

## **Rediscover Jesus (Luke 4-9)**

### **Part 5: “Jesus Cleanses” | Luke 5:12-16**

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[SERMON MANUSCRIPT]

### **Introduction**

We are in this sermon series called “Rediscover Jesus” (through Luke 4-9) so that we can get a fresh take- or for some of us, a first take- on who Jesus is, what he did and valued, and how he related with people. The Bible provides the metaphor that the church is like a human body with many, many parts functioning together as one body, and the head of that body is Jesus Christ. He is the one who is at the top, conveying information and controlling movement. So as we try to rediscover who we are as the church, we must learn about our head, Jesus Christ. Today, we are in Part 5: “Jesus Cleanses” from Luke 5:12-16. Please find this for yourselves in your Bibles at this time.

I just watched the Super Bowl this past week (by the way, the Super Bowl is the championship game for American football and is the biggest sporting in the U.S. by far). What has become just as much of an event as the Super Bowl are the commercials that are aired during the Super Bowl. In fact, I think my kids enjoy watching the commercials more than the actual football game!

Anyways, from the commercials I watched, I realized that there will always be a market for newer and better cleaning products. And this can be for any use: cleaning floors, carpets, furniture, windows; cleaning clothes, dishes, pots and pans; cleaning hands, hair, teeth, skin...I can go on and on. Especially with this pandemic, we are a lot more aware to clean whatever surfaces other people touch. You can admit it if you do what I do. Whenever I go somewhere in public, I spray it or wipe it: doorknobs, tables, money, bags, shopping carts...I can go on and on. Most of us now are very aware of the possibilities of catching something, so we are constantly thinking, “clean.”

In today's Scripture, we'll see how Jesus healed a man with leprosy- someone who was classified as “not clean” by society. Jesus did not distance himself or shunned and isolated in their society- he reached out and touched this man. Even greater, Jesus not only touches the unclean, he makes the unclean clean! We'll see how this restoring of this leprous man's physical health points to how Jesus restores our relationships with God and our relationships with other people.

### **Scripture Reading**

Before I read this Scripture, let me get you up to speed with what we've covered so far in the book of Luke. This was the early stages of his public ministry when he went around different cities and towns in the region of Galilee (in the northern part of Israel).

Earlier in chapter 4, Jesus taught in his hometown synagogue (a synagogue was a local Jewish place of worship) and declared that he was the King of God's kingdom that was promised in the Scriptures. He was kicked out of there, but he went to other places and exercised his authority by casting out demons and healing diseases from people. Then in chapter 5, Jesus called Simon Peter to be his disciple after they went fishing on the Sea of Galilee. Now we get to today's Scripture- this is God's Word.

#### **Luke 5:12-16 (ESV):**

*12 While he was in one of the cities, there came a man full of leprosy. And when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and begged him, “Lord, if you will, you can make me clean.”*

13 And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, "I will; be clean." And immediately the leprosy left him.

14 And he charged him to tell no one, but "go and show yourself to the priest, and make an offering for your cleansing, as Moses commanded, for a proof to them."

15 But now even more the report about him went abroad, and great crowds gathered to hear him and to be healed of their infirmities. 16 But he would withdraw to desolate places and pray.

Amen!

## **Proposition**

Here's the "one thing" that I want us to take away from this passage of Scripture that we just read:

### **Trust in Jesus, who is willing and able to cleanse our sins.**

Did you just hear what I said? This is amazing news! As I unpack this, I hope that we rediscover how amazing this is again! Let's not just gloss over this without grasping the magnitude of this "one thing."

## **Organizational Statement**

In this passage of Scripture, we see that Jesus did three things here. Jesus was first, willing and able to cleanse (in verses 12-13); second, fulfilling the Law (in verse 14); and third, connecting with the Father (in verses 15-16). These will be the three main parts of today's sermon.

**Transition:** Let's get started here. First, from verses 12-13, we'll see how Jesus was...

## **Sermon Outline**

### **I. Willing and Able to Cleanse (vv. 12-13)**

A. In this part, we see that Jesus was willing and able to cleanse this man suffering from leprosy.

1. [Here's the first truth about Jesus...] **Jesus is willing and able to make people clean (12-13).**

Luke 5:12-13 (ESV): *12 While he was in one of the cities, there came a man full of leprosy. And when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and begged him, "Lord, if you will, you can make me clean." 13 And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, "I will; be clean." And immediately the leprosy left him.*

- a) According to verse 12, Jesus was in another city in Galilee and he came across a man with leprosy. The disease known as "leprosy" today is medically called "Hansen's disease." It is a chronic, contagious disease that is caused by bacteria infection and produces skin lesions and nerve damage in people. In the first century, the disease known as "leprosy" included Hansen's disease and all kinds of other chronic, contagious skin diseases as well. It seems like this man in the narrative had a very severe case as he was described specifically as *full of leprosy*. When this man saw

Jesus, this is what happened: ...*he fell on his face and begged him, "Lord, if you will, you can make me clean."*

- b) In first-century Israel, leprosy was a severe physical ailment for sure. But there were also spiritual and social implications of having this disease. In the Law (which were the first five books in the Old Testament: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy), having any type of leprosy caused an individual to be ceremonially "unclean." To be unclean meant that they were not allowed to participate in the various corporate assemblies and observances of holy days. According to Leviticus 13:45-46, any person with leprosy had to wear torn clothes, leave his hair uncovered, and cover his mouth and beard. The unclean person would have to say something like, "I'm unclean! I'm unclean!" to prevent others from being in contact and making them unclean too. That sounds bad, but I think worst of all, any person with leprosy was to live alone outside of the community until the leprosy was gone. This sounds so sad, doesn't?
- c) Some might think, "This guy was so lucky that he happened to be in the same place as Jesus and that he ran into him." But with God there are no coincidences- this was his sovereign will for this leprous man to meet Jesus at this exact moment. In God's grace, Jesus came in human flesh into this world and made it possible for people like this man to encounter him. And notice what this man did and said at this moment. He fell on his face (like Simon Peter on the boat), but he did not dare to touch Jesus (or anyone probably). And then he begged Jesus, "*if you will, you can make me clean.*" Notice that he assumed Jesus' authority- that he was able heal his leprosy- probably because he had heard about or even seen Jesus do all kinds of healings already. But he did wonder whether or not Jesus was *willing* to do it. He was probably thinking, "Why would Jesus- this great man- care about me?" "I don't think so, but at this point, I am so desperate, what do I have to lose?"
- d) But Jesus *did* care about this man. This is how verse 13 reports what Jesus did: *And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, "I will; be clean." And immediately the leprosy left him.* I want to note that by touching this leprous man, Jesus ran the risk of catching whatever form of leprosy he had and also he would've made himself ceremonially unclean as well. He certainly could've just declared him clean with his words (which he also did)- so this action is clearly significant: Jesus still reached his hand out towards this man- who stayed an arm's length away- and touched him. Then he reassured the man that he indeed was willing to heal him and make him clean. Also note that Jesus merely spoke and at his very words, the leprosy left this man and he was no longer unclean!
- e) Context: [Here's the first truth about Jesus again...] **Jesus is willing and able to make people clean!** Let's pause here so that I can ask you two important questions. First, do you understand your hopeless spiritual condition enough that you come to Jesus with this kind of desperation? Being desperate is generally looked down upon, but in dealing with sin and our sinful condition, this kind of understanding that we're stuck doing what we hate doing (in our sin) and that we cannot save ourselves is totally necessary. For example, I hate that I have this competitiveness that makes me often compare myself to others and either feel like I have to "win" against them or like I need to impress them somehow. And I hate it worse that causes me to be insecure around them or it causes me to undermine them instead of desiring to build them up and rejoice in how they can

serve the Lord's cause. And I can't even help myself in doing this! Perhaps you have felt this same way, as Paul wrote in Romans 7:18-19.

- o Romans 7:18-19 (CEV): *18 I know that my selfish desires won't let me do anything that is good. Even when I want to do right, I cannot. 19 Instead of doing what I know is right, I do wrong.*

What I will say is that this kind of desperation before the Lord puts us in the perfect place to receive the gospel!

- f) Context: Second, do you realize the infinitely wonderful truth that Jesus cares for you? We may wonder, "Why would Jesus care about me?" Jesus Christ, the Creator and Sustainer of the universe, knows exactly what's going on in your life right now and cares for you in it! Just as he met that specific leper (out of the many in Israel) and came near to him and touched him, Jesus meets you specifically and comes near to you and touches our unclean souls. This is what is so important about seeing Jesus with fresh eyes in this sermon series- we need to realize how wonderful, amazing, and mind-blowing it is that God would become flesh and dwell among us- so that we can also encounter him personally like this. Jesus cares about *all of you*- he cares about your physical health, your mental health, your relationships, your work, your family, and your spiritual condition. This encounter has another, deeper layer to how Jesus cares for us that we'll talk about in our next part.
2. [Let's pause here before we move on so I can share...] **Life Application #1:** Ponder your desperation for Jesus and Jesus' care for you in your present situations.
- a) I want us to just do some self-reflection about your desperation for Christ. Do you understand your desperate condition apart from Jesus? What makes you resistant or uncomfortable to be desperate like this? Do you know that when you feel this desperation, it puts us in the right place to receive from Jesus? Also, if you wonder, "Why would Jesus care about me?" this passage paints a picture of Jesus as the one who makes himself accessible to you, reaches out and connects with you at all levels, and is willing and able to deal with whatever you're going through right now.

**Transition:** First we saw that Jesus was willing and able to cleanse. Now second, from verse 14, we'll see how Jesus was...

## **Sermon Outline (continued)**

### **II. Fulfilling the Law (v. 14)**

- A. In this part, we see that Jesus told the man to present himself at the temple in accordance with the Law.
  - 1. [Here's the second truth about Jesus...] **Jesus fulfills the cleansing rituals of the Law in the cross (14).**

Luke 5:14 (ESV): *14 And he charged him to tell no one, but "go and show yourself to the priest, and make an offering for your cleansing, as Moses commanded, for a proof to them."*

- a) Jesus' healing of this man with leprosy was not the end of the story- it's important to see that there's more to this story. After Jesus healed this man, verse 14 says: *And he charged him to tell no one, but "go and show*

*yourself to the priest, and make an offering for your cleansing, as Moses commanded, for a proof to them.*" Why did Jesus tell this man to not tell anyone? Like in previous situations, Jesus wanted to limit his fame at this point. Although it was inevitable with what was happening, Jesus did not ever take advantage of riding this surging wave of popularity. Instead, I think this highlights the exact opposite: Jesus did what he did *for this man personally* who was suffering so greatly from this disease. Jesus didn't do it to get more publicity or fame- he did it for this desperate man.

- b) But Jesus did give this man some instructions to do next. He told him to go to the priest and get verified as now ceremonially clean and then to make the required offerings as someone who was now clean from his leprosy. What Jesus was telling him to do was to obey the Law from Leviticus 14. Remember that Leviticus 13 explained what to do if a person had leprosy; Leviticus 14 explained what to do when that person was over leprosy. So according to the Law, the priest at the temple had to inspect his skin and verify if the leprosy was still present or healed completely. Then the priest would perform an interesting ritual. He would take two ceremonially clean birds: one he would kill and sprinkle its blood on the person being cleansed; the second he would let live and release. The first bird (sacrificed) symbolized the cleansing of the healed person; the second bird (released) symbolized the disease being taken out of the community of Israel.
- c) Then the person could rejoin the community again but had to live outside of his house for a week. After a week, the person was supposed to go back to the priest at the temple and bring three unblemished lambs: the first lamb would be sacrificed as a guilt offering, the second as a sin offering, and the third as a burnt offering. Each of these offerings had different purposes. *Show table-of-offerings.jpg*. The sin offering was a sacrifice that wiped out a person's sins against God (the theological word is "expiation"). The guilt offering was a sacrifice that wiped out of a person's sins against God *and* other people, focusing on reconciliation and restitution (paying back for wrongs done). The burnt offering was a sacrifice of receiving God's forgiveness and mercy and devoting themselves to the Lord. After giving these three offerings, this man could reenter his home without fear of ceremonially defiling his house and family.
- d) I want to read what Nancy Guthrie wrote that brings to life these sacrifices a bit more vividly and personally:
  - o "Sacrifice in the Bible, however, is the bloody reality of a bellowing animal being butchered on an altar. Imagine the sensory overload of this experience—the violent resistance of the animal, the spurting of blood, the feel of pulling the animal apart, the smell of its burning flesh and bones. Imagine the emotional and spiritual impact of offering this sacrifice, knowing that it was your sin that made this death necessary. And imagine the frustration in knowing that you'll be back tomorrow or next week because you will sin again." [Nancy Guthrie]

There are two important implications here for this man. First, for this man just healed of leprosy by Jesus, these sacrifices that he would fulfill pointed him to the reality that more than just healing him physically of this uncleanness of his body, he needed the uncleanness of his soul taken care of! Second, this was the proper procedure for being readmitted into the covenant community of God- what literally kept the people of God together was the sacrificial system that made them ceremonially clean

- e) Context: [Here's the second truth about Jesus again...] **Jesus is the fulfillment of the cleansing rituals of the Law!** To expand on this, let me point us to Hebrews 9:13-14.
- o Hebrews 5:13-14 (CEV): *13 According to the Law of Moses, those people who become unclean are not fit to worship God. Yet they will be considered clean, if they are sprinkled with the blood of goats and bulls and with the ashes of a sacrificed calf. 14 But Christ was sinless, and he offered himself as an eternal and spiritual sacrifice to God. That's why his blood is much more powerful and makes our consciences clear. Now we can serve the living God and no longer do things that lead to death.*

Just like this leprous man and anyone who experienced ceremonial uncleanness, we are unfit to worship God until we considered clean by the blood of the offerings sacrificed. Jesus Christ was the unblemished, eternal, spiritual sacrifice on our behalf. He was the sin offering that wipes out our sins against God; he was the guilt offering that wipes out our sins against God *and* other people, reconciling those relationships and paying back for wrongs done; he was the burnt offering, devoting himself completely to God and thus to us all the way to the cross. This was what Jesus did when he died on the cross for us. In sum, he was the substitute sacrifice that makes us clean before God and allows us to now serve God instead of our sinful desires. I always want to give the invitation for people to trust in Jesus and follow him, so friends, is there anyone who wants to take that first step and become a disciple of Jesus? How you do this is by trusting in Jesus as the one who has cleansed your sins by sacrificing himself on the cross.

- f) Context: Another thing I want us to think about is how the truth that Jesus is fulfillment of the cleansing rituals of the Law also *reconnects us with the covenant community of the church*. Just like this once leprous man was declared clean and could rejoin his family, friends, and neighbors in Galilee, so we are reconnected back to each other in the church. I think this is especially important in light of the COVID19 pandemic that we have endured for so long. Simple physical contact with others will not be the same again. I notice this in myself when I watch TV shows or movies and cringe because I think to myself, "Oooh...they are not socially distancing themselves," or "Oooh...they are way too close to each other- this would not be acceptable today." But human beings are innately social creatures that need meaningful touch points with others: belonging, interacting, and being known and knowing others. This is regardless of whether you are an extrovert or introvert! I've been blessed by brothers and sisters in Christ who send food, drop by to lend a hand, write a note or give a gift, send a message, or ask for prayer requests.
2. [Let's pause here before we move on so I can share...] **Life Application #2:** Meditate on the effects of the sacrifice of Jesus on our relationship with God and others.
- a) The greatest need we have is to deal with our sins and the wrath of God that we deserve. And God has provided his Son, Jesus Christ, as the one who cleanses us from our sins completely and makes us righteous and holy before God. His grace is free to us but was incredibly costly for him! All we can do is thankfully receive from God. And thus may the spilled blood of Jesus compel us to reach out and connect with others in the covenant community, especially as we "gather together as a spiritual family" in this

season! What are the ways- tangible, physical, real ways- that we can show people that Jesus cares for them?

**Transition:** We saw that Jesus was willing and able to cleanse as well as fulfilling the Law. Now third, from verses 15-16, we'll see how Jesus was...

## **Sermon Outline (continued)**

### **III. Connecting with the Father (vv. 15-16)**

A. In this part, we see that Jesus often went to desolate places to pray in order to connect with the Father.

1. [Here's the third truth about Jesus...] **Jesus is our model for connecting with the Father (15-16).**

Luke 5:15-16 (ESV): *15 But now even more the report about him went abroad, and great crowds gathered to hear him and to be healed of their infirmities. 16 But he would withdraw to desolate places and pray.*

- a) Luke didn't end the story at Jesus' healing of this man and his command to go and present himself at the temple. He added verses 15-16. He wrote, *But now even more the report about him went abroad, and great crowds gathered to hear him and to be healed of their infirmities.* Even though Jesus told this man to not tell anyone what happened, there were undoubtedly other people around who witnessed what happened and spread the word. Despite the absence of Twitter or Instagram, reports about Jesus still spread like wildfire and crowds of people found out where he was and gathered around him. In a parallel account of this narrative from Mark 1:40-45, it gives some additional, helpful information. It says that the leprous man didn't listen to Jesus and actually went out and talked all about what had happened to him. As a result, Jesus couldn't openly travel in and out of places in Galilee anymore.
- b) What I want to reiterate here is that Jesus didn't come to earth to get famous, gain a big following, overthrow the Romans, and then start his own kingdom on earth. I've never been a celebrity or anything, but from what I've read, it's actually not all that it's cracked up to be. For example, remember that band One Direction? They came and went so quickly! I read up a little about why they broke up and basically it was because being so famous became toxic and they couldn't really enjoy what they loved doing, which was singing. The masses actually dictated what they could and couldn't do. So for Jesus, would he stay on track regarding why God had sent him to earth? Would the masses dictate what he did or didn't do?
- c) And the answer is no! According to the rest of verse 15, Jesus continually did his preaching and teaching about the Kingdom of God; and Jesus continually healed people who were sick. He cared for people who were in need; he cared *personally* for people in the midst of his public ministry. And verse 16 offers some critical information about how Jesus kept focused. It says, *But he would withdraw to desolate places and pray.* Remember when Jesus healed Simon Peter's mother-in-law at his house? And then he spent that whole evening (probably until late at night) healing people who were sick and casting demons out of people. After that evening, he left early in the morning to a desolate place. In contrast to the circus that was growing around him, the common practice of Jesus was to withdraw from

these crowds and go off to be alone in solitude to pray to his Father in heaven.

- d) This text doesn't mention specifically what Jesus said when he prayed, but we can make an educated guess of the sorts of things he prayed by what he taught about prayer. Later on in Luke 11, Jesus was praying (again) and his disciples asked him to teach *them* how to pray. So he said this:

- o Luke 11:2 (CEV): 2 "Pray in this way: 'Father, help us to honor your name. Come and set up your kingdom.'"

Jesus probably prayed something similar. His desire, as God the Son, was to personally and intimately connect with God the Father. His desire was to honor his holy name. His desire was to establish his Kingdom. This is what kept him personally ministering to people. This is what kept him resisting the lure of fame and popularity that was growing so rapidly. This is what kept him focused on his endgame here, which was to go to the cross and save a people for his name's sake!

- e) Context: [Here's the third truth about Jesus again...] **Jesus is our model for connecting with the Father!** I want to make clear that Jesus is not only our model for connecting with the Father, but he is the *means* of connecting with the Father. Remember this! But he also is the model for it. And I'd like to talk about two types of people. The first group of people are those whose heart cry is "I want to get away from sin" and yet keep falling into sin. By the way, this is all of us, but you might be particularly discouraged and frustrated- maybe even in despair- because you feel like you're always failing. You might be wondering whether or not God will keep accepting you after ten times or one hundred times. You might just be tired of feeling guilty after falling into sin so often. I'm going to tell you this today- in light of this talk that Jesus is the sacrifice that cleanses us from our sins: according to Hebrews 10:10, his sacrifice was "once for all"! It never runs out! So we can trust this and we can treasure this! And then with this access to God through the blood of Jesus, we can repent! We reconnect with the Father by faith and repentance doesn't make us feel guilty, but it makes us rejoice and appreciate Christ all the more. Repentance is a very *tangible* and *practical* way that we experience the touch of Jesus: he doesn't shun us, he reaches out and embraces us eternally, we have access to our Father in Christ *despite* our sins- now and always!
- f) Context: The second group of people are those who feel ridiculously busy and struggle with making time to spend with God most days. Honestly, I definitely include myself when I say that our lives are *extremely* full of noise, meetings, plans, and chaos (that usually ruin those plans). If you're like me, you feel guilty enough and it doesn't help to just say, "Well, if Jesus could make time in his busy schedule to be alone and pray, then we should too." I get that. I've gone down that path. But I want to invite us to try a different path, which is to make it a lifelong personal prayer request to more fully grasp and treasure the access that we have with God our Father. In whatever ways we fall short, just refer to what I just said about repentance: a very tangible and practical way to experience the touch of Jesus. And in light of the bloody sacrifice of Jesus' blood that never runs out, we can keep wrestling with our schedules to prioritize time with the Father more and more. If the effectiveness of Jesus' blood never runs out, then neither will my attempts at trying to get closer and more intimate with God! And it will happen as we stick with it!



2. [Let's pause here before we move on so I can share...] **Life Application #3:**  
Treasure the access we have with God our Father to repent and pray.
  - a) My wording here is 100% intentional, so look at it carefully. We have access to God the Father through the blood of Jesus that cleanses our consciences and makes the way for us to be right with God. In light of that sacrifice that takes care of all of our sins- past, present, and future- forever, may we *love* the practice of repenting because it's how we experience the touch of Jesus! And may we *love* to spend time with God our Father in prayer- at least *grow in our love for this*. This means to prioritize prayer, be proactive to schedule, and to remain persistent in trying over and over again to make it a part of your life.

**Transition:** We saw that Jesus was willing and able to cleanse, fulfilling the Law, and connecting with the Father. Now in conclusion, here's the "one thing" again:

## **Conclusion**

May we start or continue to **trust in Jesus, who is willing and able to cleanse our sins.** Jesus is willing and able to make people clean. Jesus fulfills the cleansing rituals of the Law in the cross. And Jesus is the model for connecting with the Father.

**Transition:** Let's pray at this time.

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