

JESUS: HOLISTIC HEALER

Open

Acts of compassion have the potential to heal wounds, restore relationships, curb hatred, and prevent violence. Jesus showed God's mercy in amazing ways for the sick, the poor, the hungry, the outcast, and the weary.

- When you think of Jesus, do you think of him as a merciful healer? Why or why not?

Context

Within Jesus' kingdom, powerful oppressors are brought low, and those pushed to the margins are uplifted (Lk. 1:50–53; 2:34–25). After proclaiming his mission of liberating society's "underclass" (Lk. 4:18–19), Jesus begins rescuing creation from sin, disease, poverty, evil spirits, and death (Lk. 4:31–44). Simultaneously, he trains his apprentices to share in his work (Lk. 5:1–11).

Read Luke 5:12–26 (NIV)

^{5:12} While Jesus was in one of the towns, a man came along who was covered with leprosy. When he saw Jesus, he fell with his face to the ground and begged him, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean."

¹³ Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" And immediately the leprosy left him.

¹⁴ Then Jesus ordered him, "Don't tell anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them."

¹⁵ Yet the news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses. ¹⁶ But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.

¹⁷ One day Jesus was teaching, and Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there. They had come from every village of Galilee and from Judea and Jerusalem. And the power of the Lord was with Jesus to heal the sick. ¹⁸ Some men came carrying a paralyzed man on a mat and tried to take him into the house to lay him before Jesus. ¹⁹ When they could not find a way to

do this because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus.

²⁰ When Jesus saw their faith, he said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven."

²¹ The Pharisees and the teachers of the law began thinking to themselves, "Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

²² Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked, "Why are you thinking these things in your hearts? ²³ Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? ²⁴ But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." So he said to the paralyzed man, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." ²⁵ Immediately he stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on and went home praising God.

²⁶ Everyone was amazed and gave praise to God. They were filled with awe and said, "We have seen remarkable things today."

Discuss

1. Imagine you are in the crowd witnessing the events in verses 17–26. Who are the key characters in the story? What is most striking to you? How might you describe the experience to a friend?
2. People with leprosy lived as social outcasts and were considered "untouchable." What implications do Jesus' instructions to the leper (v. 14) have for his social and spiritual health?
3. As with the leper, how might Jesus' "touch" today empower a person living on society's margins to experience friendship and community? What examples come to mind?
4. In Jesus' time, the religious leaders taught—and people generally thought—that illnesses and handicaps resulted from God's judgment. Why might Jesus' statement, "Your sins are forgiven" (v. 20), be welcome news to this suffering man?
5. The religious leaders question Jesus' authority to forgive sin (vv. 21–22). How does his response address their questions (vv. 22–24)?

Reflect

"We have drugs for people with diseases like leprosy, but these drugs do not treat the more problematic disease of being unwanted," said the late Mother Teresa, whose sisters in Kolkata run both a hospice and a clinic for leprosy patients. "The sick and the poor suffer even more from rejection than material want," she said. As his hands and feet, Jesus calls us, like Mother Teresa, to serve as channels of physical, spiritual, social, and emotional healing to the whole person.



- Do you relate to the men afflicted with leprosy and paralysis, the tax collectors and "sinners," or the Pharisees? What might you see in Jesus that would encourage you to seek his help?
- What kind of healing do you think people today need the most? Which aspect of healing are you most drawn to?
- The paralyzed man's friends took bold risks to bring him to Jesus. What might their initiative imply about our role in others' healing?
- How can medical and healthcare professionals go beyond treating symptoms to addressing patients' full well-being?

Pray

Consider which character(s) you identify with. Ask Jesus what he might want to say to you. Sit in silence and listen to his words. Confess any sinful attitudes and pray for his guidance and empowerment.