

THE LEPER CLEANSED.

Mark 1: 40-45

I'd say I had been good all my life.
Attended the synagogue as regularly as anyone,
Loved my neighbour,
Done more than my fair share of kindly deeds.
And been blessed with a happy marriage and sons.

My life all changed in a day.
One of those days you remember everything distinctly, as it happened, to the second.

I'd just finished washing, was drying myself off, when I noticed the signs.
The immediate reaction of disbelief, then mesmeric stare:
The creeping fear that began to overwhelm me even before acceptance rooted itself in my thought.
I had leprosy and there was no known cure.

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I'd been in our leper colony for nearly a year.
Allowed to venture out, but rarely wanted to.
There were others far worse off than me, some recently joined.
I felt for them. Nothing to look forward to but worsening health and, yes, an early grave. Yet, will even death be a release from the pain?

Why has God condemned me so?
What sin did I commit that I must now shout "Unclean"?
Each time I utter those words it's like a stake driven into my heart.
Each time I ring my wretched bell, it only serves to mock me more:
"This man is a leper, untouchable, stay away. He's no good. He has sinned.
Unclean....unclean..."
How does one live if all hope has gone?

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We hear the rumours about a prophet with us now who has been healing people of all kinds of diseases.
Jesus of Nazareth.
It seems he is being called the Messiah that was promised.
Someone has just arrived at the camp, saying he's passing by not a few miles away.
My heart leaps. I think of my wife, my sons, my lost life and suddenly a new life that might just be.
I clutch my bell, wrap round my wounds, and ask where he was seen. His answer is vague.

Amazingly, I seem to be the only one that asks. I can get no one else to come with me, the others all resigned to their self-pitying fate. With sudden hope I drop to my knees and humbly and deeply pray to God to guide me. For the first time for a long time, I feel as though He is holding my hand, and yet with the other I will be ringing my bell. My hope is greater than my fear, yet I'm still holding on to my past. I leave, and with each step taken to find this Jesus, the leper village recedes from my thought.

An hour later, hot and uncomfortable, I see a gathering of people coming towards me. The habit of the last year kicks in:
"Unclean... Unclean..."
My bell rings out and seems to cut through the noise of the day.
The crowd in front of me holds back.
I am offending custom by continuing to draw near to them.
One man keeps walking towards me.
I break the laws of leprosy as I keep heading towards him, my words a plea for healing.

“Unclean”....“Unclean”....

Dear God, he is still walking towards me, leaving the crowd behind, ever closer, my hope leaps as he comes up close, to stand in front of my now kneeling frame.

There is such love in his eyes, no fear, no alarm, just quietness and assurance that confirms the hope I thought I'd never have again.

“Jesus, Jesus,” (for it can only be him!) **“I beg you, have mercy!”**

My diseased face looks up at him, imploring, knowing and realising:

“If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.”

He reaches out with his hand and I feel his gentle touch on my face! No one had dared touch me for more months than I could remember. But what touches me more is the compassion that flows out from his very being: like a stream of living water, unstoppable, bathing me in purity and love. It is as though time has stopped still as the recognition of the Christ power now present eradicates all that was past and forms me anew. I suddenly see that he has no fear because there is nothing in his experience to cause fear. He is at one with his Father and his tender touch is an open invitation to share that sense of unity with him and with God. His God and my God! I too suddenly realise with awe and amazement there is nothing to fear. Everything to love.

His words mirror his actions and what I now feel.

“I will. Be thou clean.”

In that instant, the leprosy is no more! It has gone! I feel cleansed, washed through. My hands reach up and feel the full fair flesh where ugliness had been. Yet more important is my changed understanding.

Transformed in the moment of his tender touch, transformed indeed for me to touch with my deepest thoughts a life eternal, a life at one with God, at one with Spirit, in which evil and disease have no power, no existence. The stunning thought, - God really is my Father! Our Father! I had sought healing and have been given dominion. No longer full of fear, but full of Love. I stand upright, and we share, in that marvelous moment, the truth of our being, the pure joy of gratitude, yes, the understanding of one Family!

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I'd glimpsed, in that instant, the ever-presence of the Christ-consciousness of Jesus. My cleanliness absolute, all sensation and fear of materiality washed away with the purity and balm of the Christ-Spirit. A fundamental truth that God made me, and He is governing my all, governing my health and very being. I thank Jesus again and again. He tells me to tell no one, stay true to God, to go show myself to the priest and make due sacrifices as further proof as Moses commanded. But my heart is so full of joy I cannot help myself and go running in to the town with such joy, shouting out “I'm clean, I'm clean!” Oh, such a contrast to what I was shouting before! Now shouting and sharing that the kingdom of heaven is indeed at hand, just as this Jesus is preaching and proving! Just look at me!

My life all changed in a day.

One of those days you remember everything distinctly, as it happened, to the second. Immediately!

“I will. Be thou clean.”

Let this be your day! Your moment!

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?

Romans 8:35(to?)