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## 8:1

**When He was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him. 2. And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped Him, saying, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." 3. And Jesus put forth His hand, and touched him, saying, "I will; be thou clean." And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. 4. And Jesus saith unto him, "See thou tell no man; but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them."**

So, some introductory notes:

#1. Jesus has already healed thousands. Now this might be hard to grasp, but consider this passage of Scripture from just a little while ago, Matthew 4:23.

*And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and **healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.** 24. And His fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto Him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed of devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had palsy; and He healed them.*

Wow! How comprehensive is that? How complete? How expansive? How exhaustive? And by the way, oh by the way, in case you missed it, throughout all Syria. That is no small thing. And we're going to come back to why I think that is in just a moment.

Look at chapter 4. This is not a TV where you can see the little picture up on the screen so that your son can watch the silly Steelers game while you watch the game that matters, ok? A screen within a screen. Well, Matthew can't do that so he writes about one thing at a time. And so I'm saying that I really believe that if you were to take Matthew 5, 6, and 7, and just for a second act like it's not there, look at the last verse of chapter 4:

*And there followed Him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judaea, and from beyond Jordan.*

And then go to chapter 8 and you start reading about the healing of a leper. We're not surprised that the last verse of chapter 4 says something about Damascus. Now we see, in chapter number 8, the healing of a leper. Just stop for a minute and think that through. Just before we see Jesus healing all manner of sickness and diseases, in chapter 4, we see Him passing by His disciples, and what does He say to them? "Follow Me." The last time we see that in the Bible is when a certain prophet by the name of Elijah passed by a certain prophet by the name of Elisha. So the last time we see someone saying, "Follow me," is the prophet Elijah calling the prophet Elisha. And do you remember? There was a certain general; a certain army leader that had leprosy, in 2 Kings 5? His name was Naaman. And there's a maiden that they took captive from Israel, and she says, "There's a prophet in Samaria that can heal you of your leprosy, I think." And they go down to Samaria and they ask, "Where is this prophet?" And they find the prophet Elisha. And he is in the northern part of Palestine. And Elisha does something that makes complete medical sense. Well, not so much. He tells Naaman, "Go down to the Jordan River and immerse yourself seven times and you will have clean skin. No leprosy."

There is a clear parallel here being drawn between Jesus and all the prophets of the Old Testament, to include Elijah and Elisha. He's better than them too.

#2. Jesus continually heals people it seems.

*8:16 He healed all that were sick.*

*9:35 Healing every sickness and every disease.*

*14:14 He healed their sick.*

15:30 He healed them.

19:2 Healed them.

21:14 He healed them.

Is this the only leper that gets cleansed? Well, there is one later on in the book of Matthew. His name is Simon the leper (Matthew 26:6). I don't know that it is this "Simon healed of leprosy" here in chapter 8. I doubt it. But, in any case, if you'll look at chapter 11, verse 3 you'll notice that healing leprosy was part of Jesus' normal activity.

*And it came to pass, when Jesus had made an end of commanding His twelve disciples, He departed thence to teach and to preach in their cities. 2. Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, 3. And said unto Him, (Are you the one that we're looking for?) "Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another?" 4. Jesus answered and said unto them, "Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: 5. The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the **lepers are cleansed.***

By the way, what is leprosy? And so, I think it would be good for me to read a portion, a description of what leprosy is. This is written by a man named Kuizenga in 1927:

*The disease which we today call leprosy generally begins with pain in certain areas of the body. Numbness follows. Soon the skin in such spots loses its original color. It gets to be thick, glossy, and scaly. As the sickness progresses the thickened spots become dirty sores and ulcers due to poor blood supply. The skin, especially around the eyes and ears, begins to bunch with deep furrows between the swelling, so that the face of the afflicted individual begins to resemble that of a lion. Fingers drop off or are absorbed. Toes are affected similarly. Eyebrows and eyelashes drop out. By the time one can see the person in this pitiful condition is a leper, by the touch of a finger one can feel it. One can even smell it, for the leper emits a very unpleasant odor. Moreover, in view of the fact that the disease-producing agent frequently also attacks the larynx, the leper's voice acquires a grating quality. His throat becomes hoarse and you can now not only now see, feel, and smell the leper, but you can hear his rasping voice. And if you stay with him for some time you can even imagine a peculiar taste in your mouth, probably due to the odor.*

#3. Jesus should not be touching the man.

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**8:3**

**He put forth His hand and touched him.**

*Leviticus 5:3 Or if he touch the uncleanness of man, whatsoever uncleanness it be that a man shall be defiled withal, and it be hid from him; when he knoweth of it, then he shall be guilty.*

So, we'll talk about this to some degree, but you need to know right off the bat, that Jesus was doing something that appeared to be wrong. The leprosy had a way of making people ceremonially and physically unclean.

#4. Next, Jesus uses the law to glorify God.

*Leviticus 13:38 If a man also or a woman have in the skin of their flesh bright spots, even white bright spots; 39. then the priest shall look: ...44 He is a leprous man, he is unclean: the priest shall pronounce him utterly unclean; his plague is in his head. 45. And the leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and **shall cry,***

*“Unclean, unclean.” 46. All the days wherein the plague shall be in him he shall be defiled; he is unclean: he shall dwell alone; **without the camp** shall his habitation be.*

This leper was doomed to the rest of his life away from the synagogue, away from the tabernacle, away from the sacrificial system, away from his family; he is now to be alone for the rest of his life. He is not allowed to be around anyone. He is to keep himself from afflicting more infection among the people of Israel. He is supposed to stay away from the crowd and cry, “Unclean, unclean.” That’s what he’s supposed to do, yeah.

*Leviticus 14:2 This shall be the law of the leper **in the day of his cleansing**:*

Well, that’s kind of funny. Actually, it’s hysterical, because this is written about 1445 BC. 1,445 years before Christ. And other than Miriam, we have no record of anyone needing this chapter. Other than Miriam being cursed with leprosy, and healed by the Lord, and having to spend seven days outside the camp, we have nobody, from what we can tell, in Hebrew history, all through the Old Testament...not once do we ever have record of anyone needing this chapter.

As a matter of fact, little Jewish young men would grow up in Rabbinical school at times, and they would have to memorize the entire law of Moses. What a waste. What a waste to memorize chapter 14 of Leviticus. No one has ever needed it. No one ever had a day in which they were cleansed of leprosy. The only one we can find, since Miriam, that has been cleansed of leprosy, was the Syrian who didn’t even need Leviticus! We have a king who died of leprosy named Uzziah because he decided to do a job that wasn’t his. That is to say, he was the state, poking into the church, and he paid for it with his life. Smoke on that one.

*Leviticus 22:4 What man soever of the seed of Aaron is a leper, or hath a running issue; he shall not eat of the holy things, until he be clean.*

Ok, well that’s nice. But we don’t have any record of anyone being clean after they were a leper. Except a Syrian who didn’t need it. Naaman would never serve as a priest.

So imagine, Matthew 8, Jesus tells this man who is the first record we have of anyone needing Leviticus 14. Can you imagine the day when this known leper theoretically walks into the presence of a priest, in the day of his cleansing, and the High Priest for the first time in a millennium and a half, has to listen to what Leviticus 14 says? You talk about getting glory! And maybe that’s the answer to why Jesus said, in verse 4, “You don’t need to tell anybody. You go and show yourself to the priest for a testimony to them.” Who was Jesus trying to reach with the truth of who He is? The priest. It wasn’t that He was telling this man, “Don’t be a witness.” Nope. But there was a particular person to whom he was to witness.

God still is sovereign, and I can’t give you all the reasons as to why Jesus said, “Don’t go and tell anyone, but go straight to the priest,” but I do know this: if the priests find out that a man was healed of leprosy for the first time in over 1,000 years, chances are word will get out that somebody did it.

You see, when Jesus directs the way in which we witness He gets the job done. When the Lord directs our witnessing activity, it gets done. When we decide who and when and where and how we’re going to witness, all of a sudden we find ourselves frustrated because things just ain’t happening, like we would like.

But what if he actually did obey and finally went to the temple? Can you imagine the stir that that would have caused? I’ve already showed you over seven verses in the book of Matthew where it says He healed all manner of diseases. Virtually, Judea was disease free; Galilee was disease free; southern Syria was disease free; every time they found out the Messiah was in town they brought someone to Him to get healed. That’s earth shattering. That is astonishing. And why was He doing it? So the priests would find out.

#5. This is an issue of sin. I am not saying that you get leprosy if you are a sinner, because I’d be as white as a goose. So I’m not saying that. I’m not saying this was an issue of sin, but what I am saying is that the theme of Matthew is, “You call His name Jesus, because He’ll save His people from their sin.” He’s not called Jesus because He heals you of leprosy.

Every one of these lessons is a lesson as to how a disease that eats you to the core is a picture of the leaven of sin that permeates our inner being, and before you know it, we look in the mirror and we say, “Well,

that's not me. I shouldn't have done that. That's not me. It's not like me. I don't do that." But after a little while of doing those things, we have to recognize that really is what we are. You say, "Well, leprosy starts in the skin." That's true. But it gets all the way into the organs and then you die. Matthew is preaching to us the sermon that Jesus saves His people from their sin, and so this healing of leprosy is God's way, once again, of showing us that there's not any sin that is so deep in your core that God can't purge it out.

#6. Worship is very often audacious to those who believe they know who Jesus is. Now think through this for just a moment. There were more diplomatic ways for the leper to make his presence known. Would you agree? And by the way, if there was ever a time for Jesus to say, "Whoa, wait, wait. I'm not God, don't bother me," this would have been a good time. But the problem is this is the first of nine times that we have record of where Jesus allows someone to worship Him. That is what your Bible says, isn't it? In verse 2, **And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped Him.** That word means "kissed His hand." If your Bible does not have something that expresses worship in its words, I'm afraid it is a weak translation.

So this is the first of nine times where we find Jesus being worshipped, and apparently He doesn't mind. The second time is when his son, a ruler who's son was healed worshipped Him. The disciple, after a storm, worshipped Him. The disciples worshipped Him. The Canaanite woman worshipped Him. The mother of James and John, Salome, who by the way was also Jesus' aunt, worshipped Him. The Gerasene demoniac worshipped Him. The healed blind man worshipped Him. All the disciples, at the end of Matthew, worshipped Him. "Thou will have no other gods before Me. You will not bow yourself down to them." That's in the Ten Commandments, so Jesus is in deep trouble if He's not God.

So this stupidity spewed out by almost every Muslim on the globe that says Jesus never claimed to be the Son of God. Two displays of audacity. Think this through with me. Jesus is touching a leper. And perhaps the only second place thing to that is the leper coming in the middle of a crowd! What audacity. Worship takes, in some regard, audacity. You offer thanksgiving that is not comfortable, and you render honor to someone when people would rather you shut up. Yeah, that's just sort of how that works.

So, if you step back and look at it, both Jesus and the leper are breaking the law. Which one is more audacity? Well, it depends. But I would recommend to you that the reason that the man was willing to stand as a leper in the middle of the crowd is because he thought, "I won't be a leper much longer." And the reason Jesus was willing to touch the leper was because in a minute He'd be touching a man that wasn't a leper. What audacity! For a man to have such faith in the Son of God that he steps in the middle of a crowd, risking his life, and says, "I will do something that is just... dumb." No one would do that. Not in a religious setting. Why in the world would you do that? Well, because he was convinced that Jesus had power. "If You are willing, You can make me clean. I know You're able. But if You want to, You can make me clean. The power is in You, God. This is a light thing to You! All You have to do is say so! You can do this and so I know You're able, and so I want to know if You're willing." And Jesus says, **Yeah, I am willing. Be clean.**

That is the Son of God; more audacious than I am. He comes and He touches a leper. But Jesus has an awful bunch of power because after He heals this leper He goes to a gentile centurion and heals his servant, and then after that, in verses 14 and following, He goes and heals a woman. Not a Jewish man, a leper. Not a Jewish man, a priest, nope. A centurion. Not a Jewish man who's a priest. Nope! A woman! What an audacious Savior, taking what people would call an unnecessary chance on some little gentile dog named Bill Sturm.

So I guess that's why we followers of Christ are full of audacity. Praying for people we may never see again, willing to let the news of their conversion wait until we may meet them in heaven. The audacity of witnessing to a person that hates you. The audacity of believing when there isn't any reason to believe. The audacity to ask for forgiveness again and again and expecting the Lord, the Holy Spirit that prompted you to ask for forgiveness, is in the other person prompting them to forgive you. What audacity!

Where do we get that? Our Master. We do things that don't make any sense. Why are we so audacious as to set our alarm a few minutes early so we can pray and read the Scriptures, and actually convince the God of heaven that we think we need Him? Because we have the audacity to believe that just a little time with God changes the whole day.

#7. Crossing social barriers to accomplish the Father's will is quite Christian. I've already said it. It's very hard to imagine anyone who calls himself a son of God saying, "I would never build a relationship with a Muslim." It's very hard to imagine someone saying God brought someone 7,000 miles and I would never build a relationship with them. It's hard to imagine that, isn't it? So, we are quite Christian when we do cross lines.

#8. Obedience is the first mark of one whose sin has been purged. You see in verse 4, he wasn't, "You're healed. Go have a nice day. Go have a picnic with your wife." No, no. Where was **the priest**? Jerusalem. There weren't no priests in Galilee, or Syria, or Samaria. This newly cleansed leper was healed when they came off the mountain. Where was the mountain? North edge of the Sea of Galilee. How far from Jerusalem were they? Seventy miles at least. Jesus said, "You're cleansed. Now go show yourself to the priest. I've cleansed you. I've made you a new man. Now go do something hard for Me. Hard. The joy that I just gave you, you're going to need that joy, because I want you now to go and carry the gospel to a person far away." It's hard.