

## **1Yr15 – You Are The Leper Luke 5:12-15**

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Open your Bibles. You are going to love the title of the message today. Here it is: “You Are The Leper.” Doesn’t that just make you feel warm and fuzzy? We’re going to Luke Chapter 5.

The last 55 minutes was our response to the terror attacks in Paris. If you’d like to know more about what God says about these types of attacks you can go to [wordbymail.com](http://wordbymail.com). Search for a message called “We Need a Savior.” That message is directly focused on these types of events. You can also search the word “suffering” and you’ll see messages like “Why Does God Allow Suffering?” “God and Personal Suffering” and “God and Global Suffering,” among others. Learn God’s response.

For this message I have to thank one of my greatest, never to be met mentors, R. Kent Hughes. Every time I use R. Kent Hughes, I don’t always, but in the gospels I always do; his ability to bring life out of the gospels is just shaking. It’s incredible. So if you are a commentary reader, R. Kent Hughes.

Guys, all of the healing Jesus brought in his ministry had larger spiritual lessons. Do you know that? When you read through the gospels, do you sense, do you know, do you even look for the fact that in every healing there is a lesson. There is a deeper spiritual meaning. In all of Christ’s healings he was demonstrating who he was and why he came. Every healing has a message, an illustration. Last week we read Luke 4:18 where Jesus himself says *“I have come to proclaim the good news. I have come to set the captives free. I have come to give sight to the blind. I have come to deliver the oppressed.”* And then over and over again those promises were made tangible in the healing miracles of Jesus Christ during his ministry.

However, the physical healing, and please hear me for all the physical healing we see in the Bible and all the physical healing that we pray for, the physical healing is not the end game. Can you imagine Lazarus after being in Paradise, in heaven? He hears Jesus’ voice calling him and he’s like, “No way! You want me to come back?”

Listen, physical healing is a demonstration of the true eternal life that Jesus Christ gives us. There’s a purpose every time Jesus heals. A greater purpose. Every healing is a picture, it’s an illustration. It’s a sign. And so please hear me because we only have a year to go through the gospels, that’s impossible to go through all four gospels in a year. But we are doing it – it’s a survey. And so all I can tell you is that when you are meditating in the gospels slow down. Let’s stop reading the Bible like the newspaper. When you read the gospels, slow down, put yourself in there and ask yourself why did this happen? Why was Jesus healing this person? What’s the background? And what is the application to me today? Not just, “Oh Jesus. Heal me, heal me. Gimme, gimme, gimme,” but what is the deeper meaning? What was the parable? What was the illustration? Slow down, ask the

Holy Spirit because today, my only and complete prayer is that you would see the bigger picture in the healing today. In fact, that you would see that the leper we meet today is actually – you.

Let's pray. *Heavenly Father please bring it to life. Your Word is living and active and powerful and a two-edged sword. We lay ourselves open on the altar and say, "Lord pierce us through. Divide us. Discern the thoughts and intents of our hearts." We come just as we are and we pray that you would deal with us just as we are. Show us who we are today, in Jesus name, amen.*

So if all healing is a sign for something else, what does the healing of the leper symbolize? What does leprosy in general symbolize in the Bible? I'll just tell you. All throughout the Bible it's very, very clear that leprosy graphically illustrates the effects of sin. *Leprosy, throughout the Bible graphically illustrates the effect of sin.* In fact, from some Old Testament events, it was generally accepted that if you had leprosy it was God's response to some sin in your life, usually a hidden sin. This kind of came because three times in the Old Testament we read about people that God did actually afflict with leprosy because of their sin.

But by the time that Jesus was ministering, was walking on the earth, leprosy was the epitome of the picture, the illustration, of the very worst condition of sin. One Greek scholar put it this way. *Though the leper was not worse or guiltier than his fellow Jews, nevertheless he was a parable (illustration) of sin.* The leper was the parable of the worst sin condition. Leprosy in the Bible was always an outward sign of the inward effects of sin.

It's perfect. Leprosy is a perfect illustration of the effects of sin because of how leprosy actually does it damage. I don't know if you've ever seen a picture of somebody that was full of leprosy, but if you've seen one you don't need to see another one. One's enough. Because it seems like, it looks like, leprosy causes the skin to rot right off the bones. I mean it looks like the skin is rotting off the bones, it smells like the skin is rotting off the bones. Fingers and toes fall off. Noses and ears fall off.

But what is so amazing about leprosy is the actual disease doesn't cause that to happen. The actual disease that we call leprosy doesn't actually make your skin fall off your bones and your fingers and toes fall off. Here's what leprosy does. Listen carefully; remember it's the Bible's picture of sin. Leprosy dulls your senses. Leprosy dulls the senses of your body until it absolutely removes all of the senses in your body. And then, listen carefully, the horrible damage that's done to your body is done because your senses have been, if you will, cauterized. They have been dulled; they have been removed by the disease of leprosy.

So the disease deadens all feeling, and then the people's actions, because they have no feeling, their actions actually destroy their body and then their life. Who would say that's

a great picture of sin? That's a great picture of sin, because sin – in and of itself – is not destroying your life. It's not making you smell like a leper. It's the actions that come because sin has cauterized your feeling of right and wrong. Because sin numbs our feelings our actions are what destroy our body and our life. And so leprosy is the most graphic illustration of sin because it shows us physically what sin does to us spiritually.

That's not all. The life of a leper is the worst life recorded in the Bible, by far. No life is comparable to it because the leper was completely ostracized from the life of God, from the people of God, from all of society. Leviticus 13 spells out the requirements for the leper. Here are just a few. They are required to wear torn and dirty clothing. They are not allowed to wear clean clothing, as a sign. Their hair must be grown out and left unkempt again as a sign. They must cover their face as they are walking and here's the worst part, whenever someone is coming near them they must cry out "Unclean! Unclean!" And so they have got to look the part. This is required by the Mosaic Law. Finally the leper was not allowed to live among God's people but outside the camp only with those who were dying of the same disease. So a leper was ostracized, he was humiliated. He was completely rejected in every way by society.

In fact, in Jesus' day, the rabbi's had actually written a religious law forbidding you to even greet a leper. You could not even say hello to one if you got close enough. And under no circumstances was a leper ever allowed to get within six feet of any other human. In fact the rabbi's law in the first century said that if the leper was upwind from people he had to stay one hundred feet away, though some say a hundred and fifty feet. Because the leprosy of our sin smells. And so the disease of leprosy replaces life with living death. Have you seen that disease? I'm not talking about leprosy here. I'm talking about the disease that leprosy illustrates that replaces true life with living death. The lepers were truly the original "dead men walking." This is just what sin does to us when it is full grown. We may still be walking but we are dead in advance.

And so last message we saw Jesus heal so many people in Capernaum. Such a great message there. He healed them physically, he healed them mentally, he healed them spiritually. And then while everyone else went home for a good night's sleep, Jesus slipped out without anyone noticing and went up to a mountain to be revived through personal communion with the Father. And so the next morning the disciples finally find him and they say "Hey, we need round two. We need to build on what you started yesterday."

And in Mark 31:8 Jesus says, no, forget about it.

**Mark 1:38 (NLT)**

***38 . . . "We must go on to other towns as well, and I will preach to them, too. That is why I came."***

And so we pick up our walk with Jesus, our time with Jesus today, as he does this. He is going on to other towns. Now, we could have kept going in Mark, the verses we are going to look at today in Luke are also in Mark, just after this event, but we are in Luke Chapter 5 for one reason. Luke is a physician. And so Luke has some details about the leper we are going to meet today that I thought fit really well.

**Luke 5:12 (ESV)**

***12 While he was in one of the cities (in the Galilee), there came a man full of leprosy . .***

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There is Luke's first medical description: *he was full of leprosy*.

First Luke says *while they were in one of the other cities*. Jesus didn't go to a leper colony where the leper's were supposed to be. Jesus didn't go out in the open, where later he will meet other lepers. Jesus was in the city. He was in a place where a leper would definitely not be welcome. Not under any circumstances would the leper have been welcomed into society, especially the thick of society. And then Dr. Luke says *there came a man full of leprosy*.

The word full is describing how advanced the man's leprosy was. This leper hadn't just found the first sore that wasn't healing on his body. This leper hadn't just been ostracized by the priest and removed from his family and the community. This man was full to the brim with leprosy. He was full. He was covered. He was the walking dead. Remember that disease is a picture of sin and he was full to the brim until he was literally rotting. The skin was rotting off his bones as he sought out Jesus. Not a pretty picture.

There came a man, full of leprosy. In that condition he came to Jesus. The picture is this man had to push through the crowd to get to Jesus. Jesus didn't pass him by, he was forcibly making his way to Jesus. And certainly he was unwanted in his attempt to push towards Jesus. He would have been being cursed and ridiculed and probably sticks and stones literally thrown at him. And yet he is plowing through the people yelling, "Unclean, unclean, unclean!"

Now I did have one thought here. This would be a good way to get to the front of the line at Disneyland! Think about it. If your skin happens to be rotting off your bones and you come up to the line at Disneyland and you just have to say, "Unclean, unclean, unclean!" and the line will part. You will go right to the front.

But this was no joke for this leper. There was no Disneyland line. He wasn't trying to get in the front of anything with the exception of Jesus. Because to this man, it was literally a matter of life and death that he reach the Lord. The leper knew he was already the living dead and he knew that Jesus was the only one that could change it. He knew he was already the living dead and he knew that Jesus was the only one that could reverse it. And

so pushes through the crowd at all costs, bearing all of the humiliation and all of the shame of his disease of sin as he pressed forward to reach Christ.

Suddenly, he was there. He looked up and the sea of people parted and standing before him was the Son of God. And so he did what anyone who has the disease represented by leprosy should do when they come face to face with Jesus Christ. He did what we should do. Luke 5:12 in the second half of the verse it says:

**Luke 5:12(b) (ESV)**

***12 . . . And when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and begged him, “Lord, if you will, you can make me clean.”***

One thing for sure, the effects of this man’s disease had given him humility. His pride had left years, if not decades, ago. And so as he comes before the Son of God with his life riddled with this disease, as walking dead, he falls on his face with his face to the ground and he pleads with the Lord ***“Lord, if you will, you can make me clean.”***

I wonder if leprosy truly represents the sin that is full in our lives, why don’t we see people with this affliction more often responding to Christ like this man does. Why don’t we see more often in ourselves, full of the leprosy of sin, responding on our face before a holy God? I’ll tell you why I believe. Because we as a culture have removed the leprosy of sin. We’ve removed the leprosy of sin. We don’t accept that our sin makes us spiritually what this man looked like physically. We don’t see it that way.

Let me tell you why. Same reason you can handle being at a memorial service with an open casket. Because we have cleaned up that dead man walking. We’ve covered up the leprosy of our sin. We’ve perfumed up the rotting flesh of our sin. And we think the people around us can’t even tell because we work very hard to not look and smell like what we are. But the Lord knows the truth. *The Lord knows the truth.* And if we would only know, if we only knew who it was that was offering to make us clean, we would fall on our face and beg him. If we only knew that his touch was our only hope we would fall on our face and beg him to restore our dead bones, our dead life to life – to bring us back from the living dead.

And so the leper’s first words show humility and they show faith, don’t they? He first recognizes that he didn’t deserve a thing. “Lord, I don’t have a thing to bring you. I am completely one hundred percent unclean, full of the leprosy of sin and I have no rights to be here. I have no deserving; I haven’t earned anything to be here. And yet I believe. I believe if you would just touch me I believe you can make me clean.”

He believed because of what he had heard. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. He believed because of what he had heard. If I could just get to Jesus and receive a touch, I can be made clean. He believed that if Jesus was willing that the leprosy of his sin would be removed. Here’s the only thing that maybe he wasn’t sure of

that I can tell you is true today, Jesus is willing. He's willing enough that he died for you already. Romans 5:8 says when you were a sinner, when you his enemy, when you were at enmity, when you were at war with him that's when he died for you. Ephesians says when you were dead in your trespasses, when you were already dead Jesus proved that he was willing to give you this touch by dying for you ahead of time.

And notice, please, a leper doesn't say "Heal me." He doesn't say "If you will you can heal me," because the leper knew it was much deeper than that. *The leper knew it was much deeper than that.* If we have a physical injury and we ask Jesus to heal us, if our soul is black with the leprosy of sin, so what if Jesus heals us? We're just going to die again. If Jesus brings us back from the dead, we are going to die again. This man knew he needed more than healing; he needed to be clean because he was unclean. He was unacceptable; he was cut off from even the presence of God's people. He didn't just need healing, he needed a deep cleansing to the core of his disease that represents our sin, and he knew that Jesus could wash him clean with a touch.

And so I imagine the leper's face was still down in the dirt, breathing road dirt. The crowd would have been appalled. The disciples would have been shocked. People would have still been hurling curses upon him. And suddenly with his face in the dirt, everything goes silent. Suddenly this man who was so full of the disease of sin felt something he hadn't felt in a very, very long time. He felt the firm touch of another human. But not just another human.

**Luke 5:13(a) says (ESV)**

***13 And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him . . .***

The word for touch here is not a one finger – eww – touch. The word for touch here means to grasp firmly with the hands. It's a strong, compassionate taking hold of something. And so I imagine that Jesus raised up the leper from face down to his knees, and I can easily imagine Jesus getting on his knees in front of the leper and holding him by the shoulders and looking him in the eyes. And now all of the people, the religious, the disciples, the learned and the unlearned were silent. In Mark's gospel it says that Jesus was filled with compassion. Listen to what R. Kent Hughes says here.

**R. Kent Hughes says this right here:**

***The touch of Christ's pure hand on the rotting leper is a parable of the Incarnation and the Cross. Jesus took on flesh, became sin for us, and [then] gave us his [righteousness]. . . As we see Jesus bent over the prostrate sufferer, his holy hand resting on the decaying flesh of the foul-smelling leper, we see [exactly] what he did for us.***

Now that's a picture. I'm a leper. No longer is it a story it's a picture of what Jesus Christ has done for you or what he can do for you today.

## **2 Corinthians 5:21 (NIV)**

***21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.***

And so it was assumed that leprosy was a very contagious disease. Though it wasn't, it was assumed that it was. As Jesus is holding the leper, in essence, the vileness of his sin was being transferred to Jesus. And Jesus was telling the leper ...

In Luke 5:12 this leper had said ***“Lord, if you will, you can make me clean.”*** And now Jesus, full of compassion, eyes to eyes says in the second half of Luke 5:13

## **In Luke 5:13(b) (ESV)**

***13 . . . “I will; be clean.” And immediately the leprosy left him.***

Jesus says ***“I will; be clean.”*** And he transfers his righteousness to the leper. ***And immediately the leprosy left him.*** Do you see the illustration of sin and salvation and the transfer of the vileness of your sin to Christ and his righteousness to you?

We know the crowd was shocked. We know the disciples were shocked. What was the leper feeling? What was the leper experiencing right now? Suddenly he looks down and the fingers grow back on the ends of his hands. He feels his toes grow back and start pushing out his sandals. The gaping wounds of rotting flesh are covered over. And most importantly, by far most importantly, from this moment on this leper would never again have to yell “Unclean, unclean, unclean!” Never again. Never again would he have to yell “Unclean!”

Guys, the healing that Jesus Christ offers for the leprosy of our sin is instantaneous and it is complete. *It is instantaneous and it is complete.* 1 John 1:7 says, ***The blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin.*** ALL sin because we are full of sin like this man was full of leprosy. He is us. And the touch of Jesus, the blood of Jesus, cleanses us from *all sin*.

## **2 Corinthians 5:17 (ESV)**

***17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.***

Instantly and completely the old life of death has passed away and the new life in Jesus Christ has come. This is the picture of Jesus and the leper meeting face to face in the dirt with the transfer; with the leper ending up righteous and Jesus paying for his sin ultimately on the cross. And then please hear me, then there was a response required by the healed leper. There was a response required. Look in verse 14 of Luke 5.

## **Luke 5:14 (ESV)**

***14 And he (Jesus) charged him (the leper) 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.**”

Here was a big part of this man’s healing. He could have, and he would have been a sign, either recognized or not, to the priests that the Messiah was clearly in their midst. Why? Because the Jews knew that the Messiah would come to heal the diseases of the people of God. And leprosy was the granddaddy of all diseases. And so Jesus said go, show the priests. Give them an opportunity to see and believe. And then he says there in Luke 5:14 **and make an offering for your cleansing, as Moses commanded.** Please hear me right now because I am going to show you the cross in Leviticus. You say why would we want to read Leviticus, I’m going to walk you through it. Go home and read it, Leviticus 14.

In Leviticus 14 there is an odd ceremony, celebration, spelled out perfectly in the off chance that someone in the clan of Israel would be healed from leprosy. The ceremonial cleansing is there. This is what’s referred to by Jesus in Luke 5:14.

Here’s how it starts. A clean bird is slain above a pot of water and its blood drained into the pot, and so there is a water and blood mixture. And so, listen carefully, dipped into that water and blood mixture is a live bird, a piece of cedar wood (which we know from the ark represents the humanity of Christ), a scarlet thread in Leviticus (which speaks to the path to the cross), and hyssop (hyssop was always used in atonement sacrifices.) These symbols are dipped in the blood and then the blood is sprinkled over the healed leper. After that there is seven days of celebration and continual ritual cleansing until the leper would be seen as clean.

Now, follow me, on the eighth day the healed leper was to bring a spotless lamb to the priest. And the spotless lamb would be slaughtered and the blood of the lamb would be used to anoint the leper who had been healed. The anointing was to symbolize that the leper recognized that his remaining life would be in service to Jehovah God. That is the entire gospel message presented in Leviticus 14. This is just what we tell people about Jesus. And if you understand that all through the Bible leprosy is the picture of sin and then you see the blood and the symbols of the cross and the innocent, spotless lamb slain for this person’s anointing and at the end it’s a commitment on his part to serve the Lord the rest of his life, that’s the whole New Testament in Leviticus Chapter 14. One Author. Fifteen hundred years. Sixty-six books. Forty human authors. One divine author. Leviticus 14 says the same thing that all of the gospels say, that all of the New Testament says.

Why? Why was such an elaborate ceremony written in Leviticus 14 when there were almost zero mentions, very few mentions of anyone ever being healed of leprosy? Why was it there? Because leprosy is an illustration of the sin that rocks our life. And the ceremony is an illustration of Jesus Christ and his blood cleansing us from all sin. That’s why it’s there in Leviticus. You start making these connections and you start saying,

“Okay, this is no book. This is the living Expression of God,” and you change how you start looking at the Bible.

Now actually, we don't know if this leper ever made it to the priests. It doesn't say. We do know that Mark, in his gospel said he went and told everybody, which Jesus told him not to do. But Jesus knew anyway he was going to do it. We don't know if they were ever told. But we know this, they never got the message. They never got the message that the one that could heal was in their midst.

And so Luke finishes this section in Chapter 5 by telling us that Jesus' fame grew and grew. And great crowds came to be healed of their diseases. But hear me when I tell you today, every time Jesus healed a leper the message was “I came to cleanse you from the disease of sin that you can be cleansed by no other method than by my miraculous touch. There is no hope for you. You are living dead.” But as Moses foretold in Leviticus the blood of the lamb cleanses us from all sin.

Hear me please; the leper knew he was unclean. He knew. He had a lifetime of knowing that he was unclean. He had a lifetime of screaming it out in shame, “Unclean, unclean!” That is what led him to Christ. Please hear me. *That is what led him to Christ.* The person who is closest to Christ is the person that recognizes how vile their sin is. That person is very near Christ. This leper knew he wasn't ten percent clean. He wasn't five percent clean. He wasn't one percent clean. He was one hundred percent unclean. There was nothing he could do for himself; there was no way to fix the rotting, dead man's flesh that he was carrying around. His only hope was the touch of Jesus Christ.

### **In Matthew 5:3 – Jesus said (ESV)**

**3 “*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*”**

It means blessed are those who recognize their true spiritual condition. *Blessed are those who recognize their true spiritual condition.* Because in their recognition there is great hope and the Kingdom of God is very near them. The understanding of your sin is what drives you to the cross. And when in faith you say, “Lord Jesus, if you will, you can make me clean.”

Jesus will say every time, I promise and the Bible promises, he will say, “I will. Be clean.”

Let's pray. *Lord Jesus, what a picture. We just take a moment to accept that we are the leper. That we are full of the leprosy of sin. And that without your touch Lord, we are doomed to a living death. That's what your Word says and that's what we believe. And so Lord, in shame, humiliation, in humility we push to you. We push forward to you, Lord, and we fall on our face humbly, recognizing our position in sin and your ability to heal. And we say, “Lord I know that you can make me clean. I come to you because you are my only hope. Cleanse me Lord. Make me right before you.” We fall on our face before you,*

*the mighty Lord of all Creation, and we see you Jesus kneeling down and pulling us up out of the dirt and then a firm grasp as you say, I will. Be clean. We thank you Jesus.*

*Pray with me. Lord Jesus, I recognize that I am the leper. I can't fix it. I can't clean it up I need your touch. Please come into my life and cleanse me. Take out the sin and fill me with your righteousness. And Lord as the Law of Moses commanded, I commit to serve you all my days. Be my Savior and be my Lord and fill me with your Holy Spirit. For your glory and in your name, amen.*