

# TRINITY

BIBLE CHURCH DALLAS

The Sermon

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Luke 5:12-16

"Jesus Heals the Leper"

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TRANSCRIPT

So, we are in Luke chapter 5. I want you to take your Bible and turn with me to Luke chapter 5, and we continue to be on the dusty roads of Galilee with our Savior during His earthly ministry. Luke chapter 5. I want to begin reading in verse 12, and we'll be looking at this passage through verse 16. Luke 5, beginning in chapter 12. The title of this message is "Jesus Heals a Leper."

Beginning in verse 12, "While He was in one of the cities, behold, there was a man covered with leprosy; and when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and implored Him, saying, 'Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.' And He stretched out His hand and touched him, saying, 'I am willing; be cleansed.' And immediately the leprosy left him. And He ordered him to tell no one, 'But go and show yourself to the priest and make an offering for your cleansing, just as Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.' But the news about Him was spreading even farther, and large crowds were gathering to hear Him and to be healed of their sicknesses. But Jesus Himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray." This is God's word. This is milk and meat for our soul today. Let us go to the Lord in prayer.

[Prayer] Our Father, the passage has now been read, and our eyes, our hearts are drawn to this specific text for this Lord's Day as we gather here

at Trinity Bible Church. And I pray that You would take from this one passage truth, principles, examples that we need to apply to our lives. So use this to elevate our thoughts of Christ and to humble us and to transform us into the very image of Jesus Christ. I pray that You would fill me with Your Spirit and use me as a tool, as an instrument, and that You would, by Your Spirit, bring the truth of this passage home to every heart here today. Father, we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. [End]

In these verses we see Jesus reaching out to heal a leper. This was an act of extreme kindness and compassion, as Jesus, in the midst of His hectic ministry and frantic pace as He's preaching and traveling and so many demands upon Him, He stops and He made direct contact with someone whom no one else would approach. We learn here much about Jesus. There is no uncleanness in man that can prevent Jesus from dramatically cleansing and changing life. There are no barriers that He cannot overcome. There is nothing in a person's life that could restrict Jesus from becoming directly involved in that life.

Jesus is the friend of sinners. Those who come to Him will never be turned away. Those who come to Him will in no wise be cast out. You will never come to Jesus, but that He will not receive you, if you come in faith. Those who come to Him, though they are unclean, will be made clean. And those who are even outcasts of society will be received by Jesus. And those that others keep their distance away from such a person, Jesus will actually reach out and touch that person. Jesus is accessible to you and me.

So as we walk through this familiar passage, the first thing I want you to note is, "The leper Jesus met. The leaper Jesus met." In verse 12, we read, "While He was in one of the cities." Just to remind you, Jesus is still in Galilee, which is the northernmost region of the Promised Land. It is in Galilee that Jesus is on an itinerant preaching tour, going from city to city, and there's no grass growing under His feet. He is constantly on the move, coming from the city and city. And we read here that "He was in one of the cities." That's important in this passage, that He's not in between cities, that He's in one of the cities. He's in one of the cities where a leper is forbidden to come.

And we read the next word, "behold," which is actually important. The word "behold" means don't miss seeing what's about to be recorded, do not skip past this, do not hit fast play. "Behold," - gaze upon what is about to be written - "there was a man covered with leprosy." He didn't just have leprosy, he was covered with leprosy. And this word "covered" means full of leperacy. We're not given any more indication, but it may well be from the top of his head to the bottom of his feet - every limb and every extremity. He is covered with leprosy.

Now leprosy is not as common for us today, but back then it was, ultimately, a fatal disease. It was a skin disease that created a neurological disorder that numbs the sensitivities of a person's awareness of pain. Pain is a good thing because it lets you know something's wrong. But if you cannot feel pain, you are subject to abusing your body.

And what would happen with a leper, he would lose all feeling and he would begin to rub himself subconsciously, and he would rub and he would rub until his skin would begin to lose its color, and he would become sickly looking, and the skin would turn thick, inflamed, and glossy and scaly. And then thickened skin spots would become open sores with oozing ulcers and raw flesh exposed. You would just rub through the skin.

And the skin around the eyes and ears would bunch up with deep furrows until your face would resemble something like a lion. It would result in gross disfiguration throughout the whole body until, finally, fingers would drop off, and then toes would fall off. Eyebrows and eyelashes would disappear, they would just be rubbed off. And a foul odor enveloped the person like a cloud. And the throat became hoarse and the voice raspy.

Leprosy has been called a living death in which day by day you just die and die and die, yet there is not the relief of death. A leper would die a thousand deaths before they died. It was the most feared disease of the ancient world for which there was virtually no cure. It was, in essence,

uncurable. And this disorder was so feared, that anyone with leprosy would have to be quarantined, and they would have to live in a lepers colony outside of town.

And there are two entire chapters in the Bible devoted to the restrictions and the limitations imposed on the one who has leprosy. Leviticus chapters 13 and 14 give detailed instruction, as they would have to be segmented and away from people. They were not allowed to come into a city. And if by some chance someone was to become close to them and they would have some kind of a veil over their face, they would have to cry out with that hoarse voice, "Unclean! Unclean!" That was their mantra, "Unclean! Unclean!" And it signaled a warning that you had to do an about-face and pivot and go away in another direction. You could not afford to have any contact with someone who is struck with leprosy.

And in the Old Testament, leprosy was a picture of sin, sin that brings death. Leprosy infects the whole person; so does sin. Leprosy runs deep to the core of a person's being; so does sin. Leprosy is ugly and loathsome; so is sin. Leprosy contaminates and spreads. It doesn't restrict itself to one little compartment of the person's being, it spreads to the whole; so does sin. Leprosy makes one numb and insensitive; so does sin. Leprosy is incurable by man; so is sin. Leprosy defiles and results in death; so does sin. Leprosy renders one unclean under the law of God and cuts one off from God; so does sin. Leprosy can only be cured by God; so it is with sin.

I don't know if you have ever seen your own life in this manner, but you and I were born spiritual lepers with the disease of sin in us, and you were considered unclean under the law of God, and you are cut off from God. You had no relationship with God and no access to God. You were separated from Him and you were in dire need of cleansing.

This leads, second, to "the longing Jesus heard." Still in verse 12, in the middle of verse 12, "and when he saw Jesus." Jesus, as the beginning of the verse tells us, is in one of the cities. He is forbidden to be in one of the cities. And yet he sees Jesus, which clearly indicates that this leper now has

crossed the line, and he is so desperate. He has heard about Jesus. Everyone has heard about Jesus. The news has spread like wildfire. And this leper is so wanting to be healed by Jesus that he's willing to climb any mountain, forge any stream, violate even the law of Moses, whatever, "I've got to get to Jesus."

And so we read, "and when he saw Jesus," – this is not a mere chance encounter. No, he's looking for Jesus, and he sees Jesus in the city, and – "he approaches Jesus and fell down on his face." He fell prostrate before Jesus. He humbled himself and threw himself upon the mercy of Jesus because Jesus was his only hope, just like Jesus is your only hope. You have no hope but what you have in Jesus.

And we read, "and implored Him." The word "implored" is a very strong word. It means he began to plead with Jesus. He began to beg Jesus. And it really reveals how desperate this leper was. There's a sense of urgency. He understands, "This is my moment with Jesus. There will never be another moment like this again." And he has nowhere else to turn. I mean, the drama of this can hardly be replicated.

And so he cries out to Jesus, "Lord," which means Master, Ruler, Sovereign One. It's a term for Deity. We don't know what all he knew about Jesus, but he did know that He is Lord, *kurios*. And whenever someone comes to Jesus, they must acknowledge that He is Lord, not later down the path, not one day ten years later, but on the front end.

"Lord," saying, "if You're willing." That's the way to talk to Jesus. He did not come demanding to be healed. He didn't come to name it and claim it. This leper knows he has no basis to make any demand of Jesus. What can a leper demand of the Holy One? What can a sinner demand of the Sovereign? Nothing. All you can do is plead for mercy.

"If You are willing," it's an expression of his awareness of his own unworthiness to make any claim upon Jesus. If You're willing, if You're

willing, You can make me clean." There's no lack of faith in the part of this leper concerning the ability of the Lord Jesus. Each of these words just really leap off the page: "You can make me clean. You and You alone can't make me clean. No one else can make me clean, Jesus, only You can make me clean."

The word "can," do you understand the difference between "may" and "can"? "May" is a word of permission, "can" is the word ability. There are many things you may do that you cannot do, you don't have the ability to do it. This leper understands that Jesus can, that Jesus can do the impossible, that Jesus can do what the priests cannot do, that Jesus can do what the doctors cannot do. "You can make me clean."

It's interesting he does not say, "You can make me well." "You could make me clean," because to be clean means that you would be right under the law of Moses. So he wants more than just a physical healing, he wants a spiritual cleansing. "You can make me right before God. You can make me clean. Now, if You heal me, You could also cleanse me." He wants his soul to be made clean. He sees His real need. It's deeper than his body. It goes all the way down to the core of his soul.

The same is true for your life and my life. Only Jesus can make us clean. Only Jesus can take away our sins. Only Jesus can present us faultless before the throne of God. Isaiah 1:18, God says, "Come, let us reason together," says the Lord, "though your sins be a scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they may be white as wool." Only Jesus can purge your soul from the guilt and the stain of your transgressions and make you pure and clean before God.

First John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us, cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Oh, how dirty our souls are, how polluted our hearts are, how foul our mind is - how selfish, how worldly, how crass, how materialistic, how egotistical. There is only one who can make us clean and it is Jesus. Titus 3:5 speaks of the washing of regeneration. John 3:5, "Truly, truly, I say to

you, except you be born of water and the Spirit you shall not enter the kingdom of God." No filth passes through the narrow gate. We must be washed in the blood of the Lamb.

So, have you ever humbled yourself? Have you ever come to Christ and said, "Unclean! Unclean! Lord, if You're willing, cleanse me"? That's the sinner's prayer: "Lord, have mercy upon me, the sinner." It may not have been expressed in those exact words when you were converted, but that's the substance, that is the heart of the sinner's prayer, "Lord, if You're willing, make me clean."

This leads, third, to verse 13, "the leprosy Jesus healed." And please note how Jesus responded to this man who had loathsome sores and this diseased body. Verse 13, "And stretched out His hand." The word "and" is important. It indicates an immediate response from Jesus. It's the continuation of this same narrative. There's not a parentheses of time between verse 12 and verse 13. Verse 13 begins with the word "and." These are like boxcars on a train, they're just being all pulled forward together at once.

So, verse 13, "And stretched out His hand," referring to Jesus. It means to extend His hand intentionally and purposely, really, in a way that no one else would. No one else would have come near him, and yet Jesus steps in where everyone else is stepping out. Jesus moves in where everyone else is scurrying to get away from this leper. Jesus actually stretches out His hand, and we read here, "and touched him."

The word "touched" here doesn't mean like this, just kind of a glancing touch. No. This Greek word *haptó*, it means to lay hold of him. Not a mere glancing touch, but Jesus fashioned Himself to him. He grasped him. And there must have been a gasp that day: 'You touched a leper!'

And Jesus could have just said from the other side of town, "Be healed," and he would have been healed. We read something like that at the end of John chapter 4 when the nobleman came to Jesus and said, "My son is sick

unto death," and Jesus says, "Go home; you'll find him well." Jesus does not even bother to make a house call and go walk to the other town and then lay His hands on him and raise him from the sick bed. I mean, Jesus can heal from long distance. But here, Jesus wants everyone to see Him stretch out His hand and touch him.

Luke, who recorded this, was a physician. And physicians understand well the need to put their hands on their patient to try to diagnose and discern what the illness may be. And Luke here, as he writes this, Luke was not present for this. Luke had to research and talk to eyewitnesses who would recreate infallibly for him what took place there this day. And so, years later, as Luke does onsite research and to talk to people who were present there that day, including His disciples, what stuck in their mind that they passed on to Luke so that Luke would record in his word is that "We'll never forget it. Jesus crossed the line." He crossed the boundaries, and He was so full of compassion and so full mercy that He reached out and literally laid His hand upon this leper to personally, individually touch him, to identify with him, to draw near to him.

The Scripture says, "Draw near to God and He will draw to you." And this leper has drawn near to Christ. And Christ doesn't take steps back and steps away to try to keep His distance. No. As this leper draws near Jesus, Jesus draws near to him and extends His hand and touches him. Those standing there that day must have become as pale as this leper's skin was.

According to the Mosaic Law, Leviticus 13 and 14 - and I'm not going to do a detour to take us back through those chapters - but according to Mosaic Law which is the Law of God given through Moses, the leper who is ceremonially unclean could not be touched by one who was ceremoniously clean. If contact is made, the one who is ceremonially clean would become unclean. But Jesus is the Holy One of God - immutable, unchanging in His holiness; impeccable, incapable of sin.

And so in the middle of verse 13, Jesus said, "I'm willing." Jesus is so willing to touch the unclean life of this leper in order to make him clean. In



Romans 9, God says, "I will have mercy on whom I have will mercy, and I will have compassion upon whom I have will compassion." It's the sovereign choice of God to have mercy." And Jesus said, "I'm willing, not that I am reluctant, not I that I'm hesitant. I'm willing." He is more willing to cleanse the leper than the leper is willing to come to Christ.

And then Jesus utters these two words, "Be cleansed." It's in the imperative mood, which means it's a command: "Be cleansed." The leprosy must depart. The ceremonial uncleanness must leave. Again, Jesus does not say, "Be healed," because the man's real need is not his physical condition. Jesus says, "Be cleansed," because of the deepest need of his life is spiritual, for his heart to be cleansed before God. "Be cleansed."

The next two words, "and immediately," immediately, straightway, at once, without delay. This is a favorite word of Mark in the gospel of Mark. It's used over 35 times. Everything was immediately, immediately, immediately, immediately, immediately. There's no procrastination with Christ. There's no delay with Christ. Everything is done immediately. There's a rapid pace about His ministry and about His life.

"And immediately the leprosy left him." It departed. It abandoned him immediately. He was converted immediately. He was cleansed immediately. And this is something I want to stress again, that every conversion is an immediate conversion.

Your conversion was an immediate conversion. There was a day, there was an hour, there was a moment, there was a time when Jesus said to you, "I am willing; be cleansed." You may have progressively been convicted over a long period of time. You have been progressively being drawn by the Lord. You may have progressively been gaining the understanding of the gospel of Christ over an extended period of time. But there is that one **epi-moment**, that one split second when Jesus said to you, "Be cleansed," and immediately, you were cleansed, and it was the greatest moment of your life, greater than the day of marriage, greater than the day the birth of your children, greater than the day of a promotion at work.

The greatest day of your life is when Jesus says, "Be cleansed." And immediately, you are cleansed. You may not be able to pinpoint when that moment was, you may not be able to recall the day nor the hour, but I want you to know it happened in a day and it happened an hour, and you were immediately cleansed.

That could happen to you today. It's possible for you to walk in here today like this leper and be unclean before God, and in the course of this worship service and in the course of hearing this sermon, to hear the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ and for the Holy Spirit to do an internal work within your soul. And while you're even seated here in this worship service, you could say to the Lord silently within your own heart, "Lord, if You're willing, cleanse me," and for the Lord to act, "I'm willing; be cleansed," and you could go home cleansed by the blood of the Lamb. It would be the greatest day of your life.

Fourth, we come to verse 14, "the law Jesus upheld." "And" - there's the word "and" again leading the verse. All this is unfolding like links in a chain. This is all connected, there's no time lapse. "And," - next thing - "and Jesus ordered him to tell no one." Wow, we might have immediately put him in the baptistery. We might have immediately had him stand up and give his testimony. Jesus ordered him, commanded him, "Don't breathe a word of this." Why? "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so." Shout it from the housetops. Why?

Look at the next words: "But go and show yourself to the priest." Really, "But first go and show yourself to the priest." It's a matter of priority here. What must come first? And under the law in Leviticus chapter 14, if you were healed - and it was so rare for anyone to ever be healed of leprosy - but if you are healed, you need to go straight to the priest, and you need to have him inspect you so that this isn't some claim that you went to a faith healing service and your left ear is longer now. No, you need to be checked out. You need to be inspected for the reality of what you claim.

But then the priest is to leave, being outside the city, and to come into the city, and let it be known, so that you can come into the city, and everyone doesn't have to run away from you. It provides your now needed passage back into society, your entrance back into the association of relationships so that you don't have to keep saying, "Unclean! Unclean!" whenever you encounter someone. And so go have the priest check you out - at the end of verse 14 - "just as Moses commanded."

This wasn't a suggestion from God. No, it was a command from God as a testimony to them. I'll just quickly read Leviticus 14:2, "This shall be the law of the leper." It was known as the law of the leper. "This shall be the law of the leper in the day of his cleansing." - that very day - "Now he shall be brought to the priest," - verse 3 - "and the priest shall go out to the outside side of the camp. Thus the priest shall look, and if the infection of leprosy has been healed in the leper, then the priest shall give orders."

What we see here is also the high regard that Jesus had for the law of God. Jesus was not an antinomian, one against the law. Every moment of every day, every step of His personal life and public ministry and private ministry, Jesus was obedient to the law of God. It is known as His active and passive obedience to the law of God. He fulfills the law on our behalf, okay? "He fulfilled all righteousness," Matthew 3:15.

And so even here, Jesus is operating by the law of God, He's not cutting corners. And you and I should have a very high regard for the moral law of God. This is a part of the ceremonial law of the priesthood and the sacrifice and all of that, that was all fulfilled at the cross; that's all ancient history now. The ceremonial has nothing to do with us. Christ is the fulfillment of the law, the ceremonial law. That's why we're not offering sacrifices in here today. That's why we are not a messianic Jewish congregation. No. All of that has been long since fulfilled. It's over. But we are under the moral law of God which is succinctly summarized in the Ten Commandments, and the Ten Commandments are still binding upon our conscience and upon our Christian lives.

Finally, in verse 15, "the lull Jesus needed." Verse 15, "But" - meaning, nevertheless, don't tell anybody; but the news spread like wildfire - "But the news about Him was spreading even farther," - "even farther" means exceedingly, over and above and beyond what everyone else had been talking about. This is throwing gas on the fire. In John 6, they will try to make Jesus king. And we read - "and large crowds" - "large" means great number of crowds, meaning large multitude. But notice it's in the plural, "large crowds," plural. It would be hard for us to get our minds around what this scene looked like as people are just literally pouring out of towns and cities, and they're merging together and traveling.

It says, "They were gathering to hear Him and to be healed of their sicknesses." Please note the priority: to hear the word of God. No one has ever spoken the word of God, no one has ever been the truth-teller like Jesus. And they were coming not just to be healed, but first and foremost to hear the truth of the kingdom, "and to be healed of their sicknesses." Notice "sicknesses" is in the plural - all their sicknesses. Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, the great Princeton theologian in the 19th century, said, "Jesus all but banished sickness from Israel." It's an amazing thought for a period of time.

Verse 16, another but: "But Jesus Himself would often slip away to the wilderness," - which means a deserted place, a desolate place, a lonely place - "and pray." It would be hard for us to, really, put ourselves into the sandals of Jesus and understand the intense demands that were placed upon Him in a day in which the nation Israel is in apostasy. And here is a man now who is preaching sheer unadulterated, unvarnished truth to us. And in a day in which sickness is without the medical conveniences that we have today, here is a man now who is healing all of their sicknesses, that He virtually cannot even turn around to take a step in any direction, but that there are throngs and throngs and throngs and throngs of people who are engulfing Him, wanting more of Him, more of him, "Just touch my mother. Just speak the word to my child. Tell us more about the Father," that Jesus, in His sinless humanity, was just like you and me. He grew weary. He grew tired.

In John 4, He went to Samaria and sat on a well in the middle of the day and asked the woman, "Can you give Me a drink of water?" He has His life strength syringed out of Him, sucked out of Him. He has nothing left to give today, and so He withdraws and slips away. The word means retired at some isolated place, and prayed to the Father to renew His strength, to the Father to replenish what has been drained. What strength we find in prayer. Sometimes we're so busy and so weak we don't have time to pray; that's when we need to pray more than ever.

So this is the dramatic account of Jesus healing a leper, and it's only one of untold, untold, untold numbers and numbers of people that Jesus touched when He was here. At the end of John's gospel, it says, "If all that Jesus said and did was written down, all the books of the world could not contain it." This is just one little insight into one episode that was replicated again and again and again and again and again. What we see here is how accessible Jesus was and is, as you have need in your life.

And who here today does not have need in their life? There are no super saints in this building. There are no bionic believers in the building. We all have need of His strength, His wisdom, His direction, His guidance, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera.

Jesus is accessible to you today. And whatever was weighing heavily upon you as you walked in, He wants to take that unto Himself. First Peter 5 says, "casting all your cares, all your burdens upon Him, for He cares for you greatly." If you will come to Him in your heart, I'm certain He will say, "I'm willing." You have a willing Savior today.

[Prayer] Father, thank You for this account tucked away in this unfolding story of the life of Jesus. And we do not speed past it today. We slow down and stand here and observe, and we are astonished and we are amazed at the compassion and the mercy, the grace, the accessibility, the readiness, the willingness, the power of the Lord Jesus Christ. The only thing that's lacking today is for us to turn to Him. And I pray that today each and every one of us in this room would avail ourselves of Christ, that we would abide

in Him, and that He would abide in us. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.  
[End]

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship  
of the Holy Spirit be with you all. God bless you.