

Transcript

The Jesus Story - Jesus Heals a Leper and a Lame Man

In John 12:20, this is what we read:

20 Now there were certain Greeks, who came to the disciples, with this request. "Sir, we wish to see Jesus."

A little further on in Philippians' 3;10, we see the desire of Pauls' heart:

10 That I may know Him.

The writer to Hebrews makes this wonderful statement in Hebrews 2 verse 9:

9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death. Crowned with glory and honour, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone.

Today we shall be looking at a couple of incidents in the ministry of Jesus, and as we do this, we need to be asking ourselves, just how do we see Jesus.

In Luke chapter 5, this what we read in verse 12:

12 And it happened when He was in a certain city, that behold, a man who was full of leprosy.

This city is not named and the man is not named; this could be any man or woman from anywhere. This man did not just have a problem, he had a big problem. He was not just a leper, he was full of leprosy, and the verse goes on to say that he:

Saw Jesus; and he fell on his face and implored Him, saying, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean."

In verse 13 this is what we read of Jesus:

13 Then He put out His hand and touched him, saying, "I am willing; be cleansed." Immediately the leprosy left him.

This man took his problem to Jesus, He then makes a statement: "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean." This man understands that if he is to be healed, Jesus has to be willing to heal him.

13 Then He put out His hand and touched him, saying, "I am willing; be cleansed." Immediately the leprosy left him.

There is a great lesson to be learned here in verse 13: Then He put out His hand and touched him, saying, "I am willing."

This is the secret to getting answers to our prayers. We need to try to find the will of God, and pray accordingly. There is very clear instruction about this in the bible.

Apparently, the leper had heard of Jesus' healing power. Rather than rejecting what he had heard he fell with his face to the ground, a gesture of total submission, and his request to Jesus was like a prayer, asking for healing if Jesus was willing to do so.

He did not just ask to be healed. He understood that he would be healed if it was Jesus' will.

Many times believers are misled by a teaching that Jesus will heal all illnesses if we simply ask. Another very misleading, and I believe to be a very cruel statement, is that if we ask and are not healed, our faith is not strong enough. This can put a great burden of guilt on people who do not need it.

There is one thing that we really need to understand and that is that God is Sovereign. Jesus is Lord of all. God is not going to do anything against His sovereign will simply because we ask Him to.

God has a purpose for everything that happens in our lives and He can use our experiences with sickness and death to teach us valuable lessons and better prepare us for our relationship with Him.

Here is something that we need to understand concerning Prayer. This is what we read in John's first epistle chapter 5:

14 Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.

15 And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.

After healing the man of his leprosy this is what we read in verse 14:

14 And He 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."

15 However, 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.

16 So He Himself often withdrew into the wilderness and prayed.

Well, that is the outline of the first part of the text that we are going to be looking at. So, now we can look a little closer at just what really happened.

Jesus is approached by a man who is full of leprosy. This is a wonderful story, and here, there is so much to find out about Jesus. But we need to look more closely at just what actually happened.

We will understand this passage much better if we take it just one step at a time, and it happened when He was in a certain city, that behold, a man who was full of leprosy.

The first thing that we find here is that this man was not just a leper, he was a man who was full of leprosy. Being full of leprosy this man had no hope of getting better, so in desperation he came to Jesus with his great need.

This disease usually started with a small spot, that ate away the flesh until the pathetic sufferer was left with only the stump of a hand or a leg. It was literally a living death, and according to Jewish law everyone had to keep six feet away from a leper.

If the wind blew toward a person from a leper, they had to keep 150 feet away. The

religious people scorned lepers. Rabbis especially despised them; they saw lepers as those under the special judgment of God, deserving no pity or mercy.

Nevertheless, we read that this leper came to Jesus by himself and despite many discouragements. he knew how terrible his problem was, he knew everyone thought this condition was hopeless. There was no one who would or could take him to Jesus and he had no guarantee that Jesus would heal him anyway.

This man had been forced to live outside his hometown. Being a leper was a label that positioned a person in the worst possible place for discrimination and hopelessness.

It's hard to imagine the inner pain of a person with leprosy. It would be bad enough to have a disease for which there was no cure but it must have been an emotional disaster to be cut off from any gesture of compassion, any interaction with friends or family.

This man with leprosy ventured out of the isolation. It is impossible to speculate as to what kind of physical discomfort this man was in, but the social destruction of the disease was terrible.

A leper was not allowed to live in Jerusalem or any of the old walled cities of Israel. He could not mix in society, or touch anyone else without polluting them. He was to wear torn clothes, leave his hair loose, and announce to all who approached that he was unclean.

As far as we can gather, the disease in its worst form seems to have been a progressive decay, beginning with the blood becoming infected. The face and different parts of the body were attacked and gradually destroyed, till the sufferer became a hideous spectacle, and literally fell to pieces.

And, this poor man was full of leprosy.

This poor unhappy man fell down and knelt before Jesus. The leper evidently had no doubt whatever of the power of Jesus; his only concern was whether Jesus was willing to heal him.

Jesus, when cleansing this leper, demonstrated two things simultaneously: His divine compassion and His miraculous power.

Jesus could have healed the man by simply speaking the command, "Be Clean", but in His compassion; this is the real Jesus we see here, this is the Jesus we don't see when we are just reading about Him.

Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him. It would be impossible to even imagine just what it felt like to this man to feel the touch of that hand. This man who had been segregated from society and classed as Untouchable.

Jesus being moved with compassion at the sight of the man's awful state, wasting away, shunned by all men, dragging on a hopeless, aimless, weary life, Jesus did something about it.

Jesus reaches out to this poor man, this man who everyone else backed away from. Jesus places His hand upon him and makes this wonderful statement:

“I am willing; be cleansed.” Immediately the leprosy left him.

I wonder just how we would react to a sight like this? The sight and the smell of this man would have been dreadful. This poor man was “full of leprosy.” He was likely “raw” from head to foot. When he saw Jesus, he begged to be made clean of his disease. Jesus responded with compassion.

He defied the laws rigidly followed for generations and reached out to touch the man. Jesus reached out to touch a man who was covered with leprosy. Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out to the wretched man and touched him. Those who watched Jesus touch the leper must have thought his action was unsafe and unwise and would have had dangerous consequences.

By restoring the man to perfect health, Jesus had given him renewed access to a normal life. He could mix again with friends and family, he could again attend the synagogue, and the temple.

This touch would have given the leper tremendous encouragement, since no one would have been willing to touch him after he was declared a leper.

It also would have made Jesus ceremonially unclean, but where the ceremonial law collided with the law of love, ceremony must give way. The man was healed immediately. In doing this, Jesus violated the law but followed the rule of love and compassion, which superseded it.

Jesus firmly warned the man not to talk about his healing. Instead, he was to go and show the local priest at his home that he was cured. If the local priest was satisfied that the leper was indeed healed, he would send him to Jerusalem to offer the prescribed sacrifices.

The priest was the only one who could confirm that a person was a leper. And, the priest was the only one who could confirm that a person was free from leprosy. But, there was no priest who could heal a person from leprosy.

Jesus’ tour was halted by the over-enthusiastic praise of one of those who received healing from Jesus. The man was an unnamed leper who came to Jesus on his knees asking for healing.

The first thing that Jesus tells the man to do as soon as he is healed is to fulfil the law. “But go and show yourself to the priest, and make an offering for your cleansing, as a testimony to them, just as Moses commanded.”

This leper had come to Jesus convinced that Jesus could heal him – and Jesus did. The man is overjoyed and can’t contain himself and tells everyone. Jesus now has to avoid the cities because of the crowds searching for Him and looking for a sign or miracle.

In verses 15 and 16 we find another great lesson. Jesus, after healing the man who was full of leprosy and seeing the reaction of the crowd verse fifteen tells us:

15 However, 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.

Right in the middle of all the wonderful things that were taking place, this is what we read in verse 16:

16 So He Himself often withdrew into the wilderness and prayed.

In this season of increasing popularity and publicity, Jesus makes time to get away from everyone to find a quiet place to pray. The demands and pressures of life pushed Jesus to prayer, not away from it. "He made it His normal habit to withdraw from the multitudes for a time, to pray."

And, there is a lesson for all of us here, no matter what our ministry is, we need to spend time in God's presence. We need that fresh anointing, we need to be shut in with God in that secret place, and by spending time in His presence it will help us to be all the more successful in what we are doing for him.

Jesus after healing the Leper; verse 14 tells us:

14 And he charged him to tell no man:

But this miracle was too great to be hidden, verse 15 tells us:

But so much the more went there a fame abroad of him: and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by him of their infirmities.

Jesus regularly moved around the countryside teaching the people and healing the sick. But there were also times when he stayed at home in Capernaum, which had become his adopted town. He was probably staying at the house of Simon Peter, the spokesman of his disciples.

We pick the story up again in verse 17:

17 Now it happened on a certain day, as He was teaching, that there were Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting by, who had come out of every town of Galilee, Judea, and Jerusalem.

The word that Luke uses here for Pharisees and teachers of the law is the word 'nomodidaskalos'. This word only appears twice elsewhere in the New Testament. These were more than just priests. These men were doctors of the theology of Judaism.

Now, I don't want you to think that I am cleverer than I really am, this word does not come from my knowledge of the Greek language. I found it in some of the commentaries that I read.

We need to understand just what these teachers of the law were up to. These Pharisees and learned teachers of the Law had come to the house where Jesus was teaching.

These members of the clergy had not come to welcome Jesus as one of them. On the contrary, they were there to find out whether his teaching was mainstream doctrine in harmony with theirs.

If there was any deviation from the doctrine they held and taught, they would promptly report it to the authorities in Jerusalem. The crowd were eager to listen to Jesus and Jesus was willing to teach them.

Something unusual happened while Jesus was speaking to the crowd; we read this in verse 17:

17 Now it happened on a certain day, as He was teaching, that there were Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting by, who had come out of every town of Galilee, Judea, and Jerusalem. And the power of the Lord was present to heal them.

Notice that these Pharisees and teachers of the law were not standing with the crowd, they were sitting by. They did not want to be seen as a part of the crowd but they did not want to miss anything that Jesus might say.

We carry on reading in verse 18:

18 Then behold, men brought on a bed a man who was paralyzed, whom they sought to bring in and lay before Him.

19 And when they could not find how they might bring him in, because of the crowd, they went up on the housetop and let him down with his bed through the tiling into the midst before Jesus.

Verse 20 begins with a very strange statement:

20 When He saw their faith.

This is a remark that is easy to move past, but how is it possible to see faith? Jesus saw the faith of these men in the things that they were prepared to do. In Hebrews chapter eleven and verse one this is how faith is described:

1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

The question that we need to ask is, how did Jesus see their faith? If it is the evidence of things not seen? Well, whenever we find a puzzle in the bible the only place that you will find the right answer is in the bible. This is what we read in James 2:18:

18 But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.

Jesus could see their faith in action, demonstrated by their works. They carried the man, they took the tiles of the roof and they lowered the man down in front of Jesus.

The only reason that they did this was because they believed that Jesus could heal the man who was paralyzed. This was a real exercise of faith.

What happened next may have seemed strange. Jesus does not say anything about healing the man. He said to him, "Man, your sins are forgiven you.":

21 And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, "Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

22 But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, He answered and said to them, "Why are you reasoning in your hearts?"

23 “Which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Rise up and walk’?”

24 “But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins” He said to the man who was paralyzed, “I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.”

25 Immediately he rose up before them, took up what he had been lying on, and departed to his own house, glorifying God.

26 And they were all amazed, and they glorified God and were filled with fear, saying, “We have seen strange things today!”

This confrontation with the paralysed man gave Jesus an opportunity to demonstrate to His critics that He was the Messiah.

On this occasion a paralytic had been carried by his friends from his home to the house where Jesus was teaching. And the reason that they brought him was simply that he might be healed.

Due to the crowd it was impossible for his friends to bring the paralytic into the immediate presence of Jesus in the normal way. However, they were not deterred. And, they found another way to get this man in front of Jesus.

They decided to remove the tiles from the roof and lower their paralyzed friend down through the hole so that he would be nearer to Jesus. As a result, of the faith that Jesus sees, He offers much more than the man was seeking, Jesus makes this statement. Man, your sins are forgiven you.

This is worth thinking about. Can just imagine how the friends on the roof felt. They had gone to a lot of trouble to see their friend healed of his paralysis, and now Jesus seemed to only be concerned with the man’s spiritual problems. But Jesus knew just what the man’s greatest need was.

What good was it if the man had two good legs, and walked right into hell with them? Far better to limp into heaven than run into hell! Paralysis is nothing compared to Sin’s punishment.

This man’s greatest need was for forgiveness. So, first Jesus forgives the man’s sin. Jesus addresses the man’s greatest need.

Here is something else to think about. In a way, it was “much more difficult” for Jesus to heal the man than to forgive his sins. It was easier to say that someone’s sins were forgiven because that statement required no demonstration.

To say, “get up and walk” required a demonstration to prove that this had really happened. If when Jesus commanded the man to rise up and walk, the man had not done so, Jesus would have proved Himself to be an impostor. But in order that everyone might know that He had the power to forgive sins, Jesus commanded the man, “Get up . . . and go home.”

Jesus demonstrated by this miracle of healing that He was God and had the authority to forgive sin.

The man’s response to the command of Jesus: he immediately arose from his mat

and went home praising God.

The miracle silenced the Pharisees and the teachers of the law who had resisted Christ's claim that He was God and could forgive sin. They could not argue that a miracle had taken place.

Luke tells us in verse 26:

26 And they were all amazed, and they glorified God and were filled with fear, saying, "We have seen strange things today!"

They were moved to awe or reverential respect for the person who had demonstrated His authority in their midst. Because forgiveness is invisible no one could verify at that moment the man was forgiven before God.

But everyone would know immediately whether or not the man could walk. Jesus was willing to demonstrate publicly His divine authority.

Just listen to the words of Jesus in verse 24:

24 "But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins" He said to the man who was paralyzed, "I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house."

25 Immediately he rose up before them, took up what he had been lying on, and departed to his own house, glorifying God. But that you may know that the Son of Man: Jesus forgives the man's sins first.

When the scribes sitting there questioned if He had authority to forgive the man's sins, Jesus healed the man to show that He had both the authority to forgive sins and the power to heal since one goes with the other: only God can heal only God can forgive.

When we began I said that there is a question we need to be asking ourselves. Just how do I see Jesus.

The Hymn Writer CC Gabriel described wonderfully just how he saw Jesus. This is what he wrote, and I believe that this is how most Christians today see Jesus:

I stand amazed in the presence of Jesus the Nazarene.

And wonder how he could love me, a sinner condemned unclean

How marvellous! How wonderful! And my song shall ever be.

How marvellous! How wonderful! Is my Saviours love for me.

And I really love the fourth verse of that hymn.

He took my sins and my sorrows, he made them his very own.

He bore the burden to Calvary, and suffered and died alone.

The question is. Just how do I see Jesus? I can understand just how the leper saw Jesus. He had been healed; he would see Jesus as marvellous; wonderful!

I can understand just how the lame man saw Jesus. He had been healed; he would see Jesus as marvellous; wonderful! It was because of what had happened to them.

Just what has happened to us? This is what we read in Romans 5v6:

6 For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die.

8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Redeemed by his infinite mercy his child and forever I am. That is good enough reason for us today, to see Jesus as marvellous; wonderful! There is another word that I would add to that description. To me he is very Precious.