

## Jesus Heals a Leper

Matthew 8:1-4; **Mark 1:40-45**; Luke 5:12-16

And a leper came to him, imploring him, and kneeling said to him, “If you will, you can make me clean.” Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand and touched him and said to him, “I will; be clean.” And immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean. And Jesus sternly charged him and sent him away at once, and said to him, “See that you say nothing to anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, for a proof to them.” But he went out and began to talk freely about it, and to spread the news, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter a town, but was out in desolate places, and people were coming to him from every quarter. (English Standard Version – ESV)

### Background:

- Leprosy was a disfiguring skin disease for which the Bible prescribed quarantine from the rest of society (Leviticus 13:45-46). However, the Bible did not go as far as many Jewish teachers, who blamed the disease on the leper’s sin (often the sin of slander). Thus, lepers were outcasts from society, and avoided by everyone, except those affected by the disease. Touching a leper was forbidden, and most people would have been revolted by the thought of it.
- The leper approaches Jesus with humility, which was the proper way to approach God for prayer in the Old Testament. The fact that he even approaches Jesus indicates a measure of holy boldness. Acknowledging that God had the right to refuse the prayer, and that one depended on God’s mercy was not at all a lack of faith (Genesis 18:27, 30-32; 2 Samuel 10:12; Daniel 3:18).
- The Law prescribed particular sacrifices if someone’s leprosy were cured (Leviticus 14:1-32). By complying with these regulations, Jesus does nothing to violate the Law or offend the priests. Later Jewish laws also insisted that those suffering from leprosy be checked by a priest before going to the temple, but it is not clear whether these prescriptions were in effect in Jesus’ day.
- Teachers thought to perform miracles usually had large followings, because many were sick. This is validated by the great number of people, who flocked to hot springs in Galilee, which were thought to relieve ailments. Jesus, who performs miracles without the common pagan use of magical incantations, acquires such a large following that he cannot accommodate them inside a town (v. 45). It is noteworthy that Jesus never demands payment from those whom he heals.

### Questions:

- + What does the statement, “If you will, you can make me clean,” say about the leper’s faith? What does “moved with pity” and a willingness to heal by touching the leper say about Jesus? How does your faith in Jesus compare with that of the leper? How can you have greater faith?
- + Why does Jesus sternly warn the leper not to tell anyone about being healed, except the priest? Why does Jesus direct the leper to show himself to the priest, and make the required offering? How did the leper respond to Jesus? How would you have responded to Jesus, and why? In what way do you need Jesus to touch your life? How will you demonstrate gratitude?