



WHERE LIFE & PURPOSE CONNECT

## **Grow, Pray, Study for the Week of July 20, 2025**

### **Weekly Prayer**

Lord Jesus, You are the Great Physician, the Healer of every wound and the Restorer of all that is broken. As I read Your Word today, I come with open hands and a trusting heart. Speak to me now for you alone can make all things new. I rest in Your power, Your mercy, and Your love. In Your holy name, Jesus, I pray.

### **Monday, July 21**

#### **Scripture: Matthew 8:1-4**

Now when Jesus had come down from the mountain, large crowds followed him. A man with a skin disease came, knelt before him, and said, "Lord, if you want, you can make me clean."

Jesus reached out his hand and touched him, saying, "I do want to. Become clean." Instantly his skin disease was cleansed. Jesus said to him, "Don't say anything to anyone. Instead, go and show yourself to the priest and offer the gift that Moses commanded. This will be a testimony to them."

#### **Observation**

Verse 3 may sound like a normal, caring response to us. In Jesus' day, it was an utterly shocking act. The Greek term is *lepros*, sometimes translated 'leprosy,' used to describe a range of skin diseases and only rarely true 'leprosy' (Hansen's disease) people with a skin disease [were] ritually unclean.... Their unclean status was contagious, so they were supposed to avoid contact with other (clean) people. What people "avoided like the plague" (literally) was touching such a person.

#### **Application**

Skin diseases in Jesus' day were often regarded as divine judgments on sin, as were many other physical ailments (John 9:1-2). People feared both the physical and spiritual consequences of contact with such people. It took courage born of desperation for this man to even approach Jesus (which makes it plausible for The Chosen to picture the disciples drawing weapons to keep the man away). In what ways was Jesus' lack of fear a startling model for his followers in that world?

**Prayer**

Lord Jesus, thank you for wanting me to be whole, restored, healthy. Guide me in seeking to share your restoring power with others who need it. Amen.

**Tuesday, July 22****Scripture: Leviticus 13:1-3, 45-46**

The LORD said to Moses and Aaron, When a person has a swelling, a scab, or a shiny spot on their skin, and it becomes an infection of skin disease on their skin, they will be brought to the priests, either to Aaron or one of his sons. The priest will examine the infection on the skin. If hair in the infected area has turned white and the infection appears to be deeper than the skin, then it is an infection of skin disease. Once the priest sees this, he will declare the person unclean.

Anyone with an infection of skin disease must wear torn clothes, dishevel their hair, cover their upper lip, and shout out, "Unclean! Unclean!" They will be unclean as long as they are infected. They are unclean. They must live alone outside the camp.

**Observation**

In ancient Israel, skin diseases like leprosy brought devastating isolation. The Levitical law gave priests detailed instructions for examining suspicious skin conditions. Anyone diagnosed with leprosy had to live "outside the camp," wearing torn clothes and calling out "Unclean!" to warn others. These rules may seem harsh, but they were aimed at protecting the community's health in an era without modern medicine. This social isolation and stigma created deep suffering, which Jesus engaged with deep compassion when he touched and healed those branded "lepers."

**Application**

Living "outside the camp" meant complete separation from family, friends, work, and worship. The emotional and spiritual cost was as devastating as the physical symptoms. Sadly, those not affected often saw those terrible costs as "not our problem." What groups of people face similar isolation or stigma in our society today? How can you help bridge those divides with Christ-like compassion?

**Prayer**

Lord Jesus, in our recent history we saw AIDS sufferers treated much like Biblical "lepers." Guide us to avoid letting uninformed fear cause needless suffering for people already suffering. Amen.

**Wednesday, July 23**

**Scripture: 2 Kings 5:1-14; Luke 4:23-28**

Naaman, a general for the king of Aram, was a great man and highly regarded by his master, because through him the LORD had given victory to Aram. This man was a mighty warrior, but he had a skin disease. Now Aramean raiding parties had gone out and captured a young girl from the land of Israel. She served Naaman's wife. She said to her mistress, "I wish that my master could come before the prophet who lives in Samaria. He would cure him of his skin disease." So Naaman went and told his master what the young girl from the land of Israel had said. Then Aram's king said, "Go ahead. I will send a letter to Israel's king." So Naaman left. He took along ten kikkars of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten changes of clothing. He brought the letter to Israel's king. It read, "Along with this letter I'm sending you my servant Naaman so you can cure him of his skin disease." When the king of Israel read the letter, he ripped his clothes. He said, "What? Am I God to hand out death and life? But this king writes me, asking me to cure someone of his skin disease! You must realize that he wants to start a fight with me." When Elisha the man of God heard that Israel's king had ripped his clothes, he sent word to the king: "Why did you rip your clothes? Let the man come to me. Then he'll know that there's a prophet in Israel." Naaman arrived with his horses and chariots. He stopped at the door of Elisha's house. Elisha sent out a messenger who said, "Go and wash seven times in the Jordan River. Then your skin will be restored and become clean." But Naaman went away in anger. He said, "I thought for sure that he'd come out, stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, wave his hand over the bad spot, and cure the skin disease. Aren't the rivers in Damascus, the Abana and the Pharpar, better than all Israel's waters? Couldn't I wash in them and get clean?" So he turned away and proceeded to leave in anger. Naaman's servants came up to him and spoke to him: "Our father, if the prophet had told you to do something difficult, wouldn't you have done it? All he said to you was, 'Wash and become clean.'" So Naaman went down and bathed in the Jordan seven times, just as the man of God had said. His skin was restored like that of a young boy, and he became clean.

Then Jesus said to them, "Undoubtedly, you will quote this saying to me: 'Doctor, heal yourself. Do here in your hometown what we've heard you did in Capernaum.'" He said, "I assure you that no prophet is welcome in the prophet's hometown. And I can assure you that there were many widows in Israel during Elijah's time, when it didn't rain for three and a half years and there was a great food shortage in the land. Yet Elijah was sent to none of them but only to a widow in the city of Zarephath in the region of Sidon. There were also many persons with skin diseases in Israel during the time of the prophet Elisha, but none of them were cleansed. Instead, Naaman the Syrian was cleansed." When they heard this, everyone in the synagogue was filled with anger.

**Observation**

Today's readings highlight God's healing love crossing human boundaries. In 2 Kings, Naaman was a powerful foreign commander with a skin disease who found healing through Israel's God. In Luke, Jesus reminded people in his hometown synagogue about this story, pointing out that God's healing reached beyond Israel to help a Syrian. What

angered Jesus' listeners was that Israel's God was rescuing the "wrong people." Jesus was the God with a heart for healing and reaching all people, whatever their background.

### **Application**

Jesus used Naaman's story to challenge his listeners' belief that God's favor belonged exclusively to them. This truth made them so angry they tried to harm Jesus. What makes it difficult for you to accept that God might be working through people in ways you didn't expect, or for people you dislike or consider unworthy of God's love and help?

### **Prayer**

Lord Jesus, shape me into a person whose heart breaks for what breaks your heart. Keep me from anger when your love and healing extend to people outside my natural affections. Amen.

## **Thursday, July 24**

### **Scripture: Luke 9:1-6; Matthew 10:8**

Jesus called the Twelve together and he gave them power and authority over all demons and to heal sicknesses. He sent them out to proclaim God's kingdom and to heal the sick. He told them, "Take nothing for the journey—no walking stick, no bag, no bread, no money, not even an extra shirt. Whatever house you enter, remain there until you leave that place. Wherever they don't welcome you, as you leave that city, shake the dust off your feet as a witness against them." They departed and went through the villages proclaiming the good news and healing people everywhere.

Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those with skin diseases, and throw out demons. You received without having to pay. Therefore, give without demanding payment.

### **Observation**

Jesus sent his disciples out with specific instructions: heal the sick, cast out demons, and proclaim God's kingdom. Matthew's account emphasized that this healing ministry must include people with skin diseases ("lepers")—society's most feared outcasts. Jesus wanted his followers to freely share the same healing power and compassion they had freely received. This mission showed how radically inclusive God's love is, reaching beyond social barriers to touch and heal those whom others avoided.

### **Application**

"The healings the disciples were to perform, important as they were for the people concerned, were signs of something more important still: God's new life breaking into the life of Israel, beginning the new day that was dawning with Jesus." \* God wants to feed and heal people's physical, spiritual and emotional needs. That's why Messiah Church emphasizes linking the "social gospel" with the "evangelical gospel." How does this follow Jesus' ministry model?

## **Prayer**

Lord Jesus, you cared about people, about me, as whole beings. Guide me to care for others in that same holistic way. Amen.

\* Wright, N. T., Matthew for Everyone, Part 1: Chapters 1-15 (The New Testament for Everyone) (p. 113). Westminster John Knox Press. Kindle Edition

## **Friday, July 25**

### **Scripture: Luke 7:20-23**

When they reached Jesus, they said, "John the Baptist sent us to you. He asks, 'Are you the one who is coming, or should we look for someone else?'" Right then, Jesus healed many of their diseases, illnesses, and evil spirits, and he gave sight to a number of blind people. Then he replied to John's disciples, "Go, report to John what you have seen and heard. *Those who were blind are able to see. Those who were crippled now walk. People with skin diseases are cleansed. Those who were deaf now hear. Those who were dead are raised up. And good news is preached to the poor*<sup>1</sup> Happy is anyone who doesn't stumble along the way because of me."

### **Observation**

John the Baptist sent followers to ask if Jesus was really the promised Messiah. Rather than just say "yes," Jesus pointed to his actions--healing the sick, giving sight to the blind, and cleansing those with leprosy. These actions grew from specific promises about what God's Messiah would do. Jesus' identity as Messiah was not "just talk." His acts of healing and mercy that reached society's most excluded people were strong evidence that he was indeed the one they had been waiting for.

### **Application**

John was in jail for rebuking Herod Antipas' marriage to a woman who was both his niece and the former wife of his brother Phillip. Jesus didn't scorn John's question. He simply said healing people with leprosy was a key sign of God's kingdom breaking into our world. He was defeating lasting evils even worse than the temporary Roman puppets of the Herod family. What ministries does your community need that take patience to see how they advance God's kingdom?

## **Prayer**

Lord Jesus, you pointed John's vision beyond his current situation to the eternal glory he will share when God remakes our world. Give me patience and faith when you don't seem to be fixing things all at once. Amen.

**Saturday, July 26**

**Scripture: Luke 17:11-19**

On the way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. As he entered a village, ten men with skin diseases approached him. Keeping their distance from him, they raised their voices and said, “Jesus, Master, show us mercy!” When Jesus saw them, he said, “Go, show yourselves to the priests.” As they left, they were cleansed. One of them, when he saw that he had been healed, returned and praised God with a loud voice. He fell on his face at Jesus’ feet and thanked him. He was a Samaritan. Jesus replied, “Weren’t ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? No one returned to praise God except this foreigner?” Then Jesus said to him, “Get up and go. Your faith has healed you.”

**Observation**

On his way to Jerusalem, Jesus met ten people with leprosy who lived on the border between Samaria and Galilee. “Are they Jews or Samaritans? Since people with skin diseases are excluded from normal society, their ethnicity doesn’t matter.” \* We know at least one, a Samaritan, faced double exclusion—he was both a “leper” and a Samaritan, an outcast for both health and ethnic reasons. Jesus healed all ten when they called out to him for mercy. Yet the reason we know one was a Samaritan was that he—a man most Jews would have considered spiritually “unclean”—was the only one who returned to thank Jesus. Jesus highlighted this man’s gratitude, asking about the other nine who didn’t return to give thanks. Once again Jesus’ healing love crossed all social and religious barriers. The one person society would have considered least worthy showed the most appropriate response to God’s grace.

**Application**

The nine who didn’t return to thank Jesus probably followed proper religious protocol—going straight to the priests as instructed. Perhaps, once they’d seen the priest (the priest who lived locally had the responsibility to declare when people were healed from such diseases), they were afraid to go back and identify themselves with Jesus, who by now was a marked man. Luke doesn’t say that they were any less cured, but he does imply that they were less grateful. The Samaritan chose gratitude over ritual, returning first to thank Jesus. His outsider status may have made him more aware of the gift he’d received. It is not only the nine ex-lepers who are shown up. It is all of us who fail to thank God ‘always and for everything’, as Paul puts it (Ephesians 5:20). How might your own struggles or difficulties make you more appreciative of God’s blessings? What blessings have you forgotten to thank God for?

**Prayer**

Lord Jesus, for continuing to love me despite all the “thank you’s” I’ve left unsaid, thank you. Nurture in me a heart that overflows with gratitude for all your faithful love. Amen.