



Theme: Jesus, Kindness, and the Kingdom of God ***“Healing for the Unwanted and Unloved”***

Weekly Memory Verse:

¹⁶ But Jesus often withdrew to the wilderness for prayer. – Luke 5:16

Monday, May 23 – Read Luke 5:12-26. Luke named many different ills Jesus healed. No wonder people were “filled with awe,” as we read in verse 26. Awe-inspiring spiritual power was clearly at work in Jesus. And we know that in Jesus’ day, illness was not just physical. Many people saw it as a sign of God’s curse. Jesus’ healing acts bore powerful witness to God’s love and forgiveness, as well as God’s power.



As we think about spiritual gifts given to us by the Holy Spirit, the gift of healing is about the divine ability to bring wholeness that is physical, emotional, or spiritual to others. What signs can you find in these stories that Jesus healed in all these ways? In which of these ways do you most need healing right now? How can you more fully open your life to Jesus’ healing power?





Many religious leaders watched Jesus with a critical spirit, as we read about in verses 17-21. It is possible they were upset because they did not pay attention to their inner life and were simply reacting out of their human need to be right or be in charge? Jesus seems to point to this in Matthew 23:27-28 when he says the religious leaders are like “white-washed tombs,” beautiful on the outside and full of decay on the inside. Jesus told the upset Pharisees, “I didn’t come to call righteous people, but sinners.” That meant all of us, as Paul writes in Romans 3:23. Scholar Hans Küng wrote, “A Church that will not accept the fact that it consists of sinful men and exists for sinful men becomes hard-hearted, self-righteous, inhuman...the Church must always dissociate itself from sin, but it can never have any excuse for keeping any sinner at a distance.” How open are you to the fact that to include you, Jesus’ church must accept and minister to a sinner?

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, thank you for offering me your healing, restorative power. Guard my heart against ever thinking I am “too good” to associate with any of your beloved children. Amen.*

Tuesday, May 24 – Read Matthew 8:1-4 and Luke 17:11-19. In Jesus’ day, people called any visible skin disease “leprosy.” [Leviticus 13-14](#) gave detailed rules and called for isolating anyone with a skin disease to keep it from spreading. Most people feared these sufferers and avoided all


contact. It was stunning, even forbidden, when “Jesus reached out his hand, and touched” the man in Matthew 8 and said, “Become clean.” Jesus also healed ten “lepers.” Some were Israelite, at least one a despised Samaritan, bonded by their shunned and outcast status.


 The desperate isolation lepers faced seemed to have created an atypical group: Jewish lepers mixed with at least one Samaritan. The gospels say Jesus, unlike most Israelites, shunned neither lepers nor Samaritans. How good are you at seeing beyond surface differences? When has someone looked beyond your surface limitations and accepted you anyway?

 Today we know more about leprosy and other skin diseases, so we don’t see people literally wearing signs that say “unclean.” But social shunning still goes on in 2022, based on race, age, gender, socio-economic or educational level, religion, sexuality, disability, and even personal quirks, political beliefs, or looks. Have others ever shunned you? Have you ever shunned someone else? How is God calling you to live up to Jesus' example in touching the leper today?

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, I might never favor a law or rule that shut a whole class of people out from services. Help me also to avoid the informal injustice of any kind of social shunning. Amen.*


Wednesday, May 25 – Read Luke 17:11-19 again. These sufferers were desperately isolated. “Keeping their distance,” they raised their voices and called to Jesus. Their isolation may have broken down ethnic barriers—at least one was a Samaritan, but the story’s setting (verse 11) hints that some of the lepers were Jewish. Jesus certainly broke down those barriers—he healed them all. Yet, sadly, only one—the Samaritan—came back to express gratitude, and Jesus gladly accepted his thanks.

 All ten were “cleansed.” But when the Samaritan came back to say, “thank you,” Jesus used a stronger word that can even mean “saved,” saying, “Your faith has healed you” (verse 19). Pastor Bruce Larsen wrote, “The other nine were merely cleansed. If ingratitude is more deadly than leprosy, they were in worse shape than before. Only one came back and was made whole.” What blocks gratitude in your life? What helps you remember to thank God every day?


 Jesus' command to, “Go, show yourself to the priests,” in verse 14 as the way to verify people’s healing. But his command *preceded* the actual cleansing. It seems that when they acted on Jesus' word, they opened the way for his power to flow. In what ways does this speak to you? In what part of life might you need to act on God’s wishes, rather than waiting for him to make everything right before you act?

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, you so often do good things in my life; I so often take them for granted. Make my heart whole, so that I can live a life of wonder, gratitude, and praise. Amen.*

Thursday, May 26 – Read Isaiah 56:7-8. Astronauts see our planet perhaps more the way God does. They share that with us through remarkable photographs. Several of them have noted that as they view Earth from space, there are no visible border lines dividing one country or people group from another. Isaiah sensed that perspective long before space travel, or even Galileo. God’s house was “a house of prayer for *all peoples*.” God, he said, gathered Israel’s “outcasts,” foreshadowing Jesus' love for and welcome of all sinners, tax collectors, Samaritans and “lepers.”


 Jesus appeared to love Isaiah 56:7. Matthew 21:13, Mark 11:17 and Luke 19:46 all reported that he quoted the text as he challenged the exploitive dealings that went on in the Temple courts at Passover time. In what ways could those dealings have been an


obstacle that kept the Temple from being a house of prayer for all peoples? Are there ways, intentional or inadvertent, that we may make our “temples” unfriendly to some people God wishes to welcome?

 Many mainline scholars believe Isaiah 56 spoke to Israel after their return from exile in Babylon. It said God did not consider the work of gathering outcasts finished: “I will gather still others to those I have already gathered.” Jesus certainly took that attitude when you read his words in [John 4:35 and Matthew 22:8-10](#). Summit Church has been serving the Durango community for over 140 years. Do you believe that means we’ve nearly finished our work of gathering outcasts, or that we’re just starting?

Prayer: *Dear God, your epic story in the Bible shows you again and again reaching into forgotten corners of the human family, gathering outcasts into the circle of your love. Thank you for including me. Help me welcome outcasts, as you do. Amen.*


Friday, May 27 – Read Mark 1:40 to 2:12. In Jesus' day, a “leper” had one of a variety of visible skin diseases. People thought such people were highly contagious, so they feared and shunned them, but Jesus didn't. Homes excavated in Capernaum show room for maybe 50 people in the “living room.” Four men tried to bring their sick friend to Jesus on a stretcher, but the room was full. They got creative! Most houses then had an outer staircase to a roof made of branches and rushes laid over beams and covered with dried mud. They climbed up, dug through, and lowered their friend to Jesus.


 Jesus' healing power was most visible when crippled people got up and walked. But Jesus, knowing physical healing wouldn't last forever, linked it to eternal issues. Would it have surprised you to hear Jesus say to the crippled man lowered through the roof, “Your sins are forgiven”? What does Jesus' choice of remedy suggest to you about his “diagnosis”? What connection(s) might exist between forgiving sins and physical healing?

 The man would have stayed paralyzed without his four friends' energetic, creative caring. When was the last time you were able to be a “stretcher bearer” for someone else? Who has been a “stretcher bearer” for you? How determined and creative are you willing to be to bring Christ's help to someone you know who needs it?

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, thank you for caring about the well-being of my body and my inner self. Help me to live each day in the beautiful reality of your forgiving, restoring grace. Amen.*

Saturday, May 28 – Read Galatians 3:26-28 and 1 John 4:18-21. At the foundation of all Christian faith is the trust that God loves us, that God created human beings out of love and for love. This was (and is) quite extraordinary. Egyptians, Canaanites, Greeks, or Romans—none of them believed their gods loved them. But Christians believe Jesus embodied that belief and showed us how it shapes life for the better. And that belief makes a real difference in how we relate to all other people, those who are close to us and those who are “other.” Paul told the Galatians that in Jesus' ethnic, economic/social and gender distinctions all lost their power to divide us and cause fear and separation.

 Why would perfect love drive out fear? Have you ever experienced a situation in which as love developed for another person, fear of that person decreased and disappeared?

 1 John 4:20 is blunt and may make us uncomfortable: “If anyone says, I love God, and hates a brother or sister, he is a liar.” To what extent do you agree that hate for human beings rules out genuine love for God? Why would that be the case? Can you think of practical steps that move you in the direction of caring about “others,” about people that you may see as dangerous enemies, as deserving of fear and distrust rather than of love?

(Meditation Moments for May 21-22, 2022 – For more, go to www.summitdurango.org)

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, sometimes I find your ways appealing. Sometimes I find them hard. I need your grace to guide and energize me to more and more see everyone as a person you love, even the ones who frustrate or scare me. Amen.*