



“Cleansed”  
Luke 5:12-16

**Idea:** The unclean is made clean by Jesus.

**Intro:** Have you ever wondered why bath time can be one of the most stressful and difficult things parents do on any given day? It is not that kids do not like the water. They will spend an hour playing in the tub. That bath water can be freezing cold, and it does not bother them at all. The moment, however, mom or dad steps in the room and says, “Let’s get washed,” the child acts like you are going to scrub her with a wire brush. What is it about washing that is so reprehensible? It makes perfect sense to me that if you are dirty and have not washed in more than a day, then you ought to bathe. This is not so with the typical child. A kid can spend all day playing outside, running around, digging in the dirt, and collecting bugs, but when mom suggests he needs to take a bath that evening, his response is, “I don’t need a bathe because I took one last night.” Thankfully, most adults grow out of that and look forward to a bath. They recognize the value and benefits of being clean. As a person grows older, he or she begins to understand that being clean protects from bacteria that thrives in trash, grime, and dirt.

The Bible places a large emphasis on cleanliness. God gave His people laws to protect them from dangers. A good portion of the laws He gave deal with what not to touch or eat and the way for a person to be cleansed after encountering something unclean. By following these laws, God’s people could and would be physically clean and healthy. The laws, however, were not given just for physical health. They speak to the deeper need for spiritual health and cleanliness. They represent the need to be clean before a holy God.

As we move on in our study of Luke’s Gospel, Jesus continues to heal people as He preaches in the towns. In one of those localities, He met a man who was “*full of leprosy.*” For many years, this man had suffered physically, emotionally, and relationally from this disease. Due to it, he had become an outcast in society. No one wanted or would have anything to do with him because of the disease. He was unclean. Jesus, however, not only healed the leprous man from the disease, He embraced him in the process. Jesus healed him physically, but more importantly, He healed him spiritually. In this passage we learn that the unclean is made clean by Jesus.

Read Luke 5:12-16.

**Inquiry:** “Leprosy,” as described in the Bible, classified several different skin diseases. One of those diseases includes our modern Hansen’s disease, which causes numbness to the body’s extremities, ears, eyes, and nose. In this case, the devastation that follows comes from incidents caused by the inability to feel pain. Infection quickly sets in the wounds, which leads to a deterioration of the tissues. The limb becomes deformed and

eventually falls off. Due to the seriousness of these kinds of diseases, the lepers were viewed as contagious and forced to live outside the camp and away from the public.

In biblical times the rare deliverances from leprosy were certified by an elaborate and uniquely joyful ceremony that extended over eight full days in fulfillment of the directives given in Leviticus 14. It began when a priest met the would-be celebrant outside the camp and verified that he or she actually was healed. Then, still outside the camp, two birds were presented along with some cedar wood, scarlet yarn, and hyssop. One of the birds was killed in a clay pot so that none of its blood was lost. This was done above fresh water, symbolic of cleansing. Next the live bird, along with the wood, yarn, and hyssop, was dipped in the blood, and the blood was sprinkled upon the leper seven times as he or she was pronounced “clean.” This initial ceremony concluded with the live bird being released in the open fields to wing its way to freedom (Lev 14:1-7). As a result, the blood-sprinkled person could once again join the community. This foreshadowed the effect of Christ’s blood, which reconciles man to God and makes it possible for the sinner to join the household of faith.

After the bird’s release the cleansed man or woman washed his or her clothing, shaved the hair from his or her body, bathed, and entered the camp, where the individual, his or her family, and friends rejoiced for seven days (Lev 14:8-9). On the seventh day the person’s head, eyebrows, and beard for a man were shaved, and the individual again bathed, so that, like a newborn, he or she was ready to enter a new phase of existence.

On the eighth day the former leper offered three unblemished lambs as a guilt offering, a sin offering, and a burnt offering. The guilt offering was not an atoning sacrifice but a restitution for the offerings and sacrifices missed while a leper. The restitution and fresh commitment were then dramatically emphasized when the priest took some of the blood and smeared it on the offerer’s right ear, thumb, and toe, then coated each smear with a second anointing of oil, thereby symbolizing that the individual would listen to God’s voice, use his or her hands for God’s glory, and walk in God’s ways. Fittingly the shaved head was then anointed with the remaining oil (Lev 14:12-18). Finally, having thus declared the leper to be in the Lord’s service, the priest made atonement with the sin, burnt, and cereal offerings, the last being a joyous expression of gratitude. Can you imagine the joyous celebration the healed person and his or her family enjoyed together? It was as if a resurrection had taken place. They would have feasted, sang, and danced long into the night.

In our passage, we find Jesus in a new city doing what He has been doing in every city. He is preaching the gospel and healing every disease. On this occasion, a man “*full of leprosy*” approached the Lord. Luke’s description indicates to us that he was desperately ill. Most likely he was covered from head to toe with the disease. He had lived with it for many years, and it was about to take his life. We know this because he was in the city around the people. Lepers were not permitted inside the city and around people. When they did encounter “clean” people, lepers were required to voice their uncleanness to those around them (Lev 13:45-46). This practice would have been humiliating to them.

This man set aside his humiliation to come to Jesus. He had heard of Jesus’ healings in other cities. He had heard about people being healed of pneumonia, dysentery, leprosy, and every other infirmity. He had even heard the stories of demons being casted out of people. Jesus was his last resort. He was his only hope for new life, so he came to Jesus.

Today, there may be some people here today who need the Lord’s healing and cleansing touch on their lives. This leper shows us some qualifications for being healed by the Lord.

- An acute awareness of one’s condition.  
The leprous man understood the desperate condition of his diseased body (vs. 12). He knew it was destroying his life, so he did not try to hide his condition from God or others.
- A humble realization that Jesus is one’s only hope.  
He fell on his face and begged Jesus to help (vs. 12). No one else could heal his body. He was powerless. Medicine was powerless. The only hope for his condition was Jesus.

- A genuine belief that Jesus can and will cleanse you.  
He expressed his belief in Jesus' ability and willingness to cleanse and heal (vs. 12).

Leprosy is presented in the Bible as a picture for sin (Is 1:4-6), and the detailed instructions for dealing with it (Lev 13-14) suggest that more was involved in the procedure than maintaining public health. Leprosy is a disease that is deeper than the skin; therefore, it cannot be healed with mere surface measures. In the same way, sin runs deep, spreads, and defiles. People with leprosy were regarded as the "dead" (Num 12:12), and clothing infected with it were fit only for the fire (Lev 13:52). The Apostle Paul instructed the Ephesian church that all people outside the redemption of Jesus Christ are dead in trespasses and sins (Eph 2:1). There was no cure for leprosy outside of the special healing touch of God (2 Kings 5:14). Likewise, there is no cure for the incessant disease of sin other than the substitutionary atonement of Jesus Christ.

As we study this passage, we discover that Jesus has the power to heal us physically. He can remove the cancer from your body and heal any disease. More importantly though, we discover that Jesus has the power to heal us spiritually. He alone through His shed blood forgives and cleanses us from all sin and its condemnation. As we think about being cleansed by the Lord, there are realities we need to reach out and grab.

### 1. Jesus is willing to cleanse your life.

The leprous man asked Jesus if He was willing to cleanse him, and the Lord's response was, "*I will*" (vs. 13). He was willing to cleanse the man of his disease, but his willingness was more than a shout from afar. Jesus "*moved with pity*" looked on this man like no one else had in years (Mark 1:41). Luke tells us that Jesus reached out His hand and touched the leper. The man had probably not felt the touch of another person in twenty or thirty years. He had longed for years to feel the embrace of his wife and children, but no one dared to touch his uncleanness. Since the day of his diagnosis, people had avoided him as a plague, but on this day, the Lord Jesus reached out and touched him.

Everyone who witnessed this event were surely shocked by it. Touching the unclean leper meant that Jesus was now ceremonially unclean, but the leper felt loved. Jesus wanted this man to feel his willingness and sympathy. Jesus wanted him to know that He would be with him, that He understood his pain, and that He loved him as he was.

There is a beautiful and powerful overshadowing theological component to this touch. When Jesus stretched out His pure hand and touched the rotting flesh on the leper's hand, it pictured the incarnation and the cross. Jesus took on human flesh, became sin for us, and gave us His purity.

*For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. – 2 Cor 5:21*

Jesus took hold of our flesh. He touched us and healed us. As we see Jesus bent over the prostrate leper, His holy hand resting on the decaying flesh of the foul-smelling man, we see what He willingly did for us. And, we see what Jesus willingly wants to do in our lives today.

### 2. Jesus is able to cleanse your life.

In addition to hoping that Jesus was willing to cleanse him, the leper believed Jesus was able to do so. "*You can make me clean.*" The Lord's response was, "Be clean." Καθαρίσθητι...one word in the Greek. Immediately the leprosy left him (vs. 13). It was a sudden and complete healing. In that moment, the man's feet that were nothing more than toeless, ulcerated stubs, were suddenly whole and too large for his downsized sandals. The knobs on his hands grew fingers before his very eyes. Back came his hair, eyebrows, and eyelashes. His skin was soft and smooth. Surely, everyone standing by was amazed at this miracle of God. The walking dead man had been resurrected to new life by Jesus.

This kind of healing was impossible. No medicine or doctor in that day could cure the disease of leprosy. If it did somehow go away, there was no procedure to restore the ravages upon the body. Fingers and toes did not grow back. Even today, there is no medicine or medical procedure to do such a thing. Only Jesus is able to cleanse and restore a diseased body.

*I am the resurrection and the life.* – John 11:25

He not only is able to do it physically, but more importantly, Jesus is able to cleanse us spiritually. He not only cleanses the outside of our lives but the inside too.

### 3. The cleansing Jesus makes in your life is verifiable.

The man was told to go and present himself to the priest (vs. 14). The Lord's command to the cleansed leper might sound troublesome. Why would He have had the man present himself to the priest for verification?

One reason for this was so the priestly establishment would recognize his healing before they heard that Jesus had done it. Verification of the healing restored him to society and worship.

Another reason might have been prophetic. By having the man present himself to the priest, this miracle was a great testimony to the leadership that the Messianic Age had come. The Jews expected the ravages of sin to be removed in the time of the Messiah. Jesus wanted His arrival to be known.

A final reason might have pointed to celebration for God's grace. The eight days of ritual verification and celebration that followed testified to the great grace of God. In the celebration of this event, the people came to know that Jesus heals leprosy, but even more they learned that He heals leprosy of the soul. Jesus alone forgives sin and makes all things new.

Do you know this to be true in your own life? Jesus said, *"Every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit"* (Matt 7:17). If Jesus has cleansed you through the washing of His blood that was shed on the cross, then you have been made clean and whole. The new life you enjoy in Christ will be evident and verifiable.

**Conclusion:** Bath time can be a stressful and difficult time for parents. Children do not recognize the need for bathing. They enjoy playing in the bathtub, but they usually want nothing to do with soap and water. On a spiritual plane this unwillingness to recognize the need for cleansing is not much different. Many people refuse to get in the proverbial bathtub. They want nothing to do with the gospel and its cleansing power. Others, however, enjoy time in the tub. They like to play and go through the motions, but they are not willing to actually be washed and cleaned through the gospel.

What is your spiritual condition today? Have you experienced the cleansing touch of Jesus in the tub? Are you playing around that which Jesus wants to use to clean you? Or perhaps, today is your first time in the bath tub. Whatever your condition may be, I want you to recognize that Jesus is willing to cleanse you; He is able to cleanse you; and His cleansing is verifiable. You cannot miss its transforming power in your life.

How must we come to Jesus? We come with...

- An acute awareness of our sin.
- A humble realization that Jesus is our only hope.
- A genuine belief that Jesus can and will cleanse.

Good news: God loves you. He created you and desires to know you.

Bad news: You are a sinner in rebellion against your Creator.

Best news: God has done everything necessary to justly deal with your sin and bring forgiveness and restoration to your life. Today, He calls you to turn from your sin and self and turn to Him as Savior and Lord. Have you received forgiveness in Christ? What would keep you from embracing the truth and believing on Jesus today? Do you need to follow the Lord in believer's baptism?