

Jesus Is Willing

As we begin today, may I remind us of the truths we learned in an earlier message where the Lord Jesus described for us the very specific reasons and purposes that He came to this earth. In chapter 4 of this Book of Luke, beginning in verse 18, He said to us

¹⁸ "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me,
Because He has anointed Me
To preach the gospel to the poor;
He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted,
To proclaim liberty to the captives
And recovery of sight to the blind,
To set at liberty those who are oppressed;
¹⁹ To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." (Luke 4:18-19)

Too many preachers use these words to preach sermons on social issues that are taking place within our culture. But we must remind ourselves that none of these purposes are truly social in nature. While some social needs might have been met as Jesus ministered to the people, the intention of His anointed ministry was, and is, to reach straight to the soul of a person.

These words "preach the gospel to the poor" are not making reference to those who are economically poor. These words speak about the "poor in spirit", the same "poor in spirit" that is spoken about in the "Be-attitudes" given in the Book of Matthew chapter 5. These are the ones who know that they are "needy" in matters of the soul.

And the words, "to heal the brokenhearted" speak about those whose hearts have been broken by their sins, and they realize that they desperately need to be reconciled to God.

The "captives" are those who are held in bondage to their own sinful nature.

And the "blind" are those who cannot see the truths of God because of the blindness put upon them by the world and especially by the devil who has "blinded their eyes".

To "set at liberty those who are oppressed" is to free up those who cannot see a way out from under their sinful burdens, their suffering and their grief.

And to “proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord” . . . this is the “jubilee”, like that special time spoken about in the Old Testament when all debts are settled and everything that was once ours, but somehow had gotten taken away from us, is returned and becomes ours again.

Jesus came to restore us back to the life that mankind once knew back there in the Garden of Eden, those days when sin did not control our thoughts and our behaviors.

And because the Lord Jesus was here for these specific reasons, the miracles that He performed were always very intentional and very purposeful towards those ends, and, especially those miracles that had to do with the healing of sicknesses and crippling diseases. Listen to this account of one such healing given to us here in Luke chapter 5, beginning in verse 12.

¹²And it happened when He was in a certain city, that behold, a man who was full of leprosy saw Jesus; and he fell on his face and implored Him, saying, “Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.”

¹³Then Jesus put out His hand and touched him, saying, “I am willing; be cleansed.” Immediately the leprosy left him. ¹⁴And Jesus charged him to tell no one, “But go and show yourself to the priest, and make an offering for your cleansing, as a testimony to them, just as Moses commanded.”

¹⁵However, the report went around concerning Him all the more; and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by Him of their infirmities. ¹⁶So He Himself often withdrew into the wilderness and prayed.
(Luke 5:12-16)

Over the three or so years that Jesus ministered to the people, He performed many different kinds of miracles, most of which usually involved the physical needs of those He healed. He had great compassion for their suffering.

But foremost within all His miracles of healing was His desire to intervene in matters of the people’s souls. Jesus knew well that it would be far better for a person to go into heaven crippled or maimed than to not go there at all.

But it was also true that very often the two were inseparably linked. And it remains so today, physical illnesses can often be directly linked to our lifestyle.

While there is no mention that this man’s leprosy was in any way associated with a sin the man had committed, throughout these scriptures and especially in the Old Testament, sin and the disease of leprosy are often linked as one. We find

that to be so with Miriam (Moses' sister) and Gehazi (Elisha's servant) and King Uzziah, and several others, all smitten with leprosy because of a particular sin that they had committed.

And we also find in these scriptures that a person with leprosy was not only sick and diseased, but they were also considered to be "unclean" and unfit to be among other people. As a leper walked through the streets, they were required to call out with the words "unclean", "unclean". Yes, their disease might have been contagious, but they were also considered to be "spiritually unclean", and able to contaminate other people "spiritually".

A leper was not permitted to enter a temple and worship because their presence would defile the temple. And even those people who tended to a leper's needs were prohibited from entering the temple until a period of cleansing had been observed, all having to do with "spiritual uncleanness" rather than physical disease.

This man in today's passage that Jesus healed was said to be "full of leprosy". And by Jesus' instruction to him to

". . . go and show yourself to the priest, and make an offering for your cleansing, as a testimony to them, just as Moses commanded." (Luke 5:15)

Those words give some implication that this man's leprosy was probably a result of sin. But even while we cannot know that for sure, we can see that Jesus was using it to that purpose.

Folks there really is no other disease quite like leprosy, the utter devastation and misery that it brings not only to a person's body, but also what it does to a person's emotional and mental state of being. But I do think that in our generation, we have been able to come close to that kind of utter corruption and misery with some of our more modern forms of devastating sin-inflicted habits.

I recall some years ago watching an episode of the television program "Cops". A policeman had arrested a thirty-five-year-old woman for drug possession and sale of Methamphetamines. Because of her use of the drugs, the physical and mental condition of this dear woman could only be described as utter devastation. Her face was drawn and had an ashen pallor, her eyes were sunken and showed almost no life, her body showed signs of malnutrition, and as she talked to the policeman, she had very little personality left within her soul.

The policeman showed the woman's driver's license to the camera, and he asked when the picture on the license had been taken. She told him about three years earlier. Folks, the picture on the driver's license was of a vibrant and beautiful 35-year-old woman who was at that time a schoolteacher. Sin and the effects of a sinful lifestyle can be utterly devastating.

And so it seemed also for a person who suffered from the disease of Leprosy.

Bear with me for a moment about this disease of leprosy. Because leprosy with all of its destructive effects can serve as an excellent allegory, parallel in its effects to that of many of our forms of sin. For me, leprosy is a graphic image that helps me to be able to visualize the true nature and the destructiveness that sin can wreak on a person, both on their body and especially on their soul.

The rotting flesh that takes place on a leper's body leaves no doubt as to that person's horrible condition. And such is so with the awful effects that unbridled sin can have upon a person's soul, and even their body. Every part of a person's being, physically, mentally, emotionally and especially spiritually, show the effects of their sin.

And the disease of leprosy alienates its victims from other people, so much so that no one desires to have any form of close relationship with them, not even so much as a gentle hug. And it seems to only find its true fellowship with members of its own kind. As a result, lepers live as outcasts from the society, unloved and separated from everyone except their own kind.

And again, those are the same effects as sin. Sin divides and it separates even the dearest of loved ones. And again, as with leprosy, those that are caught up in sin seem only to find fellowship with those of like-minds. Adulterers seek out and find other adulterers. Pornographers seek out and find other pornographers. Party lovers and drinkers and drug addicts hang out with others of their kind. And so also it is with thieves and liars and gossipers and slanderers, and on and on.

But again, in this instance with this man with leprosy, we don't really know if his leprosy was a result of sin or not, but here, Jesus' instruction to him gives us some indication that it probably might have been so. Verse 5 again

“. . . go and show yourself to the priest, and make an offering for your cleansing, as a testimony to them, just as Moses commanded." (Luke 5:15)

One note to observe within this instruction to go and show himself to a priest is the fact that a priest has no ability to actually cleanse a leper from his disease.

He can only validate that the leper has or has not been cleansed. One and one only can actually do such complete cleansing. And that is the one who can forgive sins, the Lord Jesus.

Look with me again for a moment back at verse 12.

¹²And it happened when He was in a certain city, that behold, a man who was full of leprosy saw Jesus; and he fell on *his* face and implored Him, saying, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean." (Luke 5:12)

Here, we find the leper asking Jesus if He was willing to heal him. And Jesus answered, "Yes, I am willing".

That again, confirms the purpose for which Jesus came among us, to cleanse us, not just from diseases, but from every sin within us, and then to restore us to the image of the invisible God who created us, to restore us to the perfect creatures that first stood there in the Garden and of whom God was able to say, "this is good".

Those first creatures, Adam and Eve were truly perfect in every way, perfect physically, perfect mentally, perfect emotionally and especially perfect spiritually. And Jesus came for the purpose of restoring people to that first condition.

And I can declare to you today that He has done exactly that!

But some might say, "But oh no, He hasn't, just look around you at the sin!"

And I agree, but something very special has really taken place. In coming and dying on the cross, Jesus has actually put temptation and sin back in their rightful place.

For those of us who truly do receive Christ as Savior and Lord, He restores us to a condition that is much like that which Adam and Eve enjoyed when they were first created, in that they, in their first condition, had the ability and the privilege of being able to make the choice of whether to sin or not to sin. Now, we also have that same choice!

We need to remind ourselves that before we were saved, we had no such choice available to us. We were just like that leper who had no ability within himself to heal his devastated condition. And so it is with those who are unsaved. These scriptures tell us clearly that an unsaved person really does not have the ability to say no to sin and to save themselves. Sin is the absolute

master of an unsaved soul. Listen to these words in Romans 8, beginning in verse 5,

⁵Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. ⁶The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; ⁷the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. ⁸Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. (Romans 8:5-8)

Note those words again in verses 7 and 8.

⁷the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. ⁸Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. (Romans 8:7-8)

This is an absolute truth folks, and it expresses the total depravity that is present within us when we are without Christ. An unsaved soul does not even perceive that they are being controlled by sin or that they need to be cleansed from it. Just as that leper was "full of leprosy", so also, without Christ, we are "full of sin".

And contrary to what some might believe and teach, outside of the work of the Holy Spirit, there is no inborn sense within a person's soul telling them about sin and righteousness and judgment. Those are things of God's Spirit and not things of man.

Yes, a person who is being made miserable by the effects of sin knows that something is wrong, but they truly do not understand sin's meaning, or its cure. It is only as God's Holy Spirit enters into a person's heart, soul and mind that they are able to discern their condition and their need. God's Spirit and His Spirit alone reveals sin.

And we are told that clearly in 1 Corinthians 2. Listen beginning in verse 13

¹³These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. ¹⁴But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned. (1 Corinthians 2:13-14)

May I say again that neither the wisdom of men nor some inborn sense within men can discern sin and righteousness and judgment. Only the Spirit of God, living within a person, can do that.

And the Holy Spirit does not rest in merely revealing our sin to us. He puts a powerful conviction within our souls that drives us to want to be rid of it.

And in His conviction of us, He reminds us that it is Christ and Christ alone who can cleanse us from our “uncleanness”. No priest, no preacher, no church, no church attendance, no amount of Christian service, no amount of “good works”, none of those things can cleanse us from our sin. Only the blood of Christ is able to do that.

With that being said though, we are to also do as Jesus instructed the leper. We are to go to our temple, which is the church, and we are to demonstrate to all who are there that we are “new creatures” in Christ. And we are to keep going there and showing ourselves to the church, because that is where those who are cleansed from their sins find fellowship.

We are never again to go back to find fellowship with the lepers, with the drug addicts, with the thieves, the drunkards, the liars, the adulterers, the pornographers.

Yes, we might, in compassion, go back and minister to those who are suffering, but we are never to go back and “become one” with them. We have been cleansed from our sin and changed into the image of Christ. And we are to show ourselves as being so by separating ourselves out unto the gospel.

Folks, a simple truth is being given to us in this gospel. And that truth is that you and I must allow Jesus to not only be our “Savior”, but He must also be our “Lord”. “Lord” of everything we do! “Lord” over our thoughts. “Lord” over our behaviors! “Lord” over our habits! Jesus must not only be our “Savior”, He must also be our “Lord”.

Finally, here in these last words, Jesus also instructed the man to tell no one about his healing, but to only show himself to the priest and to make an offering for his cleansing. If the leper honored that instruction, how did the report go around anyway?

Let me suggest that when a person is changed, whether it be physically or spiritually, or both, other people take notice of it. If God truly changes you, others will notice that that change has taken place and they will tell other people about it.

It is my prayer for each of us that you and I will invite the Lord Jesus to not only be our Savior, but to also be “Lord” over our daily life. And that “word will go

out” to our friends and family and neighbors about a wonderful change that has taken place within our souls!

Listen as we close! The leper said to Jesus,

¹² . . . “Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.”

¹³ Then Jesus put out His hand and touched him, saying, “I am willing; be cleansed.” Immediately the leprosy left him. (Luke 5:12-13)

May we pray!