

Complete Restoration for All Unclean, Part 2

Luke 5:14-16

October 2, 2016

Let's begin by reading the passage, which we usually do. Look at Luke Chapter 5, verse 12, "While he," while Jesus, "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.' And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, 'I will; be clean.' And immediately the leprosy left him. 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.' But now even more the report about him went abroad, and great crowds gathered to hear him and to be healed of their infirmities. But he would withdraw to desolate places to pray."

We ended last week by noting how absolutely amazing it was for Jesus to reach out and touch this man who was covered with

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leprosy. The man had asked Jesus, "Are you willing to cleanse me?" And before saying, "I am; be cleansed," Jesus acted before he spoke. He showed in his actions the compassions of his heart. Verbal profession of willingness followed immediately after and that is really a good example for us to follow, isn't it?

If you want to know what someone really believes, don't just listen to what they say, watch what they do. How people live is a very good indicator of what they really believe, what they love, what they value. For Jesus, there was no difference between his words and his actions. We see him as the essence of integrity itself. What he says and what he does are in perfect agreement, perfect harmony. He has absolute integrity. It provides us with the basis of our assurance because he does everything he says he will do. When he says he will forgive us, forgive us he does. When he says he'll take us to be with his father in heaven, that's exactly what he will do.

He is willing to cleanse us and restore us to God. And that's what this story teaches us, that he is willing to reach out and touch those who are full of leprosy, like this man, not unlike

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us, right? Leprosy is merely an external visible symbol of the reality of our own sin. And as we learned last time, like leprosy our sin, when it is truly exposed, when it is visible, it is truly repulsive. When people around us see our sin in all of its ugliness, they want to stay away. They want to keep their distance. That's what's pictured in the insulation aspect of leprosy.

In Israel, sin fractures human relationships, sin isolates us, sin divides us, sin drives wedges between people and that's why leprosy is the perfect Old Testament picture of the doctrine of total depravity. Israel was being instructed from its inception in the ways of God and the character of God and the nature of their problem. This is one of those pictures. This is one of those points of instruction that sin is thoroughly repugnant, that it is visibly horrifying, socially isolating. Like leprosy, sin, it's the same way in a spiritual sense. When we see our sin as God sees our sin, well, that's when we get a much better grasp of God's amazing grace. Our sins are repulsive and repugnant to a holy God and like leprosy in a physical sense, only God is able to cleanse and cure us of the spiritual malady called sin.

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Again, when we know that God is able to see the depth and the breadth of our depravity, that God is able to take our full and accurate measure, knowing us better than anybody else, knowing us better than even we ourselves know ourselves. It's even more remarkable that Jesus is willing to reach out and touch vile sinners like us. God sees us for what we really are. And yet he has shown his great compassion for us by sending forth his son to earth to touch us with that cleansing power. As Romans 5:8 says, "God shows us his love for us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

Now we, all of us here, rejoice in that Gospel truth, don't we? That is the essence and the foundation of the Gospel; that's the reason we're here. For every soul that knows its own sinfulness, for every soul that knows the depth and darkness of its own depravity, how far that can go, how deep it can go, how ugly it is, and that mourns over the shame of its own guilt, the willingness of Jesus Christ to reach out and touch what is vile, what is morally repugnant with his own hands.

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That's the essence of our hope, our joy. That's the essence of everything in the Gospel. That compassionate and powerful touch, not only the will, but the ability to cleanse us from all our unrighteousness. That's the essence of the Gospel, and that's what fills our hearts with hope and joy.

But we, we need to realize something here, beloved. Not everybody was thrilled about the fact that Jesus touched lepers. Not everybody saw that as a good thing. Not everyone rejoiced in the fact that Jesus reached out to vile sinners. Take a quick look at the very next verse after our section, verse 17, "On one of those days, as he was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem."

Huh, well, this is interesting. What are those guys doing there? What is their interest in Jesus' ministry all of a sudden? What caused religious leaders from, as it says there, "every village of Galilee and Judea," even, "from Jerusalem" itself. What caused them to come to Jesus? They all of a sudden want to become his disciples? Not on your life. These religious leaders

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considered themselves to be the very epitome of righteousness, of morality, of adherence to the law. They would never admit that they were more wretched in God's eyes than a rotting leper.

Like most Americans, they considered themselves to be pretty good people. And that had the tendency to make them critical, to make them judgmental, to make them uncompassionate to the extreme. The Pharisees, the teachers of the law, knew that anyone who touches human uncleanness, Leviticus 5:3, becomes unclean. They had heard the report of Jesus touching the leper and the leper becoming clean, but instead of considering the implications of that tremendous miracle, instead of having a view to the fact of cleansing of someone with a horrendous skin disorder, they were ready to judge, criticize, condemn. We'll talk more about this next time as we come back to this verse and see that this is truly what's going on. That's truly their heart here.

Just think about that. I mean, for the first time in human history, a reverse contamination has just occurred. Instead of Jesus contracting the uncleanness of the leper, the leper

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contracted the cleanness of Jesus Christ. But, Ah, ah, ah, said the Pharisees. Just a minute there Jesus, you touched a leper and that's not allowed. They didn't have a category for this.

So instead of reconsidering Jesus, instead of reprocessing and rethinking, they took offense at him. They showed up in Capernaum, Luke 5:17, to watch for other law violations, for other ways that Jesus is offending their traditions, ignoring their traditions. The Pharisees, the law professors, they were there to inspect Jesus' ministry. They were there to examine his unorthodox methods to see whether or not they'd give him their stamp of approval, whether or not they'd accept this, Messiah.

Listen, if they're offended by that action, they had better fasten their seatbelts because Jesus is getting ready to do some remarkable things in this chapter. In verses 17 to 26, he's going to not only heal a paralytic, he's going to forgive his sins. That's going to irritate them. If you can believe that? Preposterous, they say. Even worse, Jesus is getting ready to call a tax collector; a vile, wretched, hated tax collector, to

be part of his chosen Twelve. That's verses 27 to 32, again, Outrageous, they cry.

These miracles, these actions, they were going to send the religious leaders of Israel over the absolute edge, and they would move them into a position that they were already there in their hearts, but even outwardly they were going to move to this despising of Jesus rather than bowing before him as Lord. He didn't act the way they thought he should act and they were quick to criticize his ministry, to judge him.

In fact, this is worth noting because it's going to come up again and again in the narrative. There are two healings recorded between Chapter 5:1 and Chapter 6:16. That whole section has to do with the calling of The Twelve. It started with Peter, James, Simon Peter, his brother Andrew, James and John, started with those guys. It's gonna, has, has Matthew right here in the middle, calling him, and then it's going to end with all twelve being called as disciples.

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And in this section about the calling of The Twelve, there are also two confrontations about the Sabbath. There are two healings, which are offensive to them. How he healed, how he conducted himself on the Sabbath day, to the religious elite of Jesus' day, his ministry was very controversial, deeply offensive to them. They couldn't accept him because he didn't fit into their categories. He violated their cultural expectations. He offended their sensibilities. He disregarded their traditions.

But at this point, Luke wants us, the readers, to understand that the way Jesus conducted himself, the way he executed his ministry, the way he fulfilled everything that he was called by the Father to do, he was completely righteous. Everything he did always conformed to the holiness of God. He never violated God's Word, not once. He never disregarded it. He never set it aside. He followed it to the letter, even to the crossing of the "t's" and the dotting of the "i's;" he did everything exactly as God prescribed. Even if the religious leaders failed to understand that, he was absolutely fastidious about obedience to God. And that's because Jesus is holy, as God is holy because Jesus is God.

That means that none of us, none of us here, religious leaders included, we're in no position to judge him at all. We do not stand over him to critique him. He his Word stands over us to critique us. We'd better come at this with the right orientation, beloved, humbly with an open mind to see him for who he really is. We need to come to these passages with our hearts bowed in deep humility, knowing that we have so much to learn from him.

So if we read these things carefully, if we consider him humbly, we are going to see that Jesus is not some kind of iconoclast. He wasn't some kind of social-cultural maverick, just simply upsetting everyone's tradition for the sake of making waves. That's not him. He's not some kind of social reformer. He was absolutely committed to pleasing the father. The world had seen nothing like it. Jesus said quite plainly, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I have not come to abolish them, but to fulfill them." In fact, if you look at Luke 5:14, here, here in our text, he told the man to do what? "As Moses commanded him," right? So he's very concerned to obey the written Word of God, which he

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knew better than any of the religious leaders, better than anyone who's ever lived. He knew it.

By contrast, Jesus wasn't terribly concerned about pleasing man. And that's what brought his ministry into public disrepute. That's what got him negative press. That's what caused people to talk down about him and his ministry is because he stuck closely to the Word of God, and he didn't really care about human opinion. He didn't kowtow to human opinion. He didn't pay homage to the wealthy, the powerful, the elite. He didn't pay homage to the religious scholars. He didn't quote them in his sermons. Even if his ministry seemed offensive at first glance though, in reality, before a holy God, his ministry was absolutely flawless. It was completely perfect, holy, holy, holy.

Folks, that's what Luke is preparing us to see. By recording the things that we're reading here, that's what he wants us to see. Not only does Jesus possess all authority, all power, all goodness, all compassion, mercy, but his mercy was performed with the utmost personal integrity and with scrupulous attentiveness to the Law of Moses. He kept himself, in a sense,

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under the law of God. He'd come to do the will of his father in heaven. He came to demonstrate a life fully in submission to the father, which meant that he would adhere closely, at all times, to the Law of Moses.

You would think of all people that the law professors, the Pharisees would appreciate this, that they'd study him carefully to see how he did actually fulfill the law. But no, their righteousness was merely external. What they were doing they were doing for a show, to gain the approval and the respect of men. What Jesus did had everything to do with his father in heaven. He was always concerned to keep his ministry above board, always righteous; not because of anything the men had to say, but because of what God had to say.

So, getting back into our outline, it's written there in your bulletin, we're going to see the rest of the story. Last week we talked about how Jesus had granted this man's request, cleansing him instantaneously, cleansing him completely. And Jesus not only healed him of the disease, but he cleansed him from the impurity. But that's not the end of the story.

Cleansing from the disease and the defilement of leprosy, that was only the beginning of an even fuller restoration, which is the second point in our outline. This is a lesson that we need to learn, as well, beloved. We not only come to Jesus to be completely cleansed, second point in your outline, we also obey Jesus to be fully restored. We obey Jesus so that we can be fully restored. The man full of leprosy, he came forward with one goal: to be cleansed of leprosy. We don't blame him for that. Every sinner who comes to Jesus comes because they want cleansing from their sin. They want escape from judgment, escape from divine wrath. Who can blame anybody for wanting that?

Take a look at verse 14. Jesus intended to take him all the way. "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.'" Mark, in his parallel account, portrays Jesus as being even more serious about what he said there. It says there, "Jesus sternly charged him and sent him away at once." Jesus didn't want this man talking to anybody. He wanted him to close his mouth. He didn't want him lingering. He

didn't want him wasting any time. He wanted him to keep his mouth shut and go.

The stress is on immediate obedience. It says there in verse 14, as you can see there, Luke starts in the third person. He starts describing it and then he just shifts. He charges him to tell no one, and then he switches to the second person as if he kind of wants us to listen in and hear it for ourselves. "Go, show yourself to the priest, and make an offering for your cleansing, as Moses commanded, for a proof to them." The stress there is on immediacy so we get into the moment.

Now the command of Moses that Jesus referred to is in Leviticus 14:1 to 32. Leviticus 14, and that prescribes a process of restoration for those that God had cleansed of leprosy. Go ahead and turn back there in your Bibles to Leviticus Chapter 14. We're going to get a closer look at this. It's going to be very instructive for us. It's a fascinating portion of Scripture. I'm not going to read the whole thing because it will take quite a bit of time. But [Luke] Leviticus 14, prescribes ritual sacrifices, symbolic cleansing from leprosy. There are also

ceremonial washings. There is another period there of quarantine and final examination. And then finally, there are sacrifices prescribed.

But let's start in Leviticus 14:1 to 7. We're gonna start reading in verse 1, "The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 'This shall be the law of the leprous person for the day of his cleansing. He shall be brought to the priest, and the priest shall go out of the camp, and the priest shall look. And then, if the case of leprous disease is healed in the leprous person, the priest shall command them to take for him who is to be cleansed two live clean birds and cedar wood and scarlet yarn and hyssop.

"And the priest shall command them to kill one of the birds in earthenware vessel over fresh water. He shall take the live bird with the cedar wood and the scarlet yarn and the hyssop, and dip them and the live bird in the blood of the bird that was killed over the fresh water. And he shall sprinkle it seven times on him who is to be cleansed of the leprous disease. Then he shall

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pronounce him clean and shall let," the live bird, "the living bird go into the open field.'"

Stop there for a moment. There are some who see this, what seems to us, American ears, 21st century, seems strange ritual.

Killing one bird, dipping another live bird, like dunking a bird in stuff and letting it go. It seems odd. And there are some who see this two-bird ritual thing as corresponding to the two goats that are killed on the Day of Atonement. You remember the Day of Atonement prescribed a first goat to be sacrificed, killed for the propitiation of sin? Propitiation is a word that talks about the satisfaction of divine wrath.

"The second goat was then for the expiation of sin, that is sending the guilt away outside the camp. And those two things comprised the atoning sacrifice, which means it provides a covering for sin, a refuge from the just wrath of God. And, and all of that was meant to picture what Jesus Christ did for us, dying outside the camp is expiation. But dying, truly, as a satisfaction of divine wrath for our sin.

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That doesn't seem to be what's going on here. As we noted last week, even though leprosy symbolized, it pictured sin, and even though it was commonly assumed to be an outbreak of divine punishment, leprosy wasn't necessarily the result of an individual's sin. Someone could be a law abiding citizen, law-abiding Israelite, fully in tune with the Law of Moses and in communion with God and all the people and still contract leprosy through no fault of their own.

So this bird ritual more aptly pictures the cleansing from leprosy that's taking place. That's what's going on here. Like the other sacrifice, the birds, they act as substitutes for the person, with the leper's uncleanness symbolically transferred to the innocent birds. The first bird is sacrificed; it's killed. It's gruesome, it's sad, killing a bird. That's what God thinks about our sin. It's sad. It teaches us the principle that all uncleanness comes from sin, and since sin brings death, the removal of sin requires death.

The second bird dipped in the blood of the first bird, which is mixed in with the water of purification along with the cedar

wood and the hyssop all tied together by the scarlet yarn. That second bird is dipped in the blood of cleansing, the water of purification and then sprinkled on the person, and then set free. That freedom represents a release from quarantine, a sending back into society, away from social isolation. No more of that. It's about restoring the person back into the worshipping community. And once again, a symbolic ritual here is teaching spiritual truths to the nation of Israel.

All these ceremonies, all these rituals that are prescribed in the Law of Moses. They prepare Israel to recognize the Messiah when he comes. So no wonder Jesus wanted this man to go immediately to the priest. He wanted him to learn from all the symbolism of this ritual. He wanted him to think through what all this meant and not be satisfied with just merely an external cleansing. He wanted him to think about the need for internal purification and cleansing as well.

After the bird ritual, the man had to go through a procedure of purification, lasted a full week. He was quarantined. Take a look at Leviticus 14:8 and 9. "he who is to be cleansed shall

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wash his clothes and shave off all his hair and bathe himself in water, and he shall be clean. And after that he may come into the camp, but live outside his tent seven days. And on the seventh day he shall shave off all his hair from his head, his beard, his eyebrows; he shall shave off all his hair, and then he shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in water, and he shall be clean.”

Now even though all of that, as I said, took place in the community where the person lives, so he's restored back from the quarantine, the isolation, but he's only partially restored. He had to live outside of his tent. He had to live outside of his home. So there's this process he has to follow, this procedure, a week-long procedure in the eyes of everybody. That was as much for the sake of the community as it was for him, so that they themselves could be assured that he was truly clean. It was for the sake of engendering trust that this had actually happened, that they weren't going to become contaminated by his leprosy. I'm not going to keep on reading the rest of the prescription, but it continues all the way to verse 32 talking about everything that needs to be done.

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Basically, just to summarize it, after the bird ritual and this purification procedure, the cleansed person was required to offer sacrifices on the eighth day. There was a guilt or a trespass offering that had to do with sin. There was a sin offering that had to do with unintentional sins, it, a burnt offering, a grain offering and a fellowship offering, all of those having to do with communion before God. So these are all offerings that he would have missed during his time of uncleanness since he'd been excluded from the communal worship. And each of those offerings, every single one of them symbolized spiritual realities. Every single one of those offerings: The guilt offering, sin offering, burnt offering, grain offering, fellowship offering, all of that symbolized and instructed the believing heart; helped him to see and appreciate and engender praise and glory to God.

There is one detail that I do want to highlight. If you could look ahead to verses 14 to 18, just scan the text. You can see there, there, that there are animal sacrifices, there's blood, there's rubbing some of the blood and mixed with oil on the right earlobe, on the right thumb, on the big toe of the right foot. What is that about? That's kind of getting blood in weird

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places. All of that that seems so strange to us is really symbolic of the total consecration to the Lord. The whole life set apart to God. And here the parts represent the whole. Be thankful the Lord didn't just cover them in blood, right?

They just had to have a little bit. A little dab will do, right? So the ears, a little dab on the right ear, ear lobe, that meant the ears were committed to hearing and obeying God's Word. The thumb, right thumb, it represented the hands that were committed to serving God and serving his people. The, the blood that goes on the toe of the right foot, the big toe of the right foot that meant the feet committed to walking in God's ways. So hearing the Word of God, serving God, serving his people, walking in God's ways, living a life pleasing to him, total complete consecration. All that is wrapped up in what Jesus told this man to go and do. And that's the point. All these offerings, all these rituals, all this symbolism is intended to restore this man to full communion to God. It's intended to restore full fellowship with the worshipping community of Israel.

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Obviously this is an occasion of great joy as the man is fully not only cleansed, but restored, properly restored, brought back into the fellowship and communion with God and his people. Now when you think about this man who came to Jesus, go ahead and turn back, actually, to Luke Chapter 5. When you think about this man who came to Jesus, all that the man sought from Jesus was cleansing from leprosy. This man thought he'd be satisfied with just that, that's what he was after. Jesus, he knew what this man truly needed. He knew that the cleansing is only the beginning. And like that leper, Jesus didn't only come to just cleanse us from our sin, beloved, he came also to restore us fully to God. You and I, created in God's image. We're not created for any other pleasure but one? The pleasure of God and God alone. And in him, we find all of our joy, all of our contentment, all of our pleasure, all of our satisfaction, all of our purpose, all of our meaning, everything is found in God and God alone.

So, if we're only satisfied with just getting rid of some impurity and then moving on as if the Gospel was good for that and maybe it opens the door into heaven, but the rest of life? Well, we can be a lot like that leper, can't we? Our vision is

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so small. It's so limited. We're like little kids. All we can think about is hamburgers, and God wants to introduce us to filet mignon. He wants us to eat steak.

Being so limited in our understanding, so immature in our thinking, we think we'll be satisfied with so very little, with such meager things. God wants us to enjoy his full bounty. Now, don't make the mistake of thinking that I am saying that the Gospel of cleansing from sin is meager. I'm not comparing the Gospel with hamburgers. I just want to be clear. The Gospel, the more you study it, the more you live it and learn it and go deep into its cleansing, it is everything.

People have wondered why Jesus censured this man, why he told him to be quiet, didn't let him go out and evangelize right away. Mark tells us that the man tried to do exactly that, that instead of doing what Jesus said, that he well, he did exactly what Jesus said not to do, and he went out and started talking right away.

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Mark 1:45 says, he went out, began talking freely about it, spread the news, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter a town, but was out in desolate places, and people were coming to him from every quarter." That man's disobedience had practical ramifications for Jesus' ministry, didn't they? Wasn't good; not just practically, it wasn't good for a deeper reason, for a principle reason. Hadn't he called Jesus, Lord? Where is the commitment to lordship now, now that he's receiving, he's received the cleansing that he came for? Is Jesus truly Lord to him?

So many things here. I can't get to everything. We'll just kind of cover this in an overview fashion, but there are many who are ready to give this guy a pass, to excuse his enthusiasm to go and talk. I understand that, right? It's, it's hard to be too critical knowing that we could've disobeyed in exactly the same way. In fact, we probably have. We've probably done exactly this kind of thing. But we do need to recognize that just because Jesus was the subject of his speech, because he's telling everybody about Jesus that that doesn't make this okay. The end here does not justify the means. Jesus is still Lord, and this man, after receiving the cleansing that he came for, he's still

required to obey the Lord. In fact, that should have indebted him to Jesus to do whatever he commanded immediately upon every command. Sadly, the man was too easily satisfied. He failed to obey Jesus, which means he failed to discover the joy of obeying Jesus, which meant he missed out on the blessing of being fully restored to God.

Again, look at verse 14 a little more closely. Jesus “charged him to tell no one, but,” and he gave him this instruction, “go, show yourself to the priest, and make an offering for your cleansing, as Moses commanded for a proof to them.” Listen, there were very good reasons for Jesus to censure this man. He told him to keep his mouth shut; he ordered him to present himself to the priest so he could offer the prescribed sacrifices. In verse 14, Jesus intended this man’s presentation to the, to the priest to be a proof or a testimony, the word is testimony, martyrion. But a testimony to them, not just to the individual priest, but to them, to everyone. There are reasons, good reasons that Jesus kept this guy quiet, some of which we’ve hinted at already. I am just going to run through these reasons quickly. I’m going to name them. I’m going to give them a name so you can jot them down, but then listen. Okay? Because I’m

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going to go through them and unpack them just a little bit. The reasons that Jesus silenced the man and commanded the presentation to the priest, I'm going to let me give you six reasons. The reasons are, write these down: Social, doxological, biblical, theological, evangelical, and practical. Got them? Good. Let's move. No, I'll repeat them: Social, doxological, biblical, theological, evangelical and practical. Jesus had social, doxological, biblical, theological, evangelical, and practical reasons for telling that man to be quiet, go to the priest, obey Moses.

First thing, the social reason. "He charged him," verse 14, "to tell no one, but 'go and show yourself to the priest.'" As we already kinda mentioned here, the social reason was in order to restore this man to society, in a prescribed, publicly acknowledged way. This is for the man's good, ultimately, so that he's, even though he is cleansed from leprosy, he doesn't have the stigma of leprosy as he goes through the community. So that everybody there knows, yeah, this guy's restored. He's good. I can actually put my arm around him. I can shake his hand. That was for his good, so that no one had a suspicion about where he was, where he stood. A priest had examined him,

he's good to go. It's also for the sake of the community, for their, the satisfaction of their concern, to put, to alleviate any suspicion or concern that they had. As we talked about last time, this is a public health issue. That's the social reason.

Second, the theological reason. Notice the phrase, "make an offering for your cleansing." The theological reason here is in order to instruct this man in theology. Using the symbols of the bird ritual, Jesus wanted to prepare this man to one day understand the significance of a future sacrifice for sins. Like the goats on the Day of Atonement, Jesus would be a proprietary, propitiatory sacrifice, satisfying the wrath of God for sins. He would be an expiatory sacrifice removing all guilt, taking it outside the city being crucified at Golgotha.

Like those birds, Jesus would remove all uncleanness, he'd restore complete communion with God, fellowship with the saints. Jesus wanted this guy to learn theology. He wanted him to meditate on the bird ritual and then all the sacrifices that were, everything that was taught from the sin offering, and the

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burnt offering, and the fellowship and the grain; all those things Jesus wanted him to learn and to meditate: Theology.

So, there's a social reason, a theological reason. Third, the doxological reason. I love this one. It's that same phrase, "Make an offering for your cleansing." The doxological reason, it's in order to turn this man's attention to doxology, to glorify God in gratitude, in praise. When he thought about himself and thought about everything that these offerings had to teach him, as he meditated on all the depth of that, it redounds to God's praise and glory, it redounds to doxology. Great joy in being restored to the fellowship of the worshipping community, but even greater joy in communion with the God that saved him, cleansed him, set him free, restored him.

Fourth reason, a biblical reason. That's the simple clause there, "As Moses commanded." The biblical reason was in order to submit him to what was written in the Bible, the Law of Moses, the, the unchanging Word of God. As we mentioned earlier, Jesus is not some kind of maverick, setting aside every convention in

doing whatever he wanted, doing everything his own way, forging a new path for himself.

His ministry was in fulfillment of the law, not a violation of the law. The man, the priest, the entire community in the city needed to know that, not only about this man, but about Jesus and his ministry, but also get this, this is very important, Jesus never did anything to turn our attention away from the written Word of God. Everything that Jesus wants us to see is written. That's why when Jesus talked to his enemies, when he talked to people challenging him, he said, "It is written, it is written, it is written, it is written, it is written."

Fifth, the evangelical reason. The clause there, "For a proof to him," as I said that word, proof, is actually the word *martyrion*, it's the word, testimony. We get the word, martyr from it; those who testify to the truth of the revelation of God and the Gospel. They're willing to give their lives for it, and that is a testimony to others.

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The evangelical reason here for a testimony to them and Jesus here, wanted to send him to do all these things, to keep his mouth shut because at the point of his cleansing, he's a clean man, but he's also an ignorant man. He hasn't really reflected. He hasn't really processed everything. And so if he would spend the time that Jesus wanted him to spend, the week of these procedures and the ritual and all that, and then the time it took to go and actually offer all those sacrifices, that man would be informed by theology.

His heart would be burning with passion in doxology, and praise, and worship to God. His, his mind would be actually informed by bibliology, by Scripture, by the written Word. And now this man is a prepared instrument to go and evangelize. He knows not only the man who actually did the cleansing, but he knows the truth about him. All the facts about this man Jesus Christ are interpreted by the Bible, by theology, and he's burning with passion to proclaim the truth about him because of the doxology. The fact that people want to go and tell others about the message, that doesn't sanctify all their efforts in that regard.

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Paul says in Philippians Chapter 1 that there are many who preach, maybe even a rudimentary Gospel, an accurate Gospel, rudimentary Gospel, but they do so from ill motives. They're not, it's not okay to do that. Paul thanks the Lord that the Gospel's preached, but he's concerned for those people who proclaim him with wrong motives. We should be concerned for people who proclaim this Gospel, but not with any depth of understanding. There is no virtue in ignorant, unbridled zeal.

The evangelism that God blesses is that which is in obedience to his Word. God's work done in God's way. And in this case, if that man had obeyed, the effect would be to add to the testimony of the priest who declared him clean. The two of them then would have their testimony of the cleansing that Jesus had granted this man, and this man would go above and beyond to be someone who actually knew this one who had cleansed him.

Final reason, this is the sixth reason. There's a social, theological, doxological, biblical, evangelical reason, sixth just a practical reason. This kind of propels us into the next point, but this, this is more like a result of the man's, obed,

disobedience here. If this man had obeyed Jesus, it would have allowed some time to pass, right? There's the week, and then there's the time to take to offer all of those other sacrifices. So more than a week would have passed, maybe two weeks, maybe, maybe longer.

Definitely longer, if that man had to travel down to the temple in Jerusalem to offer these prescribed sacrifices, but during that week of the man's purification, during the time of his full restoration, you know what Jesus would have been doing? Fulfilling his ministry. He could have taken the necessary time that he needed to teach that city, to perform other miracles, to accomplish all that he had come there to do.

But as a consequence of this man's disobedience, just practically speaking and, again, we're not divorcing this from the good providence of God who plans all things, brings them to the culmination of his will, but it says in Mark 1:45, it tells us that "Jesus could no longer openly enter a town, but," he, "was out in desolate places."

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Listen, all that to say, Jesus has very good reasons for commanding us to obey him, doesn't he? He is always wise. He is always good. And we have every reason to obey him always. My wife and I would teach our kids from a very young age that obedience is not just to do what we say, but it's to do it all the way, right away, with a happy heart.

We need to trust Jesus, folks. We need to obey him. Some people I've talked with, they seem to be content with just having their sins forgiven. They believe they have a get-into-heaven-card that will get them into the pearly gates, but they seem relatively uninterested in living their lives in full obedience to all that God commanded. You know what? That's, that's stupid to refuse to obey the Lord, that is cutting ourselves off from the whole purpose of Jesus cleansing us in the first place.

"Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous," 1 Peter 3:18. Why? "That he might bring us to God." Escaping divine wrath, that's only the beginning. There's an introduction into a fellowship, a relationship, a communion with God and Jesus wants us to be fully restored. So when I find

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people who profess to be Christians, but who seem satisfied with mediocrity in their spiritual lives, who seem satisfied with a marginal Christian life, who seem comfortable with half-hearted obedience, or even worse, who seem kind of comfortable with some disobedience, honestly, there's a loving concern that wells up inside of me that questions the validity of their profession.

Beloved, that's not judgmental, that's looking at fruit and being concerned about what you see, wilted, shriveled up grapes. That's called raisins, no one eats them. You just, I feel compelled by love to help those people question whether or not they've truly come to know Jesus as Savior and Lord.

This man had been cleansed of his leprosy. No doubt he was excited. Who wouldn't be? But his zeal, his enthusiasm, he failed to obey Jesus. It's not good for his sake. He missed out on the opportunity to prioritize biblical fidelity. And if he had been faithful to Scripture, he would've, it would've produced a deep love of theology, of truth, of God-centered thinking, and that would result then in doxology, which would

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mean being enraptured with the glory of God, offering biblically informed passionate praise to God for all that he's done.

Obviously, the man is happy about his cleansing, which is why he ran off to tell everybody, but Jesus knew that feeling would wear off eventually. Jesus knew the happiness was momentary, temporal, so he wanted him to stop, meditate, learn, reflect on the truth because the fuller, longer-term benefit of listening to Scripture, of going deep into theology, of fanning that understanding to a flame of passion for God's glory, Jesus knew that is what would sustain not just temporary words about Jesus, but lifelong evangelism proclaiming his fullness.

The man was cleansed, but he missed out on the full restoration, to enjoy all that Jesus wanted him to enjoy. And that's not only sad for the man, but it had practical ramifications for Jesus' ministry in that region. Jesus' reaction to this turn of events is instructive to us. Notice he didn't hunt the guy down and scold him. He didn't get irritated or upset or discouraged. He just rolled with it. He just rolled with the unfolding of divine providence and made good use of the change in circumstance that

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God had given him. Because he did that, we get to have one more point in our outline. Isn't that cool? We not only come to Jesus to be completely cleansed, obey him to be fully restored, but also, point three, we learn to pray like Jesus to be spiritually refreshed.

Look at verses 15 and 16. "But now even more the report about him went abroad, and great crowds gathered to hear him and to be healed of their infirmities. But he would withdraw to desolate places and pray." Because of what we learned from Mark's account, we know the role of the, the cleansed leper, that he, played in the acceleration of the report about Jesus. The news went out everywhere. As we see in verse 17, it even caught the attention of the Pharisees and the law professors from everywhere.

Evidently, this cleansed leper was quite a talker. The news caught like brushfire. It spread rapidly; it went far with the crowds gathering, surging in to hear him teach, to get their own healing for themselves. Jesus' message was getting smothered, lost in the clamor. He was in danger of becoming just a popular

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icon, just a servant to their interests rather than serving the interests of the God who sent him to preach the Gospel.

So Jesus pulled back here. He made a tactical withdrawal. He retreated into the back country, and what we would see as an inconvenient obstacle for ourselves, Jesus turned into an opportunity for worship and communion. No worries whatsoever; I'll just pray more. Those verbs there, withdrew, pray, they're in the imperfect tense, meaning he was regularly, continually withdrawing and praying. He was getting away. Commentator I. Howard Marshall, he writes, "The main spring of his life was his communion with God, and in such communion, he found both strength and guidance to avoid submitting to temptation. He's unable to," fill, "fulfill here what Jesus has come to do, so he took advantage of the time. He used it for spiritual refreshment."

It's instructive to us, isn't it? All of those inconveniences that come into your life and interrupt your day, you can turn that into an opportunity to pray, to praise, to worship, to think. Don't use it as an opportunity to clear your email inbox.

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Don't use it as an opportunity to text with a friend, to reach out in some kind of superficial communication. Don't use it as an opportunity to surf the net, or do anything else that just distracts your mind. Use it as an opportunity to pray. See it as divine interruption.

We're not told here why Jesus spent all of his time in prayer. We do know his refreshment was all and only found in his communion with God. He didn't fret when the temporal demands of the crowd drowned out his attempts to teach them eternal truths. He simply, calmly adjusted his expectations to what providence revealed and pulled back from catering to people's fleshly demands. He took advantage of an opportunity to spend time with his father in prayer.

J. C. Ryle said, "Few professing Christians strive to imitate Christ in the matter of private devotions. There's plenty of hearing, reading, talking, visiting, teaching, but is there a correct proportion of private prayer? Are believing men and women sufficiently careful to be frequently alone with God? These are humbling and heart-searching questions, but we will

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find it useful to give them an answer. The most successful workmen in the Lord's vineyard are those who, like their master, are often and much upon their knees." That's well said.

If you find that you're just having a hard time, at the, just struggling, working, and it's just tearing you apart, take some time to stop, sharpen the axe before you go down to chop that tree down again. Sharpening the axe means get alone with God. Get down on your knees. Maybe the frustration is with divine purpose, so you will stop striving and you'll be spiritually refreshed in God. Because, like Jesus, for us, God is our great reward. There is only spiritual refreshment found in God, not in any other thing. God is the source of all of his satisfaction, contentment, energy, strength, joy. The same thing with us, we're found in him, right?

He went forth from prayer energized from that time alone with his Father. And, beloved, that's what he has given to us as well. That is the very essence of his gift of eternal life. John 17:3, "that they may know you the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you've sent." Look, ours is the enjoyment of that gift.

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When we come to Jesus for complete cleansing, when we obey Jesus for full restoration to God the Father in his way, in his time, we have the privilege then of finding spiritual refreshment just like Jesus did with God alone in prayer. Let us, like Jesus did, “draw with confidence near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in our time of need.” That’s our spiritual birthright.