

CLEANSING TIME?

Which sentiment describes you best? A clean desk is a sign of no internet connection. This house was clean yesterday, sorry you missed it. I love cleaning up messes I didn't make, so I became a mom. You never know what you have until you clean your room. My office is not messy, I just have everything on display, like a museum. Could your life use some cleaning up?

As we return to study Luke, we encounter a remarkable miracle that transformed a man's life. In 5:12 we read, "*while Jesus was in one of the cities, there came a man full of leprosy. And when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and begged Him, 'Lord, if You will, You can make me clean'.*"

1- WHO IS UNCLEAN? Leprosy refers to a variety of skin diseases common in Bible times. This man was 'full' of leprosy, so he was not only a pitiful sight, he lived a pitiful life. He was a social pariah, "unclean" or defiled in the eyes of religiously observant Jews. Anyone who touched him would also become unclean, unable to associate with others, especially in synagogue.

Their only control was quarantine (Leviticus 13-14). Most lepers could not care for themselves, and were susceptible to many other ailments. If he had what we call Hansen's Disease, he was not contagious. But his body would no longer detect pain. Numbness and injuries results in loss of extremities, as nose, hands and feet become stumps. Doctors call this a painless hell.

Lepers and those with similar skin diseases, lived alone or in colonies with other victims, clothed in rags and living in unkempt stench. The man held his arm over his mouth and announced "unclean, unclean" as he pushed his way through people who scattered to avoid touching him.

2- IS JESUS ABLE TO HEAL? When the man saw Jesus, he fell prostrate on the ground and appealed to Him, "*Lord, if You will, You can make me clean.*" He believed Jesus was able. He addressed Jesus as Lord, *kurios*, master. This man was appealing to Jesus' authority. No doubt he had heard of Christ's miraculous healings of others. The Lord was his only and last hope.

The man's request is a remarkably clear statement of faith: "*if You will, you can.*" Acknowledging Jesus' authority and ability, he makes no demand. Speaking to the incarnate Son of God, his request recognizes Jesus' right and ability, His power and authority to heal. The man appeals to divine sovereignty to change his life. He's not asking merely for healing his physical affliction.

He wants to be made clean, physically, socially, personally complete. This transformation of his existence would make him without affliction, able to work, to worship, to be with people again. Like Naaman in 2Kings 5, he turns to Almighty God in the obedience of faith. Only God heals.

3- DO YOU TRUST JESUS? "The first qualification for coming to Jesus is awareness of your true condition," notes RK Hughes. "God does not come to the self-sufficient who think they have no need, or imagine they can make it on their own. You must come to Christ, saying 'unclean, unclean' for if you think you are only partly unclean, He will not receive you. That is the tragedy of the comfortable today, who cannot accept that they are not acceptable."

Of course if you could, you would already have healed yourself. That's why you ask Jesus. "There was no question in his mind about the power of Christ," observes RC Sproul. "In pure humility, he said, '*Jesus I know you can, will you?*' He recognized he was in the presence of the One whose power and authority far transcended anything he had ever encountered or dreamed."

4- IS HE WILLING TO CLEANSE? Moved with pity, in verse 13 "*Jesus stretched out His hand and touched him, saying, 'I will, be clean' and immediately the leprosy left him.*" Jesus touched this untouchable, and instantly makes him 'clean.' Hallelujah! Sproul says "the healing breath of God, the word of Christ, the same power by which the world was created, the same power that would raise Lazarus from the dead, is the divine power demonstrated here."

Like leprosy, the hapless hype of sinners apart from Christ is also illustrated by the dubious 'science' of Covid-19. We are desperate, and can not heal ourselves. Our only hope is Christ!

Leprosy is a metaphor for your sin. Your only hope is Jesus. He is able, and willing. Are you willing? Trust Jesus only! "Apart from the cleansing work of Christ, we are in the same condition as the leper," notes Hughes, "full of sin, unclean, your righteousness as filthy rags." But the Christ, the Deliverer has come. He has cleansed others. Will you bow to Him in faith? ☐