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This morning we have this one simple story, a single event in these 5 verses.

Luke has taken us on a pregressive journey showing us step by step who Jesus is, until last week with the fish nearly sinking the 2 fishing boats, Simon Peter falls down in worship to the Son of God.

And you'll recall what came out of his mouth as he was prostrate before God the Son? What did he say? *“Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!”*

Where does the idea come from that sinful man cannot approach Holy God in his sinful state? We find that truth often in the Bible. The idea that Holiness and sinfulness cannot co-exist together, that sinfulness must shrink away and hide itself from the awesome holiness of God.

Isaiah said, I am undone. Manoah, Samson's father said, we're done for. We've seen God. Adam and Eve were cast out of the garden and a flaming sword was set to forever remove them from where God dwells.

Isaiah 59:1,2 states it simply for us;  
*1 Behold, the LORD’s hand is not so short*

*That it cannot save;  
Neither is His ear so dull  
That it cannot hear.*

*2 But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, And your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He does not hear.*

And Exodus 33 states it clearly out of the mouth of God to Moses;

*18 Then Moses said, “I pray Thee, show me Thy glory!” 19 And He said, “I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the LORD before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion.” 20 But He said, “You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!” 21 Then the LORD said, “Behold, there is a place by Me, and you shall stand there on the rock; 22 and it will come about, while My glory is passing by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock and cover you with My hand until I have passed by. 23 “Then I will take My hand away and you shall see My back, but My face shall not be seen.”*

There is a gulf between sinful men and the Creator who loves them, but has removed them from His presence, His holiness.

Now, if you just stop for a moment and think about that. An entire planet full of sinful men, removed from God's presence. In Romans 1 we see the results. He gives them over to their sin. He abandons sinful men to their sin. Progressively. We see there that it is a progression. He gave them over, He gave them over.

Now think about the news programs you have listened to in just the past week. The world is like a dysfunctional family that is in the process of harming itself over and over until there's nothing left to harm. The

world is a giant version of a family flying apart.

In March so far there have been 18 mass murder events with 11 murdered and 76 injured. This month. More days with mass murders than days without mass murder attempts. That's just one country, one problem.

If you were to ask google how many murders 2019 worldwide, there's no way to count. It would have to be one of those number generators like the national debt one with numbers that never stop racing up.

And no, I'm not an anti 2nd amendment right to bear arms, guns should go away person. The numbers prove that because of sin, we probably will need our guns to preserve our lives. Don't get me wrong.

It isn't guns that murder, it's sinful hearts. Dysfunctional hearts because of sin. Take the guns away and those same folk would be stoning each other to death with stones and bats.

Sin has degenerated our planet into a free-for-all of complete wretched dysfunction that's looking more and more like it's going to fly completely apart.

And the retarded news media asks; if there is a God, why doesn't He do something. Why does He allow the dysfunction. And they conclude that the biblical god, if there is one, is more wicked than the wicked men for allowing the wickedness.

This book answers all of those questions, by the way. It tells us that we chose sin at the temptation of Satan in the garden, and that sin is a communicable disease, and that every human is born with the disease of sin that removes them from God's presence and places them in a world that is ruled by the author of sin, Satan himself.

It tells of one judgement that cleansed the out of control planet of all but 8 sinners. Noah and the ark. That was with water. And it tells of the next cleansing which will be with fire. Our parents chose that for us and we were born with the same disease. Sin.

The book tells of God graciously instituting restraints. Governments. Police. Rulers. Order. And sin relentlessly attacks those restraints. Like a barrage against a flood wall. Like waves that strike and strike and strike relentlessly until the wall comes down.

God gave them over. God gave them over. Read the progression in Romans 1. Where are we in that progression? Rock bottom. Other cultures and societies in history that got to where we are at now were sovereignly wiped out. Removed. By God.

Are you scratching your heads wondering what this tirade has to do with our passage this morning? Stay with me. Stay with me.

Here's a little fiction for you. Something Jim believes but cannot prove. We can ask some day.

I believe God intentionally created sheep as an object lesson for us to understand how stupid and helpless we are without a shepherd to care and protect us. A visual aid if you will. We are just as lost and helpless to find our way, and defenseless in this sinful world as sheep are with no shepherd.

And I believe God intentionally created, or I suppose to be correct I must say, allowed, because disease comes not with creation, but with the curse of the fall away from God, so I'll say, I believe God intentionally allowed the disease of leprosy to give us a picture on the outside physically, of what sin does to every human on the inside, spiritually.

Leprosy attacks the nervous system. It removes all feeling. And it

attacks the skin with scaly spongy deterioration. The result is disfigurement and harm.

Our nervous system warns our bodies of harm. Pain is our safety net. Leprosy removes that warning system. There's a story of a doctor in India in the 19th century who was caring for a colony of lepers and he couldn't turn the key in a padlock, and a young boy, 12 or 13 said let me do it sahib doctor, and turned the key to open the padlock, but then it was discovered that the force he had used to do it had gashed his skin apart, opening it to the bone.

He couldn't feel that. They can't feel fire or the damage a burn does. They can't feel . . . anything. The result is disfigurement. Entire limbs and portions of face and other parts are gone, missing. Fingers reduced to nubs. The warning system of nerves relaying pain, is gone. So little by little they destroy their own persons.

That is a perfect parallel to what sin does to us spiritually. It numbs our spiritual nerve system until ultimately we become so dis-figured it's impossible to tell what we were like if the disease weren't present.

Sin is to us spiritually what leprosy is to us physically. It makes us hideous disfigured hollow shells of what God intended for us to be. And God says, not in my house. Sin doesn't come in my house.

Lepers cannot associate with non-infected people, and sinners cannot associate with a Holy God in His house. But there is a cure available. That's good news. Super good news. Let's look at our story this morning.

*12 And it came about that while He was in one of the cities,*

There's no connecting time line here. This refers back to the verse after all the diseases were cured in Capernaum at the end of chapter 4:43 *But*

*He said to them, “I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, for I was sent for this purpose.” 44 And He kept on preaching in the synagogues of Judea.*

That's because this is a universal truth. This could have happened anywhere, any city, any time. The place and time are unimportant to Luke's purpose in telling us this particular story. Luke's purpose is to paint a universal picture of great sickness, greater cure.

It's one thing that Peter worships Jesus as God because of the fish and the boats. But our next logical question in a progression is, He can create. He created fish. Lots of fish. But can he heal the real problem? Sin. If He is God, can He forgive sin? And Luke is taking us on a logical progression, this week and next, to answer that question.

This truth is for all of us. Any city. Any time. We can come to Jesus with the impossible disease, and He can cure it.

*12 And it came about that while He was in one of the cities, behold, there was a man **full** of leprosy;*

I looked at some of the various translations of these words. Many say covered with leprosy. or Covered with a serious skin disease. One said; Advanced case of leprosy. etc. etc. Even my beloved nasb says *covered* in the latest edition. That's why I've reverted to the 1977 that I grew up with.

The king james and NASB77 and ESV have the word, full. *Full of leprosy*. The greek word is *plérēs*. And it means completely occupied. The difference between covered with and full is the difference of a platter covered with fish and a basket full of fish.

He was full of leprosy. Yes, he had scaly spongy sick skin, on the surface, but the problem is inside. He is completely filled up with the

leprosy. The surface sores are only the evidence of the inner disease.

What a difference words make. Our world today is all about putting bandaids on the surface evidence and doing nothing about the inner disease.

Luke is a physician. He's a doctor. Luke tells us, this is an advanced case. This isn't someone with a patch of dry flaky skin. This isn't dermatitis (eczema) or psoriasis. This is advanced leprosy. He was full of disease from the toes of his feet to the crown of his head, sick. Deadly sick.

*and when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and implored Him, saying,*

We need to stop just here for some background, because this should have never happened this way. The law of God, in order to restrain disease and protect his people forbid lepers to come anywhere near other people.

*Leviticus 13:1 And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, saying,*

*2 When a man shall have in the skin of his flesh a rising, a scab, or bright spot, and it be in the skin of his flesh like the plague of leprosy; then he shall be brought unto Aaron the priest, or unto one of his sons the priests:*

*3 And the priest shall look on the plague in the skin of the flesh: and when the hair in the plague is turned white, and the plague in sight be deeper than the skin of his flesh, it is a plague of leprosy: and the priest shall look on him, and pronounce him unclean.*

And it goes on like that for 59 verses. Lepers were excised from society like cancer is excised from the body. They were set apart. Quarantined.

Quarantined from their loved ones, family, friends, work, society, religion, everything. It's like being a walking dead person. You're a beggar that can't come near who you're begging from. Add to that the physical effects as the disease slowly claims your own body and kills it.

In this case, according to God's law, this man could have been stoned for the transgression of getting anywhere near Jesus and all the rest of the crowd. Not allowed.

But think about it. After solitary confinement, and your body is full of the disease, it's advanced and you are alone without hope, sick and dying, maybe stoning wouldn't be so bad. That's our man in this story. Hopelessly sick and confined to solitary confinement by his disease. He had zero to lose, even if they stoned him.

*and when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and implored Him, saying,*

What Luke has described for us is the perfect physical picture parallel of what Jesus says in the beatitudes. The beatitudes describe a person who has the disease of sin and like this leper, understands his condition.

Those of us who have the disease of sin should approach Jesus exactly as this man full of leprosy. That's exactly why Jesus says those people who understand the disease of sin are blessed, if;

3 “*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

4 “*Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.*

5 “*Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.*

6 “*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.*

Sin makes you bankrupt, spiritually, blessed are the bankrupt who know they're bankrupt. Blessed are those who being bankrupt before God mourn over their loss. Blessed are those who approach God as helpless, meek, prostrate before a Holy God, and blessed are those who hunger to be cured of sin, to be righteous before God. Restored, like this leper.

We are blessed if we understand our spiritual disease like this man understood his physical one, and against all odds, we come begging, face down, prostrate, begging for healing.

vs. 12b "*Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.*"

These are the words every person born into the affliction of sin need to say. True salvation comes to those who understand who they are without Christ, what their status before God truly is, and who come begging, in faith.

This man was full of leprosy, but he was also full of faith. He understands and believes that this Jesus can heal him. If only He is willing. The doing isn't questioned. The willingness of God to heal him is his question.

I know you can. I believe you can. Please, will you heal a poor disgraced disfigured leper.

That's our approach to God. Helpless. Bankrupt. I know you can forgive. I believe you can forgive. Please, will you forgive me, a poor disgraced, helpless disfigured, cast out, quarantined from your Holiness, sinner.

*13 And He stretched out His hand,*

Jesus stretched out His hand. If we had been present that day, one of the crowd of people in that multitude watching this play out, we would have

been horrified.

NO! No Jesus! Don't touch him! He's unclean! He'll make you unclean. Don't touch him Jesus! You can be infected with his disease. If you touch Him, YOU will be unclean!

I wish I could remember who it was that uses the illustration of a white clean cotton glove, and mud. I think it's Al Mohler. The mud never gets glovey. It always goes the other direction. Only one thing can happen. The glove gets muddy. Mud doesn't get glovey. White gloves get muddy when they touch mud.

Unless. Except. No exception you say. No, one exception. When God reaches out and touches you, He doesn't become unclean, you become; clean!

*13 And He stretched out His hand, and touched him, saying, “I am willing; be cleansed.” And immediately the leprosy left him.*

Wow! Did we just hear Jesus say those 5 words! *I am willing. Be cleansed.*

Is that possible for us?? For those of us who are full of the disease of sin! Will He be willing to touch us and have the reverse thing, the miracle take place. Instead of my disease infecting Him, will He instead cause me to be made clean. Like this leper.

The answer is yes. But unlike the leper, sin is more difficult. Because God, in that same section in Genesis, says to Moses, I will by no means let the guilty go unpunished.

Like the leper, Jesus is willing to reach out and not only make me clean, He also takes my sin, the sin that requires punishment to satisfy God's very words to Moses, He touches me, makes me clean, and takes my sin

upon Himself and takes my punishment of death.

The leper said, If you are willing, you can . . . and Jesus said, I am. If we come broken and destitute, like this leper, worshipping the Son of God and ask Him to make us clean . . . He still is willing.

No matter the extent of the disease. This man was full of leprosy. We come full of sin. Sin dwells deeply, in our hearts, inside us, destroying us, and if like the leper we understand that, and ask Jesus if He will cleanse us and make us well, He is still saying, I am willing.

That's the gospel! That's the good news. Jesus is willing to cure poor sick destitute bankrupt sinners who come begging, like this man did!

But, you say, Sin is spiritual, leprosy is physical. Can the same man who cleansed the leper also cleanse sin? Come back next week. Luke is right here this morning, on purpose, hoping you'll ask that question. Cleansing on a physical level is one thing. Cleansing sin is a magnitude different. Can He? Will He. Luke is setting us up.

Now some of the translations stop short of leprosy. They want to call this; "serious skin disease". That's weak. And un-necessary. We know this is full blown leprosy. How? Because of what Jesus says next.

The man is restored. His skin is like a babies skin. Perfect beautiful, soft healthy skin.

Remember when Jesus was arguing with John the baptist who didn't want to baptize Him. And Jesus says, it's needful to what? Fulfil all righteousness.

Jesus doesn't abrogate one jot or one tittle of the law of Moses. And when this man is healed, Jesus sends him to the priests to go through the process spelled out by God in Leviticus 13. In case someone was

healed, the disease left them, there was work to be done by the priests to restore the person back into society.

Jesus says go do that. Why. Well first of all it's God's law. If is a fulfillment of all righteousness by respecting God's commands. Go do that. But secondly, there's something else happening.

Those priests know who this man is. They know his condition. They know he's hopelessly condemned to finish his life in solitude as a leper.

*14 And He ordered him to tell no one, “But go and show yourself to the priest, and make an offering for your cleansing, just as Moses commanded, for a testimony to them.”*

Do it because Moses commanded it. But also, do it as a testimony to them. How did you become clean? Jesus touched me. Impossible.

Chances are no priest ever got to fulfil those laws. Leprosy only goes one direction. Did God include those laws specifically for when His Son came to earth, so they would be in place, when the one person who can cure leprosy, visits?

We can cure Hanson's disease now. I think that happened in my lifetime. Even this man, what was left of him, I think could be cured. But curing the disease only stops the disfigurement. We can't restore what was lost before the cure. We can only stop the disease from taking more.

Jesus healing was complete. Go show yourself to the priests. For a witness, a testimony to them. Whole. Healthy. Robust. Complete.

Why did Jesus command him to tell no one!? Because the crowd of people pressing in on Jesus with no commitment to follow Him, is big enough. We don't need more superficial folks who want to be

entertained by Jesus doing tricks. That crowd is big enough.

*15 But the news about Him was spreading even farther, and great multitudes were gathering to hear Him and to be healed of their sicknesses.*

The multitude has grown by a magnitude. The multitude is now a great multitude. They want what they can get. Healing. Hear someone who speaks like no man ever spoke. Step right up, ladies and gentlemen . . . and view the Jesus show.

That isn't who God is looking for. God is looking for people who understand their condition. Full of sin. Separated from God. Quarantined away from God because of the disease of sin. Desperate, bankrupts, helplessly pleading because they have faith that He can cleanse them of their disease, remove the sin, and make them whole.

That's the difference between the leper and the multitudes

Let me ask you this. Who will be in heaven? Will the multitude that has come to see the Jesus show and take away whatever they can get, will they be in Heaven?

How about the leper who comes, desperate, helpless, full of disease, humble, worshipping, and with faith that if God wills, He can make him clean.

In 1987 an ad campaign was released by PDFA; Partners for a drug free America. ***This is your brain on drugs.*** And the visual aids portion was a couple of eggs getting cracked into a frying pan and sizzling.

It was effective enough that to this day we're sending each other GIF's of this is your \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_ fill in the blanks. Everyone knows what it means. Everyone's seen some version

of those ads. It was an effective metaphor. Drugs fry your brain.

God has done the same thing for us with leprosy as our visual aid. This is your soul on sin. Leprosy is the visual physical equivalent of a soul infected with sin.

It's God's Partners for a Sin Free World campaign, but no one is paying much attention. It turns out sin is even more deadly than drugs at deadening our spiritual nerves. It kills our spiritual nervous system and sets us apart, quarantined, from God. Jesus is the cure. Jesus can make you clean.

Luke ends with a final truth.

*16 But He Himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray.*

The constant throng of needy people who continuously seek for Jesus so they can get their healings is relentless and exhausting. Jesus is pouring His life and His love into these crowds that follow Him around in the region of Galilee.

But who is pouring anything back in? Burnout comes quickly if it's all one direction in ministry. The shepherd needs time alone with His Father. And Jesus must use stealth to be by Himself, alone, but not alone, His Father is with Him in those quiet moments.

Jesus is the same yesterday, and today, and yes, forever. And those who approach Him, who understand their spiritual deadly illness of sin, and ask Him to heal them, will be healed. Just like the leper in this story.

Next week, He goes public with that fact. Don't miss it!