

Bible Readings

Leviticus 13:1-8

Regulations About Defiling Skin Diseases

13 The LORD said to Moses and Aaron, ² “When anyone has a swelling or a rash or a shiny spot on their skin that may be a defiling skin disease, they must be brought to Aaron the priest or to one of his sons who is a priest. ³ The priest is to examine the sore on the skin, and if the hair in the sore has turned white and the sore appears to be more than skin deep, it is a defiling skin disease. When the priest examines that person, he shall pronounce them ceremonially unclean. ⁴ If the shiny spot on the skin is white but does not appear to be more than skin deep and the hair in it has not turned white, the priest is to isolate the affected person for seven days. ⁵ On the seventh day the priest is to examine them, and if he sees that the sore is unchanged and has not spread in the skin, he is to isolate them for another seven days. ⁶ On the seventh day the priest is to examine them again, and if the sore has faded and has not spread in the skin, the priest shall pronounce them clean; it is only a rash. They must wash their clothes, and they will be clean. ⁷ But if the rash does spread in their skin after they have shown themselves to the priest to be pronounced clean, they must appear before the priest again. ⁸ The priest is to examine that person, and if the

rash has spread in the skin, he shall pronounce them unclean; it is a defiling skin disease.

Matthew 8:1-4

Jesus Heals a Man with Leprosy

8 When Jesus came down from the mountainside, large crowds followed him. ² A man with leprosy came and knelt before him and said, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean."

³ Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" Immediately he was cleansed of his leprosy. ⁴ Then Jesus said to him, "See that you don't tell anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the gift Moses commanded, as a testimony to them."

Sermon: The King's Power: Healing the Leper

20-Jun-21

Intro/Context

- We're continuing our **series** on **Matthew's Gospel**.
- We have **four more weeks** and then we'll look at the **OT book** - the book of **1 Kings**.
- Speaking of Kings - we're looking at the **power of King Jesus**, this morning.
- It would be good to have your **Bibles turned** to **Leviticus 13** initially - and then we'll look at **Matthew 8:1-4**
- Let me **pray** before we go any further

[PowerPoint 1a-Context]**Intro/Context**

- **Unless** you've **been living in a cave** for the last year or so
- You will know that **since March 2020** - we have **all be battling** with the **consequences** of the **COVID19 pandemic**
- For a good part of last year - we were **told to isolate** and **stay at home** - and as you know - we even had to **stopping meeting together** at **church**
- Even now - **if someone** has **symptoms**, they **have to isolate** until they get their **COVID test results**
- And even now - **if someone** does **get COVID19** - they have to **isolate** for at **least 14 days** - and get **retested** - until they are **all clear**
- Why? Because **COVID19** is **highly contagious**
- Heather likens COVID19 - to **using glitter** at her **craft class** - if one person uses glitter - **everyone goes home with glitter** on them

- Having a contagious disease and having to isolate is nothing new
- In our OT passage - from Leviticus 13 - God's people - the Israelites - had rules and precautionary measures in place - for a skin disease called leprosy
- What is leprosy anyway?
- Leprosy is: an infection caused by a slow-growing bacteria called *Mycobacterium leprae*. It can affect the skin, nerves, eyes and lining of the nose. Leprosy is a highly infectious and devastating disease. Because leprosy affects the nerve endings it can result in the crippling of hands and feet, and paralysis - even blindness. It's now known as Hansen's disease. The disease can be treated successfully these days. In Bible times it wasn't treatable.

Leprosy is like sin (Leviticus 13)

- We only read the first 8 verses of Leviticus 13 - but there are 59 verses of detailed instructions - from God - on how to handle all sorts of skin diseases
- The whole chapter covers things like: spots, leprosy itself, boils, burns, head and beard problems; baldness and even mould and mildew in clothing and fabrics
- The point of the instructions in Lev 13 - just like COVID19 - is to keep God's people safe - so that infections don't spread
- The instructions for each skin problem require the person with the skin problem to be brought to the High Priest, Aaron, for inspection

- The **High Priest** knows exactly what he's looking for
- And if the symptoms line up with God's instructions - the infected person is pronounced ceremonially unclean and must be isolated for seven days
- After seven days - the infected person is **reinspected** - and if the skin disease has spread, they must again isolate
- Because Leprosy in Bible times was incurable - many believed God inflicted the **curse of leprosy** upon people because of the **sins** they had committed
- In fact, people with leprosy were so loathed that they were not allowed to live in the community with their own people (see Numbers 5:1-4)

[PowerPoint 2-Sin]

- We all have a disease like leprosy - it's a spiritual disease called sin
- **Sin**: is anything we do or say or think that breaks God's rules
- The Bible says -
- In Isaiah 64:6: All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.
- And in Romans 3:23 it says: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God

[PowerPoint 3-heading]

- **Leprosy in the Bible** is a picture of what sin is like in people's lives

[PowerPoint 3a-deep rooted]

- Look at v3 of Leviticus 13 - leprosy is **deep-rooted** - it goes more than skin deep - in the same way sin in our lives can be **deep-rooted**. If we continue

to sin - it **affects our senses** - just like leprosy does - and we **become desensitised** to the sin in our lives

[PowerPoint 3b-unclean]

- Just as **leprosy makes a person unclean** - our sin makes us unclean as far as God is concerned - because God is holy holy holy - and **He can't look at our sin** - **His eyes are too pure to look on evil** - and **He cannot tolerate wrongdoing** (Hab 1:13)

[PowerPoint 3c-spread]

- Look at v8 of Leviticus 13 - **leprosy can spread** - in the same way sin in our lives can spread - we **tell a lie** - and then tell another lie to cover up the first one - or if someone in church gossips or spreads nasty unfounded rumours - it can spread and infect others in church - as the letter of James reminds us - a **loose and uncontrolled tongue can cause a forest fire**

[PowerPoint 3d-admit]

- Look at v45-of Leviticus 13 - the **infected person must admit they are infected** - they are **identified by torn clothes, unkempt hair, having their face covered** - and they must say they are "**Unclean! Unclean!**" In the same way - we must **admit we are sinful** - and **say sorry to God** - that's **repentance**

[PowerPoint 3e-separates]

- Look at v46 of Leviticus 13 - the **infected person must live on their own outside the camp**. This means they don't have fellowship with God's people and they are not able to join in public worship of God. In the same way our

sin - **separates us** from a loving right relationship with God - the relationship with God is broken - and needs to be fixed

[PowerPoint 3f-Judgment]

- Look at v52 and v57 of Leviticus 13 - when talking about fabric or clothing with leprosy (things like - mildew and mould) - the **fabric or clothing is burnt if it cannot be repaired**. In the same way - **sin destroys our lives - and if not repented of** - leads to **judgment** on the final day - where people will be thrown into the **fire of Hell**
- Whether it's **leprosy** or **sin** - both need someone to fix it - we can't fix it ourselves
- Which brings us to our NT story from Matthew 8 - verses 1 to 4

[Please turn to Matthew 8 now]

[PowerPoint 4-Picture]



- Look at v1
- **Jesus** has just delivered His famous **Sermon on the Mount**
- And a **large crowd followed** Him

- Why?
- Several reasons:
 - He's done amazing **miracles and healings** (Matt 4:23)
 - He's just spoken and **taught with amazing authority**
 - He's **no ordinary man** - He is the **Messiah**; He is the **Son of God**; He **says and does things that only God can**
- **As Jesus came down the mountainside**
- Something amazing happened
- A man with leprosy came to Jesus
- Let's look at **2 things here**:
 - The **approach of the leper**
 - And the **response of Jesus**

[PowerPoint 5-heading]

The approach of the leper

- 1st - the approach of the leper

[PowerPoint 5a-risk/stoned]

- The **leper took a huge risk** in coming to Jesus - he was **unclean** - he was an **outcast** - he **risked being stoned by the people** by bringing his **infectious body into the public domain**

[PowerPoint 5b-confidence]

- Yet the **leper came to Jesus with confidence** - see v2 - he had **no doubt that if Jesus willed** - **Jesus could make him clean**. The leper

had **complete confidence** in Jesus' willingness to welcome the man that everyone else would have driven away. No person is too unclean in their sin that they can't come to Jesus and ask to be cleansed of their sin and forgiven - as long as it's genuine and heartfelt as the leper. Remember Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount - Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. (Matt 7:7)

[PowerPoint 5c-humility]

- The leper also came with **humility** - he did not come and demand healing - he said "if you are willing, you can make me clean". It was if the leper said "I know I don't matter in this society - I know other people will flee from me and have nothing to do with me- I know I have no rights and no claim on you Jesus - but perhaps in your divine compassion you will use your power on someone like me". What a humble heart and it reminds us that we should approach Jesus with humility and a humble heart knowing that in our sinful nature we are unclean and fall way short of God's glory and need to be cleansed of our sin. "Nothing in my hands I bring - simply to thy cross I cling" - As Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount - Blessed are the poor in Spirit, theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven (Matt 5:3)

[PowerPoint 5d-reverence and worship]

- The leper came with reverence - see v2 - He knelt before Jesus - it literally means worshipped Jesus - and he called Jesus, Lord. By doing

this - the leper knew he was in the loving, compassionate, merciful presence of God. It's also amazing here - that the leper who is unclean - calls Jesus Lord, when many who think they are clean, call Jesus, Lord, in lip service and may not be saved on the last day (Matt 7:21)

The response of Jesus

[PowerPoint 6-heading]

- Now let's look at Jesus' response

[PowerPoint 6a-compassion]

- See v3 - Jesus showed **compassion**. **Jesus touched** the untouchable man. In doing so, he broke the ceremonial laws which said touching anyone who is unclean, makes the person touching, unclean also (Leviticus 5:3, 6). The medical advice of the day, would tell Jesus that by touching a leper - it was **highly likely** he would also be infected. But with Jesus, compassion trumps rules, every day of the week - as he showed when he healed a lame man on the Sabbath (Matt 12:9-14).

[PowerPoint 6b-help and love]

- For Jesus there was only one obligation - and that was to help. For Jesus there is only one law - the law of love! The obligation of love took precedence over all other rules and laws and regulations. It was Jesus' love that defied all physical risks. Any good doctor seeing someone in front of them with a terrible disease - is not a threat - but a patient who needs help and healing. Jesus is like that. God is like

that. And we are to be like that too. A true follower of Jesus, will notice those who need help and need Jesus.

[PowerPoint 6c-not reckless]

- Yet despite Jesus defying the rules and risking infection, Jesus was not reckless. He sent the leper away with two instructions - see v4
 - 1st instruction - See that you don't tell anyone. Why? Because Jesus' time to be glorified at the cross, had not yet come. People had to understand properly why He came. He didn't come to be some wonder worker that people would marvel at; nor did He come to save the people of Israel from Roman rule; He came to fix people's broken relationship with God, because of sin; and that meant Him dying on a cross. He didn't want people to misunderstand His mission as being someone to lead a rebellion against the Romans
 - The 2nd instruction - go and show yourself to the priest. There were laws in place so that the leper could be declared clean in society. These laws were in Leviticus 14 - and required the cured person to go to the priest for inspection and also make offerings before being declared clean. Jesus is teaching here not to neglect the process that was available to the man to be declared clean. Just because Jesus cleansed the man didn't make him clean in the eyes of the society or bring Him back into the community and into public worship again. Due process had to be followed.

Jesus is respectful of the due process even if He trumps rules with compassion. A lesson for us to respect the laws of our state and country; for example, the covid regulations the state has in place.

Jesus fixes our leprosy

[PowerPoint 7-heading]

- Just as Jesus was willing to heal the leper.
- Jesus is also willing to fix our spiritual leprosy - of sin
- Oh Yes, He is more than willing?

[PowerPoint 7a-Rom 5:8]

- As Romans 5:8 says: God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

[PowerPoint 7a-2 Cor 5:21]

- As 2 Corinthians 5:21 says: God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

[PowerPoint 7c-2 Peter 3:9]

- As 2 Peter 3:9 says: The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead, he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but **everyone to come to repentance.**

Application

[PowerPoint 8-heading]

To finish up then, let me give us **three things** we can **take home** with us this morning

[PowerPoint 8a-Jesus will help]

1. **No one is beyond Jesus' help** - no matter how sinful a person is - a person can still come to Jesus to have their sins forgiven - **Jesus will not turn anyone away who comes to Him, like the leper did.**

[PowerPoint 8b-constantly examine our hearts]

2. It is **important** we understand how deep rooted our sins are - and **constantly examine our hearts** - and bring our sins to Jesus to cleanse - repentance is not a one-off exercise

[PowerPoint 8c-love]

3. Jesus summarized God's 10 rules into one word - Love - and **Jesus showed love to the man whom no-one else loved or wanted** - we be must willing to show love to those that society see as outcasts, those that society see as unclean; those that society doesn't want; and those that society see as unlovable. As Jesus Himself said in the **Sermon on the Mount**: **Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.** (Matthew 5:7)

Let's pray...