

Will Do What Others Won't — Delivery Transcript

Matthew 8:1–4 (CSB) • Wes Terry • Sunday, August 2, 2026 • What Man Is This?

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If you have your Bible, we're going to be in Matthew chapter eight this morning, kicking off a new series in the Gospel of Matthew. This is a long series that we're in as a church trying to answer the question, who is Jesus? Everybody's asking it in our culture in a fresh way. Even if they're not saying Jesus by name, there's a growing discontentment with secular atheism or atheistic secularism, I should say, and the answers that it provides — and the spiritual solutions that it offers have been tried and found wanting.

And so people are curious again. People are starting to explore different answers to these big questions in life, and we as a church want to try to offer the answer that Christianity offers, the answer that Jesus himself offered — from the lips of Jesus himself on through the witness, the eyewitness testimony of Matthew, which was one of his disciples.

And so we've been in it for a long time. We've been looking at the Sermon on the Mount for several months. Before that, we looked at the preparation of Jesus for his ministry, and now we're transitioning. Jesus is coming down the mountain. And before we read our text — there's a few times in life where you're kind of hesitant to ask a question because you're not really sure of the answer.

And usually in those type of questions, it's the difference between what's possible and what's likely. In other words, the difference between could, can, and will. The difference between could and would. For example, like if you're trying to get a job and you put in your application, you're not really wondering, "Can they hire me?"

Obviously, they can. They're looking for someone to hire. They put the job posting out there. You're qualified. You put in your resume. That's not the question, can they? The question for you is, will they? Will they want me? Will they choose me? You know, as opposed to some of the other people who are applying.

And it's like that for a lot of things in life. It's not just where you go to work. It's like relationships. Maybe if you're first getting into relationships romantically, it's not a question

of can they go out with you. It's — you know, they have, like, a brain with a body. They can live and move.

It's a question of will they. Will they want you? Will they choose you? Or maybe you've been married and you blew it. You messed up big. And so the question isn't, can they forgive me? The question is, will they? Will they want to forgive me? It's a hard thing when someone has the power and ability to give you what you're looking for and yet still they choose not to.

That's not a comfort. You're not comforted by their power and ability — it's torture, because you know that they're able to do this thing, but they refuse to do so. And that fear that a lot of us carry keeps many of us from asking questions we should probably ask, attempting things that we should probably attempt, and that's especially true in your relationship with God.

There's a lot of people, especially in West Texas — if you've grown up here in Bible Belt America, you've probably inherited some form of cultural Christianity where you grew up hearing the Bible stories, maybe you even went to church. You maybe nod your head when we sing the songs. Yeah, God exists. Yes, Jesus is the Son of God.

Jesus died for sinners. But where it begins to rub for you is: I know that Jesus died for sinners. I'm not sure Jesus died for my sin. I'm not sure that he would want to forgive me of my guilt. I know that other people have been helped by Christianity and a relationship with Jesus, and he's kind of helping them manage their shame.

But when it comes to my shame, it's a different story, it's a different level, it's a different type, and so I'm not sure if Jesus wants to do that for me. And the saddest part about that dynamic — which many of you, that's exactly where you've been, if not where you are — is that for many of those people, because of that fear of what the answer might be, it prevents them from even asking the question in the first place.

It prevents them from even drawing near to see if Jesus would answer one way or the other. And that's what we're going to see in our text today in Matthew chapter 8 — a man who pushed past that fear and doubt, and really evidence that he had to believe otherwise, and still he asked Jesus the question whether he would be willing to cleanse him.

And so if you'll take your Bible, we're going to pick it up in Matthew chapter 8. If you're new to the Gospel of Matthew, it's a wonderful gospel. You got to know, though, that it was written to a group of Jewish people. There's a ton of Jewish elements in this gospel. Some of the Jewish people were Christians — well, I guess they weren't Jewish in the strict sense in that case. They were converted Jews who converted to Christianity. They believed that Jesus was the Messiah. But Matthew also wrote this gospel as kind of like an evangelistic tool to persuade Jewish people that Jesus was the Christ.

And so it's at once discipleship and evangelism at the same time. And what we've been doing over the last several months is looking at the Sermon on the Mount, and everything leading up to where we're at right now has been intentional by Matthew. And you know that because there's these little clues that he gives you before we get to where we're at today in chapter eight, and it came right before the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew chapter four, verse twenty-three.

You can read it there with me in your Bible. It's a little summary statement. And the only reason I'm pointing it out to you is so that you can contextually understand what Matthew's trying to do. In Matthew 4:23, he gives the summary statement of what Jesus was doing with his life.

He was teaching. He was going all over Galilee, teaching in the synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness. And what you see in Matthew five, six, and seven is this teaching and preaching element. He teaches and preaches in the Sermon on the Mount, and then he comes down the mountain, and when he comes down the mountain, he engages in healing every disease and sickness.

And you know that's what Matthew wants you to pay attention to because as soon as the section is over, he says the exact same thing verbatim in Matthew 9:35. Jesus continued going around to all the towns and villages, teaching in the synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness.

So what I want you to think in your mind, kind of map this book: the Sermon on the Mount is the words of the King, and what we're about to look at is the works. And Jesus is essentially going to engage in miraculous healings with like nine different individuals, and Matthew records the things that he records in order to advance his purpose.

And the purpose of Matthew in this gospel is to persuade you and I that Jesus is the Christ. Now, we're not Jewish. We didn't grow up eagerly anticipating the Christ. In the first century, that was what they were doing. They were eagerly anticipating this figure who was prophesied about in the Old Testament, who would come and liberate God's people.

And when Jesus came on the scene, he was claiming to be the Christ, but he wasn't saying or doing what people expected. They were accusing Jesus of not being the Christ. They were accusing him of being a false prophet. They're saying, "You're abolishing the law and the prophets. You're jacking up the Old Testament.

You're taking what Moses said, and you're saying something else." And Jesus says, "No, no, no, no, no. I'm not trying to abolish the law or prophets. I've come to fulfill them." In other words, "My role, my ministry is to prove that the Old Testament is pointing to me." And if the Sermon on the Mount didn't have that effect, then these encounters are about to have

that same effect, and every encounter forces every person to ask the question, what man is this?

What man is this who would touch this untouchable person? What man is this that can control the wind and waves? And the answer, of course, is that he's the Christ. But he's not the Christ that we expected. He doesn't say the things that we thought he would say, and he doesn't do the things we thought he would do.

And in this case, this morning, the key answer is that he's willing to do what others won't. And so with that said, when Jesus came down the mountain in verse one, large crowds followed him, and then right away, a man with leprosy came up. So you got a leprous man, comes up to Jesus, kneels down before him, and he says, "Lord, if you're willing, you can make me clean."

And so reaching out his hand, Jesus touched him, saying, "I am willing. Be made clean." And then immediately his leprosy was cleansed, and then Jesus told him, "See that you don't tell anyone, but go show yourself to the priest, and then offer the gift that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them." Now, one of the things I think's so fascinating as I'm studying this book of Matthew is what he does different than the other Gospel writers.

So in Mark's Gospel and Luke's Gospel, this story that we just read is the third story after the Sermon on the Mount. But Matthew is the only one who takes this leprous man and puts him at the very, very front. So Matthew puts him first, and the other thing he does is that he reduces the story by 50%. Mark has a long treatment, Luke has a longer treatment, but Matthew is very, very succinct.

And Matthew alone gives this nod to Moses, the Law of Moses, because Matthew's purpose in his gospel is to do what we just said. He's trying to persuade these readers Jesus is the Christ, and he didn't come to abolish Moses. He's not trying to do away with the Law. He's trying to show you he's what the Law is about.

He's trying to show you that he's the point of the Old Testament — the rituals, the Ten Commandments, everything. And so that's how Matthew is telling the story, and that's how we need to hear it. And so I want to give you a couple of things that Jesus does in this story that it's important we appreciate.

But to fully appreciate what Jesus is doing, you got to know the first-century context. For a Jewish man with leprosy, it was a very bad thing. When we hear leprosy, you and I probably think of something like Hansen's disease. Has anyone ever heard of Hansen's disease? It's what people think of with leprosy.

It's not really even a skin disease. It's a nerve disease that damages your nerve endings. And so what ends up happening is that you can't feel, because the nerve endings are dead. And so because your body can't feel pain, you end up doing things with your body you shouldn't do.

So you, like, touch a hot stove and it jacks up your hand, or you do any other number of things you can imagine. And so your lower extremities get all dinged up with sores and infections of various types. And then usually it begins to create deformities in your hands and your feet.

And so whether that's what this guy had or whether it was some other version of leprosy, the point is what the implications were. And in the Old Testament, there were sweeping implications — not just physically to prevent infection, but there were implications at a social level and a spiritual level as well.

In Leviticus, if you go to the next slide, it kind of spells them out. I'm not going to read you everything, but here's just a little taste. In Leviticus 13:45 it says that the person who has this kind of disease is to tear his clothes, dishevel his hair, let it hang loose, and cover his mouth. And then anytime he gets around anyone, he's to shout "unclean!"

And he will remain unclean as long as he has the disease. He is unclean, and he must live alone in a place outside the camp. So notice that a guy who has leprosy is declared unclean, and that was a very technical legal term that impacted a person's ability to go to church. Essentially, to go to church as a Jewish man, there were ceremonial washings and cleansings, and if you didn't do what you were supposed to do, you couldn't enter into the presence of God.

The idea is that God was holy, and a holy God can't stomach defilement, and we are sinners. Our sin defiles us, and so we need to prepare ourselves to wash that away. And so they had all of these rules, all of these washings, and all of these different things. And when someone got leprosy, the washings weren't enough to rid them of their uncleanness, and so they had to move outside the camp — which was literally outside the camp, but it was also symbolic for being cut off relationally, socially, and spiritually.

When you went outside the camp, that's where the unholy things went. That's where the wrath of God would remain. God's presence was inside the tent. It was inside the Holy of Holies. Outside the tent was godlessness. And so here's a man who has lost everything dear to him. He's lost his access to God.

He's lost his family. He's lost his spouse. He's lost his standing in the community. Whatever hierarchy he once had in terms of social status, all that has now been removed. And every time he even gets near anyone — or when anyone gets near him, which is not very often — he has to shout and scream so they can hear, "I'm unclean."

I'm unclean." A daily and vivid reminder of everything that he's lost. And so when Jesus sees this man come up to him, you got to know everyone who would have seen it would have went, "Whoa." Everyone else would have walked away. They would have checked out. They would have withdrawn. They would have covered their mouths because they were afraid of getting infected or that uncleanness getting onto them. But Jesus doesn't do any of those things.

Jesus lets him approach, and not only does he approach, he kneels before Jesus — which shows you that Jesus does something that others won't do. And you may think this is reaching, but I don't think it is. I think Matthew says it this way for a reason. When others walked away, Jesus chose to wait, and in so doing, he broke a very important taboo.

The cultural taboo was when unclean people get close to you check out, you go away. That wasn't necessarily prescribed in the law. They just implied that based on their reading of it. And Jesus is saying, "He has to tell us he's unclean, but I don't have to walk away." And so Jesus chooses to wait and to receive this man and to convey a kind of affection and commitment none others would do.

And I think that's really instructive for us as people reading this passage and people who represent Jesus as a church. You know, we're the hands and feet of Jesus, and so we need to think of it in a couple of different ways. Number one, if you're not a Christian, you need to know that the thing that makes you feel like you're separated and not worthy and maybe alienated from spiritual community — whatever that is in your life, Jesus sees it, and he does not withdraw.

It's not that he doesn't care. Jesus cared, and he acted to heal this man, but he is not grossed out. He is not horrified. He is not using that as a grounds for distance. And nor should we as Jesus people let these situations that people find themselves in be grounds for us to withdraw from them when what they're desperately needing is some kind of spiritual connection.

I think about people in our day and age maybe who've gone to prison or spent some time in jail — and maybe for a good reason. Maybe they did something illegal. Maybe they did something wrong. But what they want more than anything is to get out and get re-assimilated into a spiritual community.

And if we're not careful, we can let their past baggage or their leprosy, their stain, be grounds for creating distance. I'm not saying that a nation shouldn't have borders. I'm not saying that you shouldn't have standards. But when you use those standards as justification for cutting someone off who's trying to draw near to God, then you have gone further than Jesus chose to go, because he waited when everybody else walked away.

It's not just people who are in jail and stuff either. One of the real big things today, very common, is marriages that fail — especially younger people, their first marriage, they weren't ready for it, so it didn't stick. And for the rest of their lives, they carry this feeling, this sense of: I'm not like them. I don't belong. Or people are probably thinking something, they're probably saying something, and therefore I'm just not even going to go close.

Or maybe it's not their marriage. Maybe their son's an addict or something else has blown up in their life, and because of that social stigma that they carry, other people decide to walk. And I think what we're seeing from Jesus here is an invitation to ask ourselves the question: Is our welcome still on the table no matter where people start?

So if their starting place in coming near to Jesus is maybe not where our starting place was — maybe they're coming out of a season of life that you're not even familiar with — are we willing to welcome others no matter where they start? That's a question that's really important for us as a church, because it's one of our core values.

We welcome people no matter where they are. We hang it on our wall. It's on a sign as soon as you walk in. How terrible is it for people to come into our church and to read that sign, "I'm welcome no matter where I start," and then for them to come into our church and leave our church without anyone ever even saying, "Hey, it's great to see you"?

And I'm not just talking about, like, the people you hate. I'm really talking about the people you try to manage, the people who you know there's some kind of alienation, some kind of social separation. And Jesus is creating some discomfort to really get us to honestly say: is your welcome conditional because of where they're at?

And the invitation for us is to welcome people no matter where they start. But that's not even the coolest thing that he does in this text. It even goes beyond that. And so Jesus has this leper come near him. The leper says, "Lord, if you're willing, you can make me clean." You need to notice the order in which he says it.

He doesn't question Jesus' ability. What he questions is whether or not Jesus has a desire to heal him. Notice where the if is. He says, "If you're willing, you can make me clean." And so in one case, this guy is expressing true faith. He's confident in Jesus, who he claimed to be, and so he's making a statement about Jesus and saying that you can heal me of leprosy.

The reason it's a big statement is because in the Old Testament, nobody got healed of leprosy except for three people, and every time it happened, it was a unique miracle of God. The people who read the Old Testament had a category for what only God could do. Only God can raise the dead, and only God can cure someone of leprosy.

Miriam had it done, Elisha had it done, and some Gentile Syrian guy had it done — I can't remember his name. Naaman, something like that. Those were the only ones, and every time

it happened, it was a unique miracle of God. And so this guy's actually saying to Jesus, "I know you can. I know you're different.

I know you're powerful like God is powerful. You may even be God in the flesh. I'm not questioning whether you're capable. I'm questioning whether you're willing." And Jesus demonstrates that he's willing, but he does it in a unique way. He doesn't just say, "I'm willing." He shows it by extending his hand.

If you go to the next slide, you notice the way that it says it. He reached out his hand. Jesus reached out his hand and touched him. Then he said, "I'm willing. Be made clean." What Jesus is doing in this moment is he's giving this man what he truly needed. Even the way that he asked the question shows you he wasn't about the healing.

I don't just want to be healed physically. I'm not just wanting to get rid of these sores. I want to be cleansed. In other words, I want to be reconciled. I want to be brought back in to that which I've lost. I want to be able to hug my wife again. I want to put my children to bed. I want to go to worship services.

I want to worship God. I want to be connected to my spiritual family. And all of that had been removed from him, and every single day he was reminded: "You're untouchable. You're unclean. You're unwanted. You're not good." And what Jesus does in extending his hand is he sends the opposite message. He says, "I see you.

You are worthy. You are loved. You are precious in God's sight. And though everyone else says the opposite, I see you. I see who you really are, and you matter to me, you matter to God, even though you have no reason to feel that way because of the way everyone else is responding to you. I'm different."

Jesus does what others won't, because what others withdraw or withhold, he wants for you. Now, I say that knowing that for many people in this room, you wanted Jesus to do something. You needed him to heal your child or spouse, or you needed some other kind of miracle in your life, and you prayed and prayed and prayed and prayed, and Jesus did not do it. Your marriage still ended, the person still died, you're still sick — all the implications.

And so you don't want to read this miracle as like a strategy for how to pray. It's not like because this man did it just right and because he had enough faith, Jesus had to heal him. That's not what this is, because Jesus does not heal a lot of lepers, and there's a lot of people he doesn't heal. There's a lot of people who stay very, very sick.

Jesus heals people for a reason, on occasion, and it's always to point to a specific truth, and he's healing this person at this time in this way to communicate what he wants for you. And what he wants for you is even more important than your physical healing, or whatever the case may have been. What he wants for you is wrapped up in this idea of cleansing.

He wants for you to have the flourishing life. And by flourishing, I don't mean what Joel Osteen means down in Houston, you know, smiling. I'm not saying a big house and a nice car and all that stuff — you know, that'd be great, too. But that's not what Jesus is talking about.

He's talking about a flourishing life: a life that is rightly aligned beneath God's design, and a life that is rooted in Christ, a life that is strong because your identity is not measured by what people say or think about you, but your identity is rooted and grounded in who God says that you are — and that you can draw near to God's throne of grace with confidence because you're not standing in your righteousness, but you're standing in the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

And so you have this psychological superpower, and you can love, and you can spend your life, and you can forgive, and you can enjoy life even if you're persecuted. Even if all these bad things are happening, you have a peace that surpasses human understanding. That's what Jesus wants for every person.

That's the abundant life that Jesus came to give. And by touching this man, essentially what he's saying is, "I see where you're at, and I want this for you. I want this for you, even though maybe you think you can't have it. And even though everybody else, in the way that they act around you, makes you think you don't deserve it — I see you.

I want this for you. What others withhold, I want to give." And it raises, again, I think a diagnostic question for us. Would our actions say the same? Or do we, as a lot of church people are good at doing, say the right words, but when push comes to shove and people look at our life, what we say and what we do don't match?

Do your words match what you're doing with your life? Just like Jesus says, "Here's some proof of the pudding — the proof of the pudding's in the tasting, right? So I'm going to touch you before I say the words." And Jesus didn't even need to touch him. We know that, right? Jesus could heal people without a word.

He didn't have to say anything. He didn't have to touch anything. He does this for a different reason. And when we say to people, "You can have new life in Jesus," but then we live as though that's not the case, what we're doing is we're diminishing the words that we say, because people aren't just listening — they're watching.

And what does what people see in your life say about your message? Jesus is demonstrating with crystal clarity that he meant every single thing that he said. One of the things that broke my heart a couple of — I guess it's been a couple of months ago now. Somebody called up here to the church, wanted to talk to the pastor.

And, no, they didn't want to talk to the pastor. They wanted to talk to somebody, because I found out she had some words for the pastor, and she didn't know that I was him. She had come to church at Broadview. Her daughter had been working with her for months. She had not gone to church anywhere.

She used to come here a long time ago. She moved back to Abilene. She was disconnected, didn't have a church home, no church family, so she finally talked her into it. And this lady came to church, sat in a pew, came in the doors, everything. She said, "Not one single person looked me in the eye. Not one single person said hello.

Not one person asked me my name. Not one person said, 'I'm glad you're here.' And then even the pastor just walked right by me." I couldn't believe it. And I was sitting there going, "Oh, I can't believe I did that." Certainly, I didn't do it on purpose. But that's what I'm saying — what we hang on the wall doesn't matter.

It's what happens down the hall. It's what happens when they're sitting in their chairs. It's what happens when they're at the hospitality table. It's this proactive commitment to demonstrating with our life what we say we believe about Jesus, which is that no one's too far gone. You are welcome here.

Doesn't matter who you are, what you've done. There's new life in Jesus' name. There is a spiritual community to which you can belong that is even thicker than blood. It is an eternal family. It's a heavenly family that you'll enjoy forever and ever. It's a beautiful message.

It's the truth. I think it's what Jesus has created through his death and resurrection, but our lives need to demonstrate the words that we say, just like this leper needed to see. I want to show you a clip that I think really powerfully conveys all of this. I don't typically show clips in my sermons, but this one's just too good not to share.

It comes from the first season of "The Chosen," which was such a good season. I know some people love to hate on "The Chosen," but you can hate it in front of somebody else. I kind of like it. So let's watch this clip to get a vision for what it might've looked like.

[Video clip — The Chosen, season 1: the healing of the leper.]

I just love that clip. You notice that he tells the guy — "I don't want anything." He said, "You don't seek your own honor." And Jesus replies, "No, don't tell anyone, but go and tell the priest." And the other thing — Jesus, in this clip and in the text in Matthew, he uses the word cleanse, just like the leper says, "I want to be cleansed."

And then Matthew in verse three says the man was immediately cleansed. In each case, not once do they ever call this a miraculous healing. It's a cleansing that needed to be verified by the priest according to the Law of Moses. And again, we can read right past that because we don't have these Jewish eyes that they were familiar with.

But in the Law of Moses, there was a process for how to be cleansed. There was a process for reintegration into the covenant community, and that process is laid out in Leviticus. The point is that Jesus is willing to do what others won't, and what other people were wielding against him to exclude him and remove him from that which he desperately desired, Jesus takes that and cleanses it — even though he couldn't wash it away.

And so Jesus washes clean what you can't wash away. The idea is that leprosy can, for many of us, stand for any number of things. Leprosy is not even your moral guilt always. It's just this symbolic representation of sin that separates you from God, and it separates you from God's people, and we all know it deep down.

And for many of us, you try really, really hard to wash it away through various different means. You try to work hard. You maybe say you're super sorry. Maybe you make atonement in the way that you know how. You try to be helpful. You maybe try to go to church, do all the things, so that somehow you can earn what you know you don't deserve.

And what Jesus demonstrates in this miracle is how the cleansing really comes, and that is by telling him to go to the priest and show him as a testimony. If you go to the next slide, there is this process that a leper would have to go through in the Book of Leviticus.

Essentially, it starts in Leviticus fourteen: if a person has the leprosy, he's to be brought to the priest.

The priest goes outside the camp to examine the man, and then if the skin disease of the afflicted person has disappeared, then here are the steps to bring him back in. If you go to the next slide, there's a picture that tells you what the Bible basically says. It's a very long passage. I'm not going to read it.

But he would examine him outside the tent. He would examine him outside the gate, where the profane and unholy things were. And if he was clean of the leprosy, then the priest would make a sacrifice. And the sacrifice was really symbolic and interesting, because he would have two different birds.

One bird would be sacrificed. He would slit its neck, and the blood of that animal would be dripped into this water bowl, a water bowl of clear water. Now it's mixed with blood. And then you would dip the wing of that other bird into the water, so it has blood-tipped wings. And then you would also dip the hyssop branch and the cedar, which was tied together by a scarlet thread —

throwback to Rahab in the Old Testament. Another story for another day. But then he would throw that hyssop and that blood water onto the unclean man, and then he would bring him into the tent, meaning back into the covenant community. But he couldn't go right into his tent. He had to sit outside the tent where his family lived, and he had to sit outside there for seven days.

Could you imagine how difficult that would be? Haven't seen your family for years, perhaps. You're this close to being brought back in, but there's this waiting period of seven days. And then on the seventh day, he would wash, he would shave, and then he would make atonement. And he would bring his sacrifice of an unblemished lamb, and he and the priest would go to the tabernacle, and then they would make atonement for the unclean person through the shedding of the blood of the lamb.

And then if it was all up and up — God accepted the sacrifice — then the priest would declare a legal verdict: "This man is now clean. This man is now clean. He is no longer unclean." And then he would be reintegrated into the covenant community, and that's what Jesus wants this man to do. Now, you may wonder, why does Jesus say, "Don't tell anybody except one person, and that's the priest, and you need to do exactly what Moses said"?

The reason he does that is because of what Matthew's already told us. He didn't come to abolish the law and the prophets. Jesus was not saying, "The Old Testament's junk, just focus on me." He's saying, "No, the Old Testament is about me. I'm the point of everything. I'm the point of this priest. I'm the point of this process.

I am the sacrificial lamb. I'm the greater priest. I'm the greater Moses. I'm the one who cleanses you of sin." And he tells this guy to go to the priest, and the priest was the guy suspicious of Jesus. It was the priests, the scribes, the Pharisees — they were the ones wondering, is Jesus really who he says he is?

So Jesus takes this incredible miracle that had never been done in Israel — not one single Israelite had ever been healed of leprosy in this way. This law was on the books. It had never been performed, not once. This is the first man to ever go through the process, and he is miraculously brought back in.

And it basically shows this priest, who would've stubbornly wanted to refuse it: Jesus is the Christ. He is the one to whom the law and the prophets point. Jesus is the one who can do what only God can do. And only God can raise the dead, and only God can cure a leper. And so Jesus washes away what Satan wields against you.

And through this process, this guy is a living witness. He's a testimony of what Jesus Christ can do. And that raises the last question, and then with this we'll be done. Is your life a witness to that same fact — that Jesus saves? The New Testament goes on to talk about this in the Book of Hebrews.

I'm not going to spend a lot of time in it, but the idea is that Jesus is the one to whom the law and prophets point. Jesus is not only the greater priest, he's also the greater sacrifice. The Book of Hebrews says that Jesus, as priest, offered a superior sacrifice, a once-and-for-all sacrifice that paid for all sins — past, present, and future.

And that sacrifice was not the blood of bulls and goats. It wasn't the lamb. It wasn't the birds. Jesus made an atoning sacrifice with his own life. He lived a sinless life of love and obedience before God the Father — the sinless life that you and I could never live, which is why we're lepers. All of us have the stain of sin.

None of us can wash it away. And so Jesus came without the stain and then died in our place as though he did. He died in our place for our sin. He was forsaken. Even though Jesus will never and has never forsaken you, he allowed himself to be forsaken on the cross. He cried out, "My God, why have you forsaken me?" —

so that you and I could be reconciled, so that you and I could be brought near, even though we're undeserving. And it's not like God is saying, "I grade on a curve, you know, I'm in a good mood, so we'll let you in." No. God is holy. Justice had to be served. The wrath of God belongs on sinners. But so that the wrath of God would not destroy us, Jesus let himself be destroyed.

He became the leper. He became untouchable so that you and I could be cleansed. The Book of Hebrews — I'll just give you this one verse. It's such a good study. Jesus also suffered where? Outside the gate. Jesus went where the unholy things are. Jesus suffered outside the gate. Why? So that he might sanctify the people by his own blood.

It's the death of Jesus on the cross that takes our guilt and our shame and enables us to look at God and still see that he's holy, and yet not be destroyed by his presence — because we can believe by faith that God loves us so much that he sent his Son to absorb his wrath in our place.

And I know that sounds like — I don't know what it sounds like. It sounds like amazingly good news, but it's only going to be received as good news for people who know they're lepers, people who know they can't cleanse themselves, people who have a longing for God, people who have a desire to be reconciled, but for whatever reason, they know they don't belong.

"I don't belong with those kind of people. I don't belong in that kind of place. I don't belong in a place like heaven. God is too holy for that." And you're right — he is, and you are. But that's only one half of the gospel. The second half is that he loved you so much, he made a way so that your brokenness could be redeemed.

He made a way for your leprosy to be put on him, and then through the resurrection of Jesus, he could declare his price was sufficient — his death was sufficient for you, and it was sufficient for me, and it was sufficient for all who would repent and believe on him. And there's a historical marker in our history that validates what I'm saying is true.

And so if you've never in your life come to a place where you've recognized your leprosy — the reason why you feel so uncomfortable when you get into the presence of God, the reason why you have a longing for God but at the same time a discomfort — Jesus is showing you in this story why that is, and he's giving us all an invitation to receive his righteousness.

He who knew no sin became sin, so that we could become the righteousness of God.

[The available recording ends here; the closing invitation is not included.]