

Compassion At a Cost

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Preacher: Pastor Dave Thompson

[0 : 00] You can be turning to Luke chapter 5. Luke chapter 5. I'm not sure if our brother was looking over my shoulder as I was studying this week.

! The hymns that he picked were so appropriate as to what we're looking at today. And I want you to be looking for this. So I'm going to give you this.

The hymns, many of them spoke of the amazing tenderness and care of our Savior for us. And so I want you to be looking for that as we look at this healing from the book of Luke chapter 5.

We're going to read verses 12 to 16. And yes, it's amazing that we're going to see a leper cleansed. There are not many in scripture, not many places where lepers are cleansed.

And the healing of a leper did not happen much. So that's an amazing thing. But I don't think that's the point of what Luke has here. I want you to be thinking about Jesus and what he is willing to do.

[1 : 19] And at what cost he's willing to do it. So Luke chapter 5 verses 12 through 16. While he was in one of the cities, there came a man full of leprosy.

And when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and begged him, Lord, if you will, you can make me clean. Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, I will be clean.

And immediately the leprosy left him. And he charged him to tell no one, but go and show yourself to the priest and make an offering for your cleansing, as Moses commanded, for a proof to them.

But now even more, the report about him went abroad. And great crowds gathered to hear him and to be healed of their infirmities. But he would withdraw to desolate places and pray.

Let's pray together. Father, I thank you. I thank you for the work that Jesus did while he was on this earth.

[2 : 27] I thank you how it demonstrated who he was. It demonstrated who you were. I thank you for who he ministered to. Lord, even as we look at this today, the picture of hope, the picture of the wonder of who Jesus was willing to serve, we praise you for that.

Because even as we look at what we're going to look at, each one of us, every one of us, could be and really are, in one sense, in this very condition of this leper.

So I pray that you would make it plain, the wonder of who Jesus is and what he's done. And I pray that you would train our hearts to see his wonder. And you would also train our hearts to remember that wonder and be people who go to him and rest in him and trust in who he is and what he's done.

I pray that you would bless as we look. In Jesus' name, amen. So we're going to see here an interesting situation. As I mentioned, to my knowledge, there was only a few lepers that were ever cleansed.

The one by Elisha, Naaman, the Syrian, he was cleansed in the Old Testament.

[3 : 52] At one point, there was another person, but just now, I didn't write it down, so it escapes me. This is not a common thing. When Naaman found out, by means of this little Jewish girl who'd been taken captive, oh, there's a prophet in Israel who can heal you.

When he found out about that, he went to his king, and his king wrote a letter to Elisha's king and said, I'm sending this man to you to be healed.

Israel's king's reaction was, am I in the place of God? Who can heal anyone of leprosy? And so this is a desperate situation.

This is a difficult situation. But Jesus has this unusual encounter with, we're going to call him an outcast and a leper.

He's a leper, but think also of him as an outcast person. So the situation has been that Jesus has been about, and he's been preaching, and he's been healing.

[5 : 05] Remember we looked at the drought of fishes two weeks ago, and how God used that in Peter's life to show Peter, and James and John, but primarily Peter, that Jesus was God.

God used that in Peter's life. Not only at that instance, Peter recognized it through his life, and at the end, after Christ had died and rose again, and Peter was still wallowing in his discouragement, and his failure.

The Lord did the same thing to Peter as he walked along the sea. Peter and the other disciples had gone fishing, and he says, let down the net, and they let down the net, and the same thing happened.

The net was so full, it was breaking. And what was Peter's reaction? It was the Lord. It's the Lord. And we see this kind of compassionate Savior that we have. When we come to a situation after that time, not after the John 21 scene, but after the scene of the first great drought of fishes, Jesus has gone on.

[6 : 23] We don't know how far in the future it is. It wasn't probably very far in the future from when Jesus had been sitting in the boat with Peter. But it was a little bit, and he was still in that area.

It says he was in a city in that area. It's just the region of Galilee at that time. And he had stuck around there because he says that he must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well.

For I was sent to this purpose. And so Jesus was fulfilling that purpose. So he was just in a city in that area. It's not named, and it's not important that it's not named. But Jesus is in that city, which is an interesting fact.

To tuck away in the back of your mind, we'll get back to it in just a minute. But he was in a city in that area. As he was in a city in that area, there came a man full of leprosy.

Now, for any of this miracle to really make sense, you're going to have to know some stuff about leprosy. What does it mean for a person to have leprosy?

[7 : 33] Well, there were many conditions that were classified as leprosy. Which one is it? We don't know. And it really doesn't matter.

The thing to remember is all those conditions that were classified as leprosy were conditions that once the decision was made, you were no longer to be around anyone.

We'll get into all that. So it was a skin condition of the time. I'm going to read a few verses. This is from your favorite passage in the Bible.

The one you're always eager to read when you're doing your Bible reading. I hope you... Well, let me read it. You'll understand. Leviticus 13, 1-8.

The Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, When a person has on the skin of his body a swelling or an eruption or a spot, and it turns into a case of leprous disease on the skin of the body, then he shall be brought to Aaron the priest or to one of his sons, the priest, and the priest shall examine the diseased area on the skin of his arm.

[8 : 45] And if the hair in the diseased area has turned white and the disease appears to be deeper than the skin of the body, it is a case of leprous disease.

When the priest has examined him, he shall pronounce him unclean. But if the spot is white in the skin of his body and it appears no deeper than the skin and the hair in it has not turned white, the priest shall shut up the diseased person for seven days, and the priest shall examine him on the seventh day.

And if in his eyes the disease is checked and the disease has not spread in the skin, then the priest shall shut him up for another seven days. And the priest shall examine him again on the seventh day.

And if the diseased area has faded and the disease has not spread in the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him clean. It is only an eruption. And he shall wash his clothes and be clean.

But if the eruption spreads in the skin after he has shown himself to the priest for his cleansing, he shall appear again before the priest and the priest shall look. And if the eruption has spread in his skin, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean.

[9 : 54] It is a leprous disease. I want to just say this. I encourage you not to skip over the difficult to read passages of scripture. Yes, it's difficult to read that because then they go into, if it's on a bald man's scalp, if it's in a garment, if it's in a house, and you say, I don't understand this, it doesn't make sense.

Don't skip over it. The word of God, all of the word of God is profitable. And so that would be the basic procedure.

So let's just put it in what would happen one day. One day a man wakes up and he's standing next to his wife and he's, I'm sorry I don't have short sleeves on, but he's picking at his skin.

It's like, that looks weird. What do you think, honey? And she's going, ooh, we better go to the priest. And he goes to the priest and the priest looks at it and says, I don't know.

Stay in that room for a week and don't come out. A week goes by, the priest looks at it and says, son, I'm sorry, but you have leprosy.

[11 : 11] At that moment, he would be required to tear his clothes, to put on sackcloth, to warn, or not sackcloth, mourning clothes, to keep those clothes covered.

And he would then, being pronounced unclean, would be asked to go outside the city. not go home and get some things, not hug his wife, not hug his children.

He was done. He was outside the city. Leviticus 13, verses 4, 45, and 46. The leprous person who has the disease shall wear torn clothes and let the hair of his head hang loose and he shall cover his upper lip and cry out, unclean, unclean.

He shall remain unclean as long as he has the disease. He is unclean. He shall live alone. His dwelling shall be outside the camp.

Outside the camp. Never to come inside the camp. Never to come in a city. Never to come in a village. Never to sit down with his family.

[12 : 32] Never to hug his wife. Never to hug his children. This man was in a desperate situation. You would live away from all people except possibly if you found a few other people who had leprosy.

Anything or anyone you touched or touched you would be considered unclean.

And if a person touched you or you touched a person, they would have to separate themselves for a week and be evaluated to make sure that they didn't catch the disease and then they could be considered clean.

So as I said, no hugging your wife, no hugging your children, no hugging your parents. You were done. You could not work.

You were at the mercy of what you could scrounge. Or if you had a loving enough family that was brave enough, they would bring food to a spot.

[13 : 37] They would have to leave the food and leave at least back far enough not to be anywhere close that they could be contaminated and you would come and get the food and that's how you would survive.

Many lepers died simply because they starved to death because no one would have anything to do with them. People with leprosy were considered to be under the judgment of God.

Remember Miriam, Moses' sister, when she started complaining that Moses has taken too much authority on himself and God struck Miriam with leprosy and said, and as Moses pleads for her healing, she was eventually healed, but he said, if her dad had just disciplined her, she wouldn't have reacted this way.

Now, it's not anything against women. it's just the idea of God saying she didn't learn to treat with respect those leaders that God had put over them, but she was healed, but they did have to wait the one week while she remained outside the camp until she was healed.

Uzziah was a king and he contracted leprosy and he had to live in a separate house. He had one of his sons who was his representative as king.

[15 : 08] He couldn't do his kingly duties anymore. It was a little bit of a different circumstance, but they were under the judgment of God for the wrong that they had done. Well, back in this account, we find this man, as scripture mentions here, he was full of leprosy.

This was not just the beginnings. It was not a little spot on his arm. This man was full of leprosy. His leprosy was well advanced and he was, I think, not just pronounced unclean, but he looked unclean.

Now, as I mentioned, there are different kinds of leprosy and a leprous person, many of them, their flesh would rot on their body and if you've ever been around rotting flesh, it smells awful.

That's the smell they would have and so, this is not a person that you would go and hang out with.

This is a person you would run from.

Everyone of the mentality, everyone of the day had the mentality that you don't spend any time with a leper. They're dangerous. They've been judged by God.

[16:30] They've been put out of the camp. We should have nothing to do with them. And so, here was a man full of leprosy who was in the city where he wasn't supposed to be.

Based on his request, it seems that he was probably looking for Jesus. He has somehow heard enough that he knows that Jesus was his only hope because his disease was well advanced, because there was no hope of him providing for himself not only a cure but food, because no one really got healed of leprosy.

There was no hope. Leprosy is a picture in scripture of our sinful condition. everything that you hear about leprosy that makes you go, ugh, that leprosy was a picture of what we are in our sin.

We are unclean in God's sight. And not just a, you know, I didn't take a bath today, unclean, but vile, abhorrent, that which no one wanted to be around.

You were unclean, sin makes us unclean in God's sight. It keeps us from accessing God's presence. We couldn't come to God. And we are under the judgment of God for our sin.

[18:04] Well, this man, apparently, I've kind of imagined that he's been thinking about this. He's heard some things and he's been thinking about this because what he's about to do, I think, could have easily gotten him killed.

I think there were people who were willing and ready to enforce no lepers in the city. But he's thinking, I've got to help, have Jesus, his help, and he's looking for Jesus.

And I like how the King James puts it. Now, I learned so many verses under the King James, that's why when I quote verses, I mess them up because I mess up reading the ESV and remembering the King James.

But as you look at the King James, in this verse, it says, behold, he was full of leprosy or behold, this man comes who is full of leprosy. And the idea is meant that it's fast.

I think this man is walking through the city and as he sees Jesus, he knows he has one shot, one quick shot that he can get to Jesus before others would prevent him or even kill him.

[19:15] And so he runs and he sees Jesus and he falls down at Jesus' feet with his face to the ground and he begs. He doesn't say, Jesus, I hope you can heal me.

He doesn't ask if Jesus can heal him. He doesn't ask if Jesus can ask the Father to heal him.

He believes that Jesus himself can heal him. And so he asks if Jesus will make him clean.

Remember, he has leprosy, which is seen as a judgment of God. He's coming before God and begging for mercy from the judgment that God gives.

Will Jesus reverse the judgment of God against him? He's fallen on his face and he's acknowledging, he knows that Jesus as God can do this though no one has been reported to have been healed from leprosy until ever since back in Elisha's day that we know of.

[20:33] I know that you can do this. Will you heal me? Did this man do something worthy of the judgment of God?

I'm thinking he has leprosy. Does he know? I mean, Miriam spoke disrespectful of God's anointed servant and she was struck with leprosy.

Had he done something worthy of having leprosy? We don't know. It doesn't say. But had he done something worthy of the judgment of God?

My unequivocal answer is yes. All men are sinners and deserve the judgment of God. did he do something to deserve this particular judgment?

We don't know. But will Jesus take away the scourge of his condition? And the picture is so beautiful.

[21:38] Here is this man on his face before Jesus begging for God to heal him. And Jesus' reaction is to reach out his hand.

Remember all the precautions, all the regulations. Not for Jesus. He reaches out his hand and he puts his hand on this man and touches him.

Now he did this before he cleansed the man. I believe the cleansing came in the I will be cleansed as he mentions in just a moment.

So his hand went on this man in the condition that he was in. Smelled like rotting flesh under the judgment of God.

But there's Jesus' hand. In his uncleanness under the judgment of God, Jesus has compassion on him. How long had it been since anyone willingly touched him?

[22:45] how long had it been since anyone showed him any mercy? Jesus had compassion on him. And I want you to see this isn't Jesus pretending to have compassion on him.

Everyone around Jesus, now I'll make this point later, there were people there. As you read Luke it sounds like there's no one there. And I'm going to tell you why I think that Luke does this in a few minutes.

But there are people looking. And as they were there they would have been absolutely struck with Jesus touched him.

And at that point they would have looked at Jesus and thought your days are done. You're out of the camp. You've just broken the instruction compassion that's been passed along.

Actually there was no command not to touch. There was no command not to touch but there was always a result of touching. You could touch but you had to be willing to pay the price.

[24 : 00] And so Jesus in true love for this man, not a lovely man, maybe he had done something to deserve this, in true compassion of this man, touched him.

He really loved him. He really cared about his situation. And before we go on and talk more about what Jesus did, let me just ask you, do you have compassion on the unlovely and the despised? Are there people around you that if they came to you begging for your help that you would say, I can't pay that price. I won't do what you're asking because I won't be associated with this or I won't touch that.

Are you loving and compassion? Jesus, if you know Christ, Jesus has shown compassion and love to you and you were just as vile as this man in his sight.

Your sin made you just as unclean, unclean, cannot be in the presence of God. And yet Jesus had compassion on you. Are you willing to have compassion on the people around you?

[25 : 14] People that you can't stand by around because they won't quit talking or they make fun of you and mock you or whatever kind of thing would keep you from having compassion.

Our Lord had compassion. well, Jesus went further and he says, I will be clean.

Though being touched would have been an amazing thing for this man to feel the love of someone who hadn't felt love from anyone in the physical touch, it would have been amazing for someone to have been willing to pay that price and yet Jesus goes further.

He could have put his hand on the man out of love and said, I'm sorry but I can't do that. You're under the judgment of God.

I'm not going there. At the man's most desperate moment and with a need that only God could fill, Jesus showed unmeasured compassion by touching him and making him clean.

[26 : 34] His deepest physical need at that moment was met. It says immediately the leprosy left him.

He was healed. But more importantly than being healed, he didn't say you're healed. He says you're clean.

You can now be in the presence of all the people of the city. You can now be in the presence of your wife and hold her and sleep in the same bed with her.

You can now hold your children. You can now go back to work. You can now go to the temple and offer sacrifices. all that was restored in what Jesus said when he said be clean.

All that made him unclean in the sight of others was removed. If you're here and you know that God will condemn you for your sin, that because of that condemnation you will spend eternity separated from God, if you go to Jesus right now with the same mentality, with the same attitude, I know you can cleanse me, I know you can save me, and ask him to.

[28 : 05] He is just as compassionate to anyone who knows their sin and knows they need this Savior as Jesus was to this man stuck in leprosy.

He is just as compassionate and just as willing to meet your need as he was to meet the leper's need. If you're here today and you don't know what to do your sin, there's someone to run to.

There's someone to fall before. There's someone to ask. There's someone who has compassion.

There is someone who says, I will. Obviously, well, in the next section, we see that Jesus had a request.

And I was really struggling. It looks like two stories. But I think what is really going here is something that shows us more of Jesus' heart.

He has this request. Now, the man would have been excited. Wouldn't you have been excited if you'd had leprosy five, ten, fifteen years?

[29 : 21] And suddenly, you were not only healed, but you're cleansed. And those children that you couldn't watch grow up, you could go be with. Wouldn't you be amazingly excited?

But Jesus asked him to tell no one. Probably for the very reason that when the man does tell someone, it changed things.

God says, he tells the man to go to the priest, so you have proof as a testimony to them, or a proof to them.

Though the cleansing was complete, Jesus was one who kept the law and wasn't going to bypass the law. In order for those around, those in the crowd, those in the temple, those in his family, to know that it was alright, he would need to go to the priest and present himself.

However much long of a time before when he'd gone with that little spot on his arm, and now had been covered with leprosy, now he walks upright and whole into the temple and says to the priests, not the police, the priests, I've been healed of my leprosy.

[30 : 43] And they would have looked over all of his body. He was to do that. Did he do that?

I think he did. But he didn't do it quietly. He didn't answer Jesus' request. In verses 15 and 16, we see the effect of cleansing the leper.

It says in the first part of 15 that his fame spread. Now, we know from other gospels that the man did talk with other people about what Jesus did.

We also know from other gospels that there was a great crowd already present, so I'm sure they would have talked about it too. Luke does not mention any of these facts, and when there are facts mentioned that aren't mentioned in other gospels or not mentioned that are in this gospel, we ought to think about why.

There's probably a reason because Luke wrote this for a specific reason. He doesn't mention these facts, and I think Luke did not include these facts for two reasons.

[31 : 58] First, he was emphasizing the fact that Jesus was willing to minister compassionately to the outcasts. The kind of people Luke was writing to, Luke was writing to Gentiles, they were people who were outside the camp.

They were people who were unacceptable to the religious system of the day. So Luke kept only Jesus and the leper in view.

Because as this gospel went out, he wanted all those people who read it to say, look at this compassionate savior, who was willing to touch the most untouchable, and to save the most untouchable.

And Luke wanted them to know that. But the other reason that I think Luke didn't include that was because I think he wanted the Gentiles to see that Jesus did this at a cost.

What happened here greatly increased the size of the crowds and increased the pressure on his life. We know from other gospels that he was not able to preach in cities anymore.

[33 : 22] We also know from all the gospels that this miracle greatly decreased his privacy. He had a very difficult time being alone with his disciples and with his father.

And so now, because of this miracle, it's accumulation of other miracles, but because of this miracle, and this man not obeying it, now I'm not throwing him under the bus, you know, you would have had to duct tape my mouth, to keep my mouth shut, if you just healed me from leprosy. I don't fault the man. But I want you to think about this fact. Jesus is the God man. He knew this would come about.

He knew that healing this leper would change his ministry and make it so much more difficult. It would put him back in that situation where, like when the devil says, bow down before me and I'll give you all these kingdoms.

Well, just spread the news abroad and they'll thrust him into the kingship as Messiah. It'll bypass all this ugly cross stuff that's coming. What made it more difficult there?

[34 : 42] And I think Luke wanted these Gentiles to see that Jesus was willing to minister to an outcast even though it cost him greatly.

can you see the cross in the future? Can you see the fact that Jesus is willing to be our Savior even though it costs him everything?

thing? We just Luke is painting this beautiful picture of the Savior who is so tender and so compassionate and willing and loving to the point that he will do what he knows will change his ministry from that point on.

In fact, the next parable, we have the first situation where there are scribes and Pharisees mad at him. And it's just because of this kind of stuff.

And his life just becomes more and more difficult until he gets to the cross. But Gentiles, that's the kind of Savior you have.

[35 : 56] A Savior who is willing to risk whatever it takes to show compassion on a man who would reach out to him. And I want you to know sitting here, Christian, that's the kind of Savior you have.

Who is willing to do what it takes to minister in true love and true compassion to you, to take away your uncleanness, to make you clean and able to be in the presence of himself and his Father.

So Luke, leaves out some of those details. And because of the healing, it says that great crowds came to hear and be healed, but he withdrew to desolate places.

I think as he went and withdrew, he had to pray that he would not yield to the temptation to be a popular wonder worker or bypass the cross, just as the devil tempted him to.

Jesus, though the God-man, was serving the Father as a human, he needed to pray. Before, it wasn't so hard.

[37 : 12] Before, yeah, go to the room upstairs, nobody will bother you. Now, not just out in the country, he had to go to a desolate place. The crowds and the busyness made it hard for him to pray alone.

Now, I'm going to qualify what I'm about to say in telling you, this is not me throwing guilt on you. I said the same kind of things during the announcements.

This is not me throwing guilt on you. I want to encourage you by the example of the one who loves you. What keeps you from prayer?

Again, I'm not trying to make you go, oh, pastor, I know, I'm trying, I'm trying. I try to get up every morning. I work so many hours. I want you to be encouraged by the love and compassion of our Lord.

Do your prayer time because you have a Savior who loves you, not because you're trying to make the Savior love you. Do your Bible reading because you have a Savior who loves you, not because you're trying to make the Savior love you.

[38 : 26] And if you miss your prayer time, well, Lord, I missed it yesterday and I ask you to forgive me, but Lord, help me to keep going and just pick up where you left off.

You missed your Bible reading. I'm a terrible Christian. I can't pray until I've caught up in my Bible reading. That's wrong. Our Savior loves us.

And we should not try to earn His favor. We should serve Him and pray to Him because we have His favor. And His favor is not because of what we do.

It's because of who He is. It wasn't because of what that leper was that Jesus was willing to put His hand on. It was because who Jesus was. So come to Him because of who He is.

And don't let people tell you you're only a good Christian if you read your Bible seven days a week. You're a Christian because Christ died for you. You're accepted because of what He has done, not what we do.

[39 : 35] So don't let the struggles of life keep you from prayer and from Bible reading. And you want an incentive to be a good Bible reader and a good praying person?

Find out more about who Jesus is. Find out more about what He's done for you. See more and more of the facets of His beauty. And let that be your encouragement, not your guilt.

And as we wrap up the message, Christian, do you marvel at the wonder of this Savior? His willingness to associate with the unclean?

His willingness to touch and embrace the unclean? His willingness to cleanse the unclean? That's you. And that's me. As guilty as you may feel for what you've done, we have this great Savior that is because of who He is that He's done what He's done.

I stand here not in my good works. I stand here, you stand here, in who Christ is. Friend, do you see your own desperate condition?

[40 : 51] Do you know that Christ will save? You've maybe seen that, oh, I see I'm guilty before God. I deserve the punishment He would send. What do I do?

How do I write this situation? You do the same thing the leper did. You run, you fall on His face and you ask for what you need. Jesus is compassionate and He pays for our sin.

Will you not come? Let's pray. Father, I thank You for this beautiful picture. I thank You that our Savior was so compassionate and it cost Him and He was willing to do it even though it cost Him.

And Lord, I pray that You would be with us now. Those who don't know You, may they see that they can run to this person. They don't have to gain His favor before He gets there.

They already have His favor. They don't have to earn some sort of righteousness. He's earned it for them. He will cleanse. I pray that You would bring those who don't know You to know You today. [42 : 04] And today, Father, may the scene of Christ loom large in our hearts all the time. May we rest in it. May we revel in it.

May it be our joy. Our Savior has done what it takes because He is good and He loves us. And I pray that You would be with us. Be with us as we partake of the Lord's Supper. May even the bread and the cup be a reminder of the goodness and compassion of the Lord. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.