, the only hope you can find. Mt 11:28 *“Come to me all you are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”*

Coming to Jesus is the key to solving your hopeless problems. Have faith in Jesus who is the giver of hope to all. Boldly ask Jesus to do what you really need and want. Jesus will honor your faith and will certainly do something miraculous for you.

The Compassionate Touch

When the leper came to Jesus and asked to heal his leprosy, Jesus reached out his hand and touched him first. Leprosy is a contagious disease. Touching such a leper could mean getting leprosy yourself. Also touching a leper was in violation of the law.

So people were afraid of touching such a leper or being touched by him. Other healthy people must have not touched that leper for many years. Only other lepers might have touched him, which would not have made any difference or could not have brought any comfort.

But here, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the leper. Jesus also had flesh just like any other man. He was often tired and hungry. As a person who had flesh, He also risked being infected by the leprosy when He touched him. So when He helped the leper He might have tried using another way other than touching him. Jesus could have healed the leper only by His word as He did in some other healing. Nevertheless, Jesus touched the leper. Jesus touched the untouchable. His hand went out to

the man from whom everyone else would have shrunk away. So why did He touch the leper with His hand? Why did He take such a risk?

Jesus wanted to deliver His compassion to the leper as well as his healing. Jesus wanted to heal the leper with not only power but also with sacrificial love. Jesus wanted to identify His heart with the pain of the leper. Hebrews 4:15 say: *For we do not have a high priest (Jesus) who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one (Jesus) who has been tempted in every way, just as we are--yet was without sin.*

In fact, the leper was not only sick in his body but also in his mind and heart. He was suffering from severe loneliness, fear of people and shame of his disease. By touching his body, Jesus wanted to clean not only his body but also his mind and heart.

Have you ever suffered from a hopeless life condition which nobody could help? Are you living with a heart ache caused by some people's rejection? Receive Jesus' compassionate touch. By faith, you can receive Jesus touching and healing hand.

Like Jesus did, when you try to show your compassion to others, there may be a risk. When you try to share the feelings of those who are depressed there may be a risk that you may get depressed. When you try to share the feeling and pain of weak people, there may be a risk that you may also become weak. But when you really show your compassion to the people who are suffering, God protects you from any harm. If the pain of other people effects you, God will bless you more through the pain.

Dr. Paul Brand had devoted his life to treating leprosy patients in India. In the course of one examination Brand laid his hand on the patient's shoulder and informed him through a translator of the treatment that lay

ahead. To his surprise the man began to shake with muffled sobs. “Have I said something wrong?” Brand asked the translator. She quizzed the patient and reported, “No, doctor. He says he is crying because you put your hand on his shoulder. Until he came here no one had touched him for many years.”

As Jesus has touched you, touch others. Touch people around you compassionately. Jesus will use you to heal people.

The Complete Healing

Jesus also helped the leper restore his normal life in society by teaching him another Scripture. Jesus instructed him to follow the law of the Scripture to confirm his healing, enabling him go back to a normal life.

According to the law in Leviticus chapter 14, a person who was healed from leprosy should go to the priest. When the priest inspected him and pronounced him healed, the person was to offer a sacrifice. Then the healed man could go back into the community.

The man followed Jesus instruction, and was restored to his normal social life. By doing so, the leper was healed not only physically but also mentally and socially. He became completely healed in every way.

To bring complete healing there must be two things- a compassionate touch and the powerful word of God. Sometimes we do only one of these two. We touch people compassionately but we do not proclaim the powerful word of the Lord. While we share the pain of other people compassionately we do not teach and proclaim the word.

On the other hand, sometimes we teach and proclaim the word without a compassionate touch of their soul. We talk about the word. We share the word with other people, but we do not identify ourselves with their real feelings and pains.

Then there will be only half healing. Here Jesus has both of them. He touched the sick person compassionately. At the same time, He taught him the word to follow. And the leper was completely healed in every way. With compassion, let's proclaim the word of God to the people who need healing and hope today.

Also for our own complete healing, let's receive both Jesus' compassionate touch and His word. When we ask Jesus for our need, Jesus gives us far more than we ask, far more than we expect. Jesus gives us the whole blessing not just a partial blessing. Jesus wants us to learn more of God's word and follow the word so that we can be completely healed and live blessed lives. So when you are blessed one way, do not stop listening. Try to hear Him beyond that one blessing. And you will receive His complete healing and complete blessing.