

WSS Part 12
Week 4
Thursday

The Bond of Suffering
by Lisa Wallover, Guest Writer

Today's Treasure

Moved with pity, He [Jesus] stretched out His hand and touched him...
Mark 1:41

Suggested Scripture reading for today: [Mark 1:40-42](#) or [Luke 5:12-13](#)

He knew the Law of Moses. Every leper in Israel did. It was how they lived and how the community survived. And yet, he was about to do the exact opposite of what it required:

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.
Leviticus 13:45-46

So read the Law in Leviticus. He surely could recite it by heart.

Leprosy was contagious and progressive and sometimes deadly. In the Jewish tradition of the day, a leper was considered smitten by God and afflicted. The disease was even understood as a visible representation of sin and its effects: starting small and growing, destroying what it touches. And so, a leper must not be touched. He or she would be despised and rejected, as one from whom people would hide their faces. *Forsaken.*

For the health of the community, lepers would be sent away from it. As painful as the disease was, perhaps even greater would be the isolation it brought. Isolation from family, from friends, even, it must have seemed, from God. Forbidden from worshipping Him in community, the prayers of a leper were undoubtedly words of groaning, cries of petition, sorrow, and grief. It was the life of a leper.

And so, following the law, this leper tore his clothes and let his hair hang loose, making his status evident to all. He had only one thing left to do – call out the warning “Unclean!” and walk away.

But on this day, he did not. Because on this day, he saw Jesus.

The Teacher Jesus was unlike any teacher in all of Israel. He spoke the words of God with authority. He ate with tax collectors and sinners. He healed the sick and cast out demons. Yes, if any could look on a man full of leprosy and still see the man, it would be Jesus. *But would He?*

This leper, instead of backing away and calling out the warning, "*Unclean, unclean!*" moved *toward* Jesus. He fell on his face and begged Him, "Lord, *if You will, You can make me clean.*"

Did he dare look into the face of Jesus? If he did, what would he find there?

The Scriptures tell us: Jesus was "*moved with pity.*"

Jesus *did* understand, more deeply than any other, what it was to be despised and rejected by men. To be a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. To be as one from whom men hide their faces. Jesus knew that to truly bear this leper's grief and carry his sorrows, He would become the outcast. He would be stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. Jesus would be the one to cry out from the cross in the Psalm of David:

*My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?
Psalm 22:1*

For only by His wounds, would His people be healed. (See Isaiah 53)

"Lord," said the leper, "*if You will, You can make me clean.*"

Even before the leper heard the answer, he *felt* it, reaching down to him: the sure hand of Jesus. Touching him, the untouchable one. And then His voice: "*I will; be clean.*"

Immediately the leprosy left him, and the man was made clean. His life was completely restored. Because Jesus was forsaken, he never would be. Because of Jesus, the same is true for all who ask Him. This is the promise of the gospel.

LIFE-GIVING ENCOURAGEMENT

Jesus truly is the Suffering Servant, prophesied in Isaiah:

But He was pierced for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities; upon Him was

the chastisement that brought us peace, and with His wounds we are healed.
Isaiah 53:5

Jesus was sent away so that we would be brought close to God — and to each other.

He has utterly paid for the sins of all who, like the leper, have faith in Him.

He is the One who understands, more deeply than any other, your own suffering.

How do you need to experience the touch of Jesus today?

How is He meeting you in a hard place?

PRAYER

Lord, thank You for being the God who, in Jesus, became “a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.” Thank You that I can know You fully understand my pain and that You meet me in it. Please teach me how to trust You for the affliction I experience in this life, and to walk with You there because You have already walked it for me. In the places of suffering, may I discover a deep bond of love with You.