

Outcasts (3): He Touches Lepers

(Luke 5:12-15)

I. Introduction

A. Ashlyn Blocker is one of 22 known to have *Congenital Insensitivity to Pain*

1. She literally feels pain. No bumps, bruises, bug-bites or broken bones
 - a. She can and has put her hand in boiling water without feeling heat
 - b. Genetic mutation turned-off transmission of pain nerve impulses
 - c. Ashlyn and her parents live in fear of getting hurt & not knowing it
2. **Irony:** Canadian biotech company is working families like the Blockers
 - a. Their work discovered what might be powerful new pain-suppressor
 - b. It may serve to “turn-off” chronic pain in much same way as CIP
 - 1) In the wake of the opioid epidemic, this may help those in pain
 - 2) Sadly, it won’t help those like Ashlynn who cannot feel pain

B. What does all this have to do with *Outcasts: The People Met in Luke*?

1. In **Luke 5**, Jesus meets a man who life is destroyed by leprosy
 - a. In Bible, “leprosy” describes any number of scaly skin conditions
 - b. They didn’t have doctor; so priest were the authority (**Lev 13:1-3**)
 - 1) Chapter shows priest how to determine a “defiling skin disease”
 - 2) If you got leprosy, you didn’t know if you had THE leprosy
 - 3) People did get better; there was a process of being declared clean
2. If one truly had leprosy (Hansen’s disease), they didn’t get better
 - a. Scaly patches turned into oozing, disfiguring tumors or pustules
 - b. Leprosy isn’t really a skin disease; it is a disfiguring nerve disease
 - 1) Much like CIP, it robs its victim of the ability to feel pain
 - 2) Finger and toes will be chewed off by rats– they cannot feel it
 - 3) Dr. Paul Brand (Phillip Yancey) called leprosy “a painless hell”
3. The reality of the leper is they live as total outcast (**Lev 13:45-46**)
 - a. Leper was condemned to live out his or her days in total isolation
 - b. They were forced to enforce their isolation– “Unclean, Unclean!”
 - 1) Jesus is going to meet a leper who breaks these rules just a bit
 - 2) Jesus seems to be OK with that; He breaks the rules too

II. He Touches Lepers (Luke 5:12-15)

A. Jesus is approached by a man covered with leprosy ([Luke 5:12](#))

1. Luke is the only gospel that says the man is covered or full of leprosy
 - a. Makes sense that the doctor would find this detail to be interesting
 - b. He doesn't give us a lot of background or context to story
 - c. No one seems to be around when Jesus heals this leper
 - 1) It is right after Jesus calls Peter, James and John as apostles
 - 2) It right before one of Jesus encounters with the Pharisees
2. Luke has encounter take place "*While Jesus was in one of the towns*"
 - a. The leper is so desperate he follows Jesus into town against Law
 - b. If you are dying of leprosy, you aren't going to stand on formality
 - 1) Peter's mother-in-law was healed near end last chapter ([4:38-39](#))
 - 2) Then there is this general statement of Jesus healing ([4:40](#))
3. Word has gotten around about Jesus; somehow it gets to this leper
 - a. This leper comes to the very place where he should not be— town
 - b. He doesn't cry "*Unclean!*" He says, "*You can make me clean!*"

B. You know how Jesus will respond to faith like this ([Luke 5:13](#))

1. Mark adds a couple of surprising details here ([Mark 1:40-41](#))
 - a. OK, Mark has him fall to his knees; Luke has him fall on his face
 - b. Guy is begging for his life; posture isn't the important point!
 - c. Mark says Jesus was "*indignant.*" (Some MSS - "*compassion*")
 - 1) There is a variation in MSS; English versions reflect variations
 - 2) How could Jesus be "*indignant*" or "*angry*" at the leper here?
 - a) He was angry because sin had caused suffering in God perfect world
 - b) Pain, suffering, sickness, death is not God's will for his people
 - c) Same thing as when he heals deaf and mute man ([Mark 7:33-35](#))
2. Back to [Luke 5](#): The exchange is pretty simple here ([Luke 5:12-13](#))
 - a. If you are willing you can make me clean. I am willing. Be clean.
 - b. What was it that convinced leper to go to Jesus in the first place?
 - c. Hope against hope? Desperate faith? Whatever, it saved him!

- C. When your life is saved, the one thing you can't do? Be quiet (**5:14-15**)
1. Jesus tells the man not to tell anyone about what has happened
 - a. He is to show himself to the priest as the Law requires
 - b. He is to offer the sacrifices for cleansing as Law requires
 - c. Jesus asks him not to tell anyone the details of his healing
 2. That strikes us as odd, but that becomes a pragmatic necessity
 - a. Jesus' miracles will indeed attract a crowd for he wrong reasons
 - 1) The crowds will try to make him a King by force (**John 6:15**)
 - 2) They make it hard for Him to move around, teach and minister
 - b. So often when he heals someone, he asks them not to tell anyone
 - c. The irony is, like this leper, they usually go out and tell everyone!
 3. Why is that an irony? He tells us to tell everyone about him and...

III. Conclusion

- A. The point that stands out in this story— Jesus touches the leper
1. I think it is pretty clear He didn't have to touch him in order to heal
 - a. Point is made about demons that he healed with word (**Matt 8:16**)
 - b. May call this "exorcism." Jesus told demons to get out; they did
 - c. We'll see in a couple of weeks that Jesus can mail it in if he wants
 - 1) In **Luke 7**, Jesus is headed to centurion house to heal servant
 - 2) Centurion says, "*Give the command and my servant is healed*"
 - 3) Not only doesn't he touch him, he doesn't get to neighborhood
 2. He touches him, not to heal him— but because he needs to be touched
 - a. If he can trust Dr. Luke, this man was "*full of leprosy*" (advanced)
 - b. That means he'd been isolated for years— years of unclean, unclean
 - 1) How long had it been since he had been touched by anyone?
 - 2) How long since anyone looked him in face... could look in face
 - c. Jesus touched him, not to heal, but because he needed his touch
 - 1) He needed to be healed of this dreaded disease to be sure
 - 2) He also needed to be accepted. Received. Included. Touched.
 - d. As part of this healing process, Jesus reaches out and touches him

- B. Again, the point that stands out in this story– Jesus touches the leper
1. Uncleanness in OT system is like cooties; you get it by touching
 - a. That’s true if you touch something unclean accidentally (**Lev 5:2-3**)
 - b. Jesus here touches the leper intentionally and on purpose
 - 1) He didn’t have to– he could have healed him without touching
 - 2) Did He break the law? Did He become ceremonially unclean?
 2. Pharisees once accuse disciples of violating Sabbath (**Matt 12:1-2**)
 - a. Law makes distinction between using hand and sickle (**Dt 23:25**)
 - b. Jesus has some things to say, but here’s how ends it (**Matt 12:8**)
 - 1) He is the Lord of the Sabbath– he gets to make the rules
 - 2) He’s also the Lord of showing compassion to the lepers
 - c. He doesn’t break the rules on touching leper... He IS the rule
- C. And He is the rule that we are called to follow– to love like He loved
1. We will never get into trouble with the Lord showing too much love.
 - a. We are never going to be too accepting, too forgiving, too loving
 - b. We will never get into trouble with God for touching lepers, right?
 2. Medicine science makes Hansen’s disease a non-threat in our culture
 - a. There are people that our culture treats like lepers & outcasts today
 - 1) Like those who are mentally disabled or physically challenged
 - 2) Or those who are chronically poor and habitually homeless
 - 3) Those who don’t speak language or fit our culture other ways
 - b. More and more, culture treats these people with apathy or hostility
 - c. In other words, they are treated just like lepers in the first century
 3. We must treat them like Jesus treated lepers– acknowledge & touch
 - a. No, our bag of miracles is not quite as deep as that of the Christ
 - b. We begin by acknowledging the value & worth of all before God
 - c. We also acknowledging that we are all lepers saved by His grace
 - 1) We are all hideously deformed by our sin but touched by Jesus
 - 2) We aren’t here today because we’re good but because He’s great
 4. We are lepers before Jesus– *“If you want to, you can make me clean”*