

3/25/20 - Touch

When Jesus came down from the mountainside, large crowds followed him. A man with leprosy came and knelt before him and said, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean." Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" Immediately he was cleansed of his leprosy. - Matt. 8:1-3

I have had more than enough of neighbor conversations from 10 feet away. I'm not naturally a touchy guy, but I really miss good hugs from my friends at church. So I can only imagine how it must be for those without 5 other family members in the house to touch. When something is gone, we realize how much we miss it, and in a time of "social distancing", touch is something I miss a lot.

This was the order of the day for anyone cursed with leprosy. Leprosy was a nasty disease. It's a nerve problem, so lepers lose all sense of touch in their skin. While this seems a blessing - no more pain when you hurt yourself! - the curse is that you don't even KNOW you've hurt yourself. So cuts go untended, burns ignored, even broken limbs may not be noticed until they give out. Infection runs rampant, and so lepers often lose body parts. Their skin becomes diseased and even deformed.

But the worst part was that leprosy was considered contagious. So, when someone contracted it...no 14 day self-quarantine here - lepers were banished for life. Cast out of the safety and community of the city, they were forced to live in the wilderness, with only other lepers for company. And it got even worse.

When it came to leprosy, everyone took "social distancing" to a new level. Lepers were forced by law to maintain an enormous distance from any other living (non-leprous) soul, so that even their shadow might not fall on someone and befoul them. As a person approached, the leper would call out, "UNCLEAN!!" so the person knew to avoid them, forcing them to be complicit in their own ostracism.

Imagine the loneliness, the fear, the desperation for any kind of touch at all. And then along came Jesus. Jesus didn't distance Himself as He should. He didn't run away as others did. He didn't ignore, blame, or condemn them like the rest of society. No, Jesus saw this leper, and Jesus touched him. Perhaps the first touch this man had experienced in years. And this man learned what we can only read about: God is more contagious than leprosy, bringing cleanness to even the most diseased people.

Has God touched you? Have you experienced the end to loneliness or disease, to deformation or exile? Has God brought healing and redemption and restoration to your life? If so, like another story (Luke 17), this time of 10 lepers, learn from a leper and come back and thank Him today. Thank Him for healing, for restoring, for touching You with His almighty hand of grace.