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## Lent Day 31: The Leper

3-4 minutes

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### Mark 1:40-45 (ESV)

*And a leper came to him, imploring him, and kneeling said to him, "If you will, you can make me clean." Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand and touched him and said to him, "I will; be clean." And immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean. And Jesus sternly charged him and sent him away at once, and said to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, for a proof to them." But he went out and began to talk freely about it, and to spread the news, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter a town, but was out in desolate places, and people were coming to him from every quarter.*

Contracting leprosy was one of the most tragic things that could have happened to an individual in the ancient world. Whenever a leper was around other people, he was required to shout "unclean, unclean," so passersby would know to keep their distance. A leper was required to live "alone, outside the camp," so as to reduce the risk of transmitting his disease to others (Leviticus 13:45-46). To be a leper was to be isolated and humiliated perpetually.

And then Jesus came and changed everything. One of the great beauties of the Gospels is how frequently they record Jesus'

interactions with lepers. He approached them and was approached by them. He treated them with respect and kindness. He even did the unthinkable: he touched them, and his touch made them clean. Jesus healed the lepers.

Many biblical scholars have pointed out that there is an analogy between the physical condition of leprosy and the spiritual condition of sin. Sin in our hearts isolates us, both from God and from other people. Try as we might to hide it or remove it, the stain of sin remains present. Like Lady Macbeth, we try to wash away the stain of sin crying, “out damn’d spot,” all to no avail. We are unclean, and we know it.

The good news of the gospel is that Jesus Christ is the contagiously clean man. When he touched a leper, Jesus did not contract leprosy. Rather, the leper became clean. Those trying in vain to remove their sin must allow themselves to be touched by the contagiously clean man. And, like the leper in the story, may we who have experienced that touch possess an uncontainable gratitude, talking freely about our encounter with the contagiously clean man.

## **Prayer**

*Heavenly Father, we thank you for your Son who makes clean everything he touches. By his grace may our hearts and our actions be touched by him this day and everyday. In Christ's Name, Amen.*

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