

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

EXPOSITORY SERMON CHAPTER EIGHT:
"THE TOUCH THAT CLEANSSES"

(8:2-4)

Introduction: When Matthew wanted to show God's power at work in Jesus of Nazareth, he picked the most loathsome disease he could conceive.

I. THE LEPER'S INSISTENT REQUEST: It was:

- A. Original: there were no previous recorded instances of such a cure amid all the Judean and Galilean cures. Perhaps he reasoned: "It is no secret what God can do; what He's done for others He can do for me too!"
- B. Courageous: "full of leprosy" "in a city" directly to Jesus he came with a courage born of desperate hope.
- C. Pitiful: "Lord, if you will . . ." Is he not sure of Jesus' willingness?
 - 1. He had a repulsive disease from which people recoiled in disgust; it was a horrible, living death.
 - 2. His was a contaminating disease; rabbis wanted nothing to do with him or his kind; they even delighted in throwing stones to keep him at a distance so as to insure their ceremonial purity.
 - 3. He had an isolating or separating disease which barred him from human society.
- D. Believing: he had a perfect confidence in Jesus' power and even in Jesus' willingness to welcome the man whom everyone else would have driven away.
- E. Humble: There is no demand here, no thoughtless claim upon His time, or energies. His unspoken plea: "I cast myself upon your heart."

II. THE LORD'S IMMEDIATE RESPONSE: To a Jew trained in the strict observance of the Levitical mentality of ceremonial pollution and cleanness, there could be no more amazing sentence in the New Testament than the simple declaration: "Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand and touched the leper."

- A. From a human standpoint Jesus ran the risk:
 - 1. of ghastly infection: "What if Jesus became a leper too?"
 - 2. of moral contamination: "Should anyone, including Jesus, deliberately sully His life with such outcasts as lepers? Would not God also reject Him?"

SERMON ON CHAPTER EIGHT

3. of social rejection: "What if the crowds rejected an unclean Christ?"

B. Jesus got involved and touched this leper. It was just like Jesus to do it! But when Jesus became man He had already gotten involved with our filthy, corrupting morals and our insoluble problems.

C. Jesus not only spoke cleansing but willed it! (Greek: *thélō*) "I will it—I want to cleanse you!" Jesus' answer was no naked word of power spoken at an uncommitted distance. Jesus loved him and desired to help him. Here we see a man who had been kept at arms' length by all men, now wrapped around with the compassionate love of God.

III. THE FIRST COMMAND OF JESUS TO HIS DISCIPLE: "Obey God's revelation for those in your situation!"

A. To the cleansed leper it was:

1. "Go show yourself to the priests for a testimony to them!" They too must hear of my power first."
2. "Offer the sacrifices Moses commanded for your cleansing! Not even so marvellous a cleansing as that from living death can excuse you from your normal duties to God."
3. "Keep still: revolutions are afoot; the success of my ministry cannot stand such display of ignorant popularity encouraged in unthinking crowds. Besides, your pride cannot stand display either. Tell it to no man!"

B. To us and our age, Jesus charges us who claim to be His followers:

1. Faith, repentance, baptism (Mt. 10:32; Lk. 13:3; Mt. 28:18-20).
2. Growth in discipleship (Mt. 11:28-30) and all that it involves.
3. Sharing His message and His life with our associates.
4. Getting involved in His work.

CONCLUSION. Jesus touched the untouchable, crossed the chasm and got involved in our suffering, our sorrows. Who can refuse such a Lover as He? No man can ever feel himself incurable in body or unforgiveable in soul while Jesus Christ lives! Do you fear the exposure of some hideous sin in your life? Are you deliberately separating yourself from human companionship because of some heartbreaking experience in your home and family? Do you wonder if anyone really loves you and cares what happens to you? Do you long above all else to turn to a useful, happy life of service, gratefully rendered to Jesus? Jesus calls you to His side. Will you come? Will you say, "Jesus, if you

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

want to, you can cleanse me, restore me, heal me, fill me!" He lays His reassuring hands upon you, saying, "I want to, come to me. I will give you rest and cleansing."

"THE MASTER MARVELLED"

(8:5-13)

What can excite the wonder and admiration of Jesus of Nazareth? The times of Jesus' earthly ministry were days loaded with excitement, but they must not dim our sight of the Lord Himself. If we desire to delight this Master, let us pay attention to what brings Him highest joy. There are some genuinely impressive facts in this text: what one fact drew Jesus' attention leaving Him overjoyed and amazed? Matthew tells us of . . .

I. AN UNEXPECTED COMPASSION. Ours is a cruel, hard-nosed, "business is business" world, where men climb the heights to a success over the bent backs of their inferiors, the less fortunate.

A. An unlikely object of compassion was the centurion's slave.

1. Slaves in the Roman empire were no better than a living tool, differing from other things possessed by owner in the sense that the slave could talk. Slaves too sick, too old or too unable or unwilling to work could be disposed of in any manner the master chose.

2. But here in this household the anguished cry from a paralyzed human being, though a slave, was heard!

B. An unlikely person for expressing such compassion was the centurion.

1. His military career had not been able to extinguish his human concern for another human being.

H. P. Hughes commented: "I know nothing more noble, more indicative of the godlike man, than a proper courtesy and thoughtfulness and a disinterested and unselfish care for those who are our social inferiors."

2. The centurion was not Jewish, therefore, technically a pagan. What opportunities had he had for knowing God's revelation? What circumstances had God combined to bring him to his love for the subject people over which his own government had posted him to keep law and order?

C. No, while this compassion and unexpected generosity certainly surprises us, this is not yet what caused the Master to marvel.