

WEEK 2 – AFFLICTED WITH LEPROSY

Devotions this week are based on the GPS Guide from the series “People Jesus Loved”, by Church of the Resurrection, Kansas City.

MONDAY – “I do want to”



Matthew 8: 1-4 *When Jesus came down from the mountainside, large crowds followed Him. A man with leprosy came and knelt before Him and said, “Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.” Jesus reached out His hand and touched the man. “I am willing,” He said. “Be clean!” Immediately he was cleansed of his leprosy. Then Jesus said to him, “See that you don’t tell anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the gift Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.”*

In Jesus’s day, people with a skin disease were seen as ritually unclean and contagious, so they were supposed to avoid contact with other (clean) people. What people “avoided like the plague” (literally) was touching such a person.

Skin diseases were often regarded as divine judgements on sin. People feared both the physical and spiritual consequences of contact with such people. It took courage born out of desperation for this man to even approach Jesus. Therefore, Jesus’ lack of fear was a startling model for His followers at that time.

The man said, “Lord, if you want, you can make me clean”, and as

Jesus touched him, He said, “I do want to.”

For me, Jesus’s response, “I do want to,” is the most amazing and beautiful response that there could be. Jesus **wants to** restore people to wholeness. Wholeness in every facet of life. And He wants to touch each one of us.

Just imagine Jesus looking at you, saying, “I do want to.”

Do you need to be cleansed and restored by the loving, healing powers of Jesus Christ?

Reflection: Spend time now giving Jesus those ‘unclean’, broken areas of your life.

And hear His words, “I do want to.”



Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank you for wanting me to be whole, restored, cleansed. Thank you for not judging me as the world does. Lord, let Your Holy, restorative waters flow over me. AMEN

TUESDAY – Fear or compassion



Leviticus 13: 45 & 46 *"Anyone with such a defiling disease must wear torn clothes, let their hair be unkempt, cover the lower part of their face and cry out, 'Unclean! Unclean!' As long as they have the disease they remain unclean. They must live alone; they must live outside the camp.*

In ancient Israel, skin diseases like leprosy brought devastating isolation. Anyone diagnosed with leprosy had to live "outside the camp," wearing torn clothes and calling out "Unclean!" to warn others. These rules may seem harsh, but they were aimed at protecting the community's health. This social isolation and stigma created suffering and fear. Yet Jesus engaged with deep compassion.

When we read these accounts in the Bible, we may tend to think this is ancient history. However, here in Pretoria, on the southern slopes of Bronberg Mountain, near Daspoort, was Westfort Village. A leper colony, established in 1897. It was the main leprosy hospital after the Robben Island facility was closed in 1931. It finally closed in 1997. The buildings can still be seen there. It is very much in our recent past! We did the same thing.

Social isolation takes many forms these days. It could be illness or disease, poverty, unwashed people living on the streets, abandoned children, those with mental health issues or just those who are weirdly different.

How can we bridge those divides with Christ-like compassion? Which is greater: fear or compassion? Do you have a heart for the outcasts as Jesus did? Perhaps it is time to have Godly conversations with each other about what can be done to help the outcasts in our community. If you said to one other person, "I have a deep concern about this," perhaps they may reply, "Me too!" Two heads are always better than one – and then we add Jesus! He is calling us to action.

Who can you start a conversation with?



Prayer: Lord, give me just an ounce of the compassion You have for people. Help me to turn fear into empathy and action for others. May I not ignore the stirrings of my heart when I see poverty, isolation and "unclean" people. AMEN

WEDNESDAY – Jesus commands: heal even the outcasts



Matthew 10: 8 *Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give.*

Jesus sent His disciples out with specific instructions: heal the sick, cast out demons, and proclaim God's kingdom. Matthew's account emphasised that this healing ministry must include people with skin diseases ("lepers")—society's most feared outcasts. Jesus wanted His followers to freely share the same healing power and compassion they had freely received. This mission showed how radically inclusive God's love is, reaching beyond social barriers to touch and heal those whom others avoided. (GPS, Church of Resurrection).

The instruction was: healing to everyone—even the outcasts. Not just those with whom they felt comfortable. Jesus expected them to counter the social norms just as He did.

We may be quite appalled at the idea of leper colonies, yet health isolation still exists. Remember: AIDS pandemic in the 1980's.

Mental health institutions. Covid – a mere five years ago. Jesus and the leper is a blinding revelation of how God's people should deal with stigmatised medical and social conditions. Yet we opt for our own protection first.

Jesus's actions heralded the dawning of a new way. The way where people were to care for people. God wants to feed and heal physical, spiritual and emotional needs. And we are part of that process.

Being the presence of Christ requires us to overcome our fears. Can compassion rise above fear?

Where do you have difficulty showing compassion?

Is it somebody who is culturally or socio-economically different from you, someone who begs on the street, someone who is lonely and needs time and friendship?

Let us not forget: "*Freely you have received. Freely give.*"



Prayer: Lord Jesus, You cared about people, about me, as whole beings. Guide me to care for others in that same holistic way.
AMEN

THURSDAY – Evidence of Christ's transforming power



1 John 1: 8 *If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.*

Romans 3: 9, 23 *What shall we conclude then? Do we have any advantage? Not at all! For we have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under the power of sin.*

23 *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,*

What if you are the outcast? We are all broken and unclean in some way. Yet Jesus says, "I want to." It takes just a touch from the hand of Jesus.

As we pray, read Scripture and fellowship with each other, Jesus heals us emotionally and spiritually. Here we find compassion, hope. And as we learn and seek Him, our faith deepens. Restoration and wholeness begin. When we hand the brokenness over to God, we embark on a personal journey where pain is replaced with peace and purpose. And our spirit lightens as we move from heaviness to praise.

In Psalm 51: 10, David prays, *"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me"*.

Let's begin again—

Cry out to God. Tell Him how you feel.

Grieve. Life is hard sometimes.

Be angry.

Rest in His loving arms.

Forgive yourself and others.

Pray and pray some more.

Fellowship.

Praise the living God.

Let Christ minister to you today.

So that we might live as His people and not be outcasts from God and His Kingdom.



Prayer: Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on me. Melt me, mould me, fill me. Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on me. Lord, fill me with Your transforming power. AMEN

FRIDAY – Go back and give thanks



Luke 17: 11-19 *Now on His way to Jerusalem, Jesus travelled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. As He was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met Him. They stood at a distance and called out in a loud voice, “Jesus, Master, have pity on us!” When He saw them, He said, “Go, show yourselves to the priests.” And as they went, they were cleansed. One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus’ feet and thanked Him—and he was a Samaritan. Jesus asked, “Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Has no one returned to give praise to God except this foreigner?” Then He said to him, “Rise and go; your faith has made you well.”*

Sometimes we are so focused on what we want God to do for us that when He does, we gleefully continue with our lives. It takes humility to thank God. Thanking Him for what He will do requires faith. And faith is the certainty of what we do not yet see. This is the heart of thanksgiving.

Do you feel aggrieved when you are not thanked for a gift you have given or a service you have offered? Yet we forget to thank God, and He loves us anyway.

Thanking God turns our hearts towards Him and helps us keep our eyes on Him. Gratitude is not for God’s benefit but ours.

Thank you, God, for being my stability and my guiding light in days of darkness and uncertainty. Thank you for all the times You have protected and guided me and I have not known it. Thank you for not answering all my selfish prayers. Thank you for the people who smile at me. Thank you, Lord, for being there.



*For every breath you freely gave
For mercy new with every day
For all the grace I don’t deserve
With all I am, I say these words:
Thank you, Lord, for saving me.
For every hope, for setting me free
Thank you, Lord for love so true.
(Faith Music)*

Go back and thank Jesus.

AMEN