

Devotion on the Miracles of Christ (Cleansing the Leper) – 7 March 2014, Anno Domini
(In the Year of our Lord)



12 And it came to pass, when he was in a certain city, behold a man full of leprosy: who seeing Jesus fell on his face, and besought him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. 13 And he put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, **I will: be thou clean.** And immediately the leprosy departed from him. 14 And he charged him to **tell no man: but go, and shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing, according as Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.** 15 But so much the more went there a fame abroad of him: and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by him of their infirmities. 16 And he withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed. (Luke 5:12-16)

This miracle follows hard on the heels of the first draught of fish which Jesus miraculously had caused to happen. His mastery over the physical universe is demonstrated in the draught of fishes, and his sovereignty over sickness and disease of the body is demonstrated in the present miracle of cleansing of the leper; but more is also demonstrated spiritually as we shall see. The unseen truth buried, as a precious gem beneath the surface, is most often of the greatest blessing to our souls when we dig for it and discover it.

This account of the miracle of the cleansing of the leper appears almost verbatim in Mark 1 and Matthew 8 as well as here in the Gospel of St. Luke. The greatest truth, in my opinion, to be learned from this miracle is that we are sinners and, like leprosy, sin is an insidiously deadly sin that brings with it an odor that cannot be long concealed. In the mind of the modern church and philanthropist, sin is merely a defect that needs working on. In the eyes of God, sin is an offense against Heaven which requires repentance and forgiveness. We must, like the leper in today's record, be cleansed from sin by God. We cannot cleanse ourselves. The ideal of the world is directed more to goodness toward our fellow man (the falsely called, Brotherhood of Man). Of course this misses the mark. Our first duty is always to God. If we do our duty to God, we

shall surely meet our obligations and service to our fellows. As the Psalmist has proclaimed, *“Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.”* (Psalms 51:4)

Every beautiful event of scripture always seems to just *“come to pass.”* It is true that God’s mercy and grace **ALWAYS** come to pass according to His own Omniscience and Omnipotence. It may be true that the leper of our story may have considered this the most lucky day of his life to have come across the Lord Jesus Christ in the way; but there is no luck or happenstance with our Lord. All His ways are fixed and deliberate. The Lord knew, long before the foundations of this “certain city” were laid that on this fixed date He would meet and cleanse this poor leper.

“And it came to pass, when he was in a certain city, behold a man full of leprosy: who seeing Jesus fell on his face, and besought him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.” There are at least four points of salience that emerge in this account of the leper. 1) We must walk where Christ walks if we will benefit from His mercies – we must meet Him where He is; 2) We must know our great need and failure – our hopelessness without Him; 3) We must acknowledge Jesus as Lord; 4) We must seek to make our will consistent with His will. We are nothing but dust at the feet of the Lord; therefore, we must approach Him in abject humility. This, the modern church has long ago ceased to preach.

One will look long and in vain to find any place in Holy Writ in which it is not the will of the Lord to heal the penitent sinner. Let us examine this case of the leper in detail; that is, let us cast out into the deep as Christ commanded Peter before the miraculous draught of fishes. What was the nature of leprosy, and how was a leper regarded by, shall we say for convenience, “polite society?” Leprosy was first of all 1) a disease of the blood and it was without cure. 2) It was, moreover, deadly. 3) It was insidious resulting often in the rotting away of limbs and facial features until the leper was rendered totally helpless and dying. 4) It emitted a horrible odor of dead and rotting flesh. The open sores of the leper puss-laden and running constantly (forgive the indelicate language). 5) Though the leper may not immediately know of his dreaded malady, the advancing symptoms were unmistakable as hope became forlorn for the desperate victim. 6) He was forced to separate himself from all society including his own beloved family. 7) If he ventured out of his colony, he must shout ‘Unclean! Unclean!’ to all who approached. He was shunned as the despicable leper that he was.

Please observe that each of the characteristics of leprosy, in their physical manifestations, so completely cohere to the nature of sin in its spiritual manifestations. 1) Sin is a disease inherited from the blood of Adam – a disease of the blood tainted with sin and it is beyond man’s ability to cure. 2) Sin ALWAYS results in the death of its victim. *“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”* (Romans 3:23) *“For the wages of sin is death.”* (Romans 6:23) 3) Sin works insidiously to deform and deprave its victim. It never subsides, but grows altogether more dominant in its practitioner. 4) Sin cannot be forever covered. It emits an odor of immoral character and conduct that cannot be covered by silken robes or discreet behavior. 5) The sinner may not at first, or even at last, know that he is a sinner. He may have been deceived by false teachers into the belief that he is good and respectable – his sin is not sin but merely an ‘alternate lifestyle.’ As sin advances, it becomes more and more obvious to others that the sinner is reprobate in his depravity. He approaches the point of deterioration of conscience that eternal death seems most likely. 6) Sin finally separates us from all righteous people – even our loved ones. The leper of sin will not be admitted

through the Gates of Heaven. 7) When the sinner becomes so wicked in his sins, he will find himself excluded from polite society just as was the leper. He may even be incarcerated in man's prison before he becomes a prisoner in Hell. He will be shunned by banks, clubs, employers, old friends, and even family.

So we see that leprosy is very much like sin in its effects and nature. It is beyond man's means to cure himself from the disease of sin. He needs a Physician of Heaven - for one of the world can never do.

As was mentioned earlier, no man dared touch the boils and sores of the leper. Clean hands had not touched this leper for perhaps the many years of his affliction. He was so completely alienated from society that kind words, even, were never heard. Yet, this leper came to Christ begging mercy. There was something about the holiness of Christ that so contrasted with the deadliness of the disease of leprosy, yet appealed to the leper to call upon His Beloved Name: "*Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.*" Perhaps those in the company of Jesus recoiled at this brazen approach of the leper. What would you have done, Reader? Would you have laid your hands upon the deadly sores and prayed? What will Jesus do? I am sure that you already know Jesus well enough to not doubt the reaction even before you have read it!

"And he put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will: be thou clean." What a magnificent and loving Lord and Savior we have in Jesus Christ! He touched where no other man would have even approached. The hand of God deigned to touch where no lesser human hand dared to love. Has your sin-laden heart been touched and made clean by the Hand of our Lord Jesus Christ, Friend? You may have been told by some deceptive men along the way that you are good enough just as you are, but have you been cleansed by the only One who is able? Our Lord stretches forth His Hand of Love to this wretched leper and pronounces the most profound blessing this leper has ever heard - "*I will: be thou clean!*"

It is the perfect will of our Lord to heal the infirm, and to receive sinners in his embrace. Just as the father of the Prodigal embraced an errant boy covered in the filth of the pig sty, so does our Lord embrace every returning sinner. What profound grace is made available to the sinner, of which I am a great one, in our Lord Jesus Christ! "*And immediately the leprosy departed from him.*" With immediate dispatch, the leper felt a fresh flow of blood to parts of his body that were dying and starving for it. Immediately, the air that he breathed became clean and easy to inhale. Immediately, he felt fingers that had long lost their sense of touch. He was clean, restored, and forgiven. In summary, the leper was made whole in body AND in spirit. Have you been so restored? Please answer in your heart - not a canned and proper response, but a response from the deep of your heart.

Jesus issues His usual counsel to keep the miracle a secret. "*And he charged him to tell no man: but go, and shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing, according as Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.*" Though I do not speak with a perfect understanding of the matter, it is my opinion that Jesus issues this warning for two possible reasons: 1) to demonstrate the inability of the sinner or leper to keep so great a secret from those around who have known of our previous, desperate condition; and 2) to prevent the priesthood from pulling their usual deception in denying the man their pronouncement of healing in dread of admitting the miraculous healing powers of the Lord.

Jesus is the Light of the World, and such a bright and burning Light as He is

cannot be hidden under a bushel: "*But so much the more went there a fame abroad of him: and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by him of their infirmities.*" We all need a continual access to the Throne of Grace for the healing of our infirmities. We have that access through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Though Jesus worked many miracles, much of His time was divided, as ours should be, between prayer and teaching the Word. "*And he withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed.*" Just prior to the miracle of the 'draught of fishes,' Jesus had boarded a ship and asked that it be thrust out from the shore a bit. It was from this point of perspective that he taught those ashore. Now, He withdraws to the Wilderness for a different perspective – to fellowship in prayer with His Father. As you see, His attentions were equally divided between those of Heaven and those of man. Regardless of our good works toward man, if they are not anchored in God, they mean nothing as much as a "*sounding brass.*"

We, too, must cast off in separating ourselves from the world to both teach and bring in a draught of prized fishes of mankind. But do not forget to return to the shore where our labors truly begin.