

Sinful And Unclean

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 27 January 2019

Preacher: Shawn Woo

[0 : 0 0] Today, we will be reading Luke 5, 1 through 16. So if you could turn to that in your Bibles. As you turn, I'll just share, as I was reading and preparing for Scripture reading today, I was overwhelmed by Jesus' authority and his sovereignty to heal, to deliver, to correct, to guide.

How disciples turn from all that they knew to follow the Lord. And so I'll pray in a moment, but as you hear and read along, may the Lord speak to you as he desires.

Father God, thank you so much for your word, your infallible word. Lord, I pray that you will move in our hearts today as we hear the word, as it ministers to us.

Lord God, may your Holy Spirit guide and direct our thoughts, guide and direct our understandings. May you prepare a way for Pastor Sean's message today, Lord God, that we are able to receive it even more so after hearing this word.

So may you move, Father God, in Jesus' name. Amen. Luke 5, 1. Jesus calls the first disciples. On one occasion, while the crowd was pressing on to him to hear the word of God, he was standing by the lake of Gennesaret.

[1 : 3 1] And he saw two boats by the lake, but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon's, he asked him to put out a little from the land.

And he sat down and taught the people from the boat. And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.

And Simon answered, Master, we toiled all night and took nothing. But at your word, I will let down the nets. And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish and their nets were breaking.

They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats. So both the boats, so that they began to sink.

But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees saying, Depart from me, for I'm a sinful man, O Lord. For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken.

[2 : 3 4] And so also were James and John, sons of David, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, Do not be afraid. From now on, you'll be catching men.

And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him. While he 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, can you make me clean? 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 priests and make an offering for your cleansing, as Moses commanded, for 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 and pray.

[3 : 41] The word of the Lord. Good morning.

My name is Sean. For those of you who are visiting, one of the pastors at Trinity Cambridge Church, I have the privilege of preaching God's word on most Sundays. And we're in Luke, in the series through the Gospel of Luke.

We're in chapter 5, verses 1 through 16. This morning. We saw in chapters 3 and 4, Jesus getting baptized, which was his anointing as the messianic king, the king that God had promised to send to save his people.

And then we saw him demonstrate his authority and power in those chapters as well. But in spite of all of this, Jesus faced rejection from his own townspeople in Nazareth.

And then at the end of that chapter, in chapter 4, Jesus concluded by saying that he must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well. And at the beginning of our passage today, we find ourselves wondering who then will be the kind of people who will receive the good news, who will be able to respond to Jesus' message.

[5 : 03] The answer is surprising. I'm just going to come down real quick to grab the iPads so that I can show you guys the things that I'm pointing out. And the answer is surprising because in our society, it's people who are the most successful or the people who are the most attractive or the people who seem to have everything put together that will get admission to things and get accepted or invited into things.

But here, the kind of people that Jesus invites to follow him is surprising. God's kingdom is an upside-down kingdom. He does not choose to minister only to the best and the brightest or even to the holiest people, but he calls the sinful and cleanses the unclean.

That's really the main point of this passage, that Jesus calls the sinful and cleanses the unclean. And we see this first in verses 1 to 11, the calling of the sinful.

First, let's look at that. Verses 1 to 2 tell us that the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God. And throughout chapter 4, we saw Luke emphasizing Jesus' teaching, his word, that his word possessed authority and power.

So once again, the focus in Luke is not on his signs and wonders, but on his word, what he taught, his preaching, that takes center stage.

[6 : 29] The sign and wonders serve to prove the things that he's teaching, his word, to authenticate and confirm his word. And the preaching of the word of God is a central concern here as well.

And the people are so eager to hear Jesus speak the word of God that they're pressing in while Jesus is standing by the lake of Gennesaret, which is another name for the Sea of Galilee.

And Jesus notices two boats there on the shore. They were empty because the fishermen were out washing their boats, washing their nets, I mean. And one of the boats turned out to be Simon Peter's, whom we already encountered in chapter 4.

Jesus had just healed his mother-in-law of an illness, of a fever. And Jesus now sees his boat. And in order to get away from the crowd that was pressing in on him, he goes into the boat.

He tells Peter to put out a little from the land. And then Jesus proceeds to teach people from the boat. So instead of casting nets from the boat to catch fish, Jesus is casting the net of his gospel, the good news that he's preaching, to catch people.

[7 : 34] And in the next verse, Jesus now turns to teaching Peter how to do the same, to become a fisher of men, as he says. So look at verse 4 with me. It tells us, When he had finished speaking, Jesus said to Simon, Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.

So Jesus is taking control over Peter's boat, which is ironic, because I don't know if you guys remember who Jesus' earthly adoptive father was, which was Joseph, and he was a carpenter.

So he works with wood. And here's a carpenter, because in those days, you learned the profession, your trade from your father.

Here's a carpenter ordering fishermen where to fish. And it's like me telling a manager at an investment banking firm where to invest their money.

It's absurd. It's almost funny. They'll just laugh at me if I told them. And Peter is understandably skeptical, and he answers in verse 5, Master, We toiled all night and took nothing.

[8 : 40] The word toil is a reference to very difficult, laborious, backbreaking labor. And nighttime was the best time in this place to fish.

And their backbreaking work the night before had produced nothing, indicating that it's not a good idea, according to Peter's professional opinion, to go out fishing during the day immediately on the next day.

But Peter doesn't end there, even though he's skeptical. He continues in verse 5, But at your word, I will let down the nets. Once again, the word takes center stage because Jesus speaks from God.

He speaks the word of God. Peter, in spite of his best professional opinion, defers to Jesus and obeys his instruction. Peter serves here as a model of faith and obedience here.

And sometimes God leads us in surprising ways as well in our lives. He leads us in ways that sometimes seem to contradict our own wisdom and expertise. Sometimes the Bible teaches us things that contradict our culture or what our parents taught us.

[9 : 49] But because it is God's word, we must overcome that skepticism and have faith, as Peter does. We have to take God at his word and obey him because we can do that.

We can build our faith for that by cultivating a habit of seeking God's help and guidance on things that are small and big. And we should be open to and sensitive to the leading, God's redirection in our lives.

So when he tells us, put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch and we might be able to hear his voice and obey. The result of Peter's obedience is the haul of a lifetime.

Verses 6 to 7 tell us that when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish and their nets were breaking. They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them and they came and filled both the boats so that they began to sink.

The catch was so abundant that they didn't have enough nets and they didn't have enough partners and they didn't have enough boats. And Peter knows better than to attribute this to his genius fishing skills or to a stroke of luck.

[10 : 53] It says in verses 8 to 10, read with me, but when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees saying, depart from me for I am a sinful man, O Lord.

For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken. And so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee who were partners with Simon.

So Peter, along with James and John, who will also be chosen as Jesus' 12 disciples, recognize that Jesus is the reason for their spectacular catch of fish.

And seeing that miraculous catch of fish enables Peter to see Jesus for who he really is so that he can't help but humble himself before Jesus by falling down before his knees.

And he says, depart from me for I am a sinful man, O Lord. I'm unworthy to be in your presence. I'm unworthy to be here like sitting at your knees. Please leave.

[11 : 54] Depart from me. The word Lord here can be a generic word that refers to any kind of superior. So something like an English equivalent of a sir, hey sir, something like that.

But in the Gospels, the word is frequently given more theological weight. It's given a deeper meaning. So for example, in Luke chapter 1 verse 43, God was called the Lord.

And in Luke chapter 2 verse 11, he said that Jesus is a Savior who is Christ the Lord. So this is a significant word. Peter's addressing him as Lord and bowing down before him.

He suggests that Jesus is in fact either God or a divine messenger. That's what Peter knows at this point. Even though, as we find out later in the Gospel, Peter and Jesus' disciples don't quite grasp the extent of who Jesus is.

They don't fully grasp it yet. But he knows enough to recognize that Jesus is a divine messenger before whom he is unworthy and he must bow. And we know that this is a divine encounter because in Luke, there is a standard pattern that Luke follows when a human being encounters a divine being.

[13 : 04] So in Luke chapter 1 to 2, the angel of the Lord, a messenger of the Lord, appears to Zechariah, Mary, and the shepherds in three separate occasions.

And each of those three occasions follow the exact same pattern. So when you encounter a divine being, first, there's the appearance of the divine being. Second, there's the astonishment and fear of the human being in the presence of the divine being.

Third, there's the assurance by the divine being saying, do not fear, do not be afraid. And then fourth, there is the announcement of the divine beings. And usually, that's accompanied by a sign that guarantees the fulfillment of the announcement that this divine agent brought.

So if you look at that pattern and map the encounter with Peter onto it, it follows the pattern exactly because first, Jesus' appearance is met after the catch of fish.

Peter sees it, sees him. And then second, there's the astonishment and fear. And he's astonished and falls down before Jesus. And then third, Jesus tells him, do not be afraid.

[14 : 09] And then fourth, he makes his announcement, from now on, you will be catching men. That's the announcement. And that miraculous catch of fish that they just have taken serves as the accompanying sign that guarantees to Peter, James, and John that they will indeed become fishers of men.

So even though Peter might not recognize fully yet who Jesus is, he senses that he is a divine messenger and he is unworthy and says, depart from me for I am a sinful man.

It's just like a person who emerges from darkness, from the bedroom after night's sleep and if the sun's really bright in his eyes, he can't quite open his eyes. Or maybe someone like a poor man in a village who feels unworthy to have a king come into his lowly house, Peter senses that he is unworthy to be in Jesus' presence because Jesus is the Holy One.

So he confesses, depart from me for I am a sinful man. This is a major theme throughout the Gospel of Luke and actually later in chapter 18, Luke tells the parable of a Pharisee and a tax collector.

That famous parable that many of you guys have heard. And in this parable, God rejects the self-righteous Pharisee who boasts of his righteousness.

[15 : 29] This Pharisee is self-congratulating. He's saying, I am so righteous. I'm not like this sinner, this tax collector here over there. But God rejects that tax collector's prayer.

But he accepts the humble and contrite tax collector who confesses his sinfulness and pleads for God's mercy. So in a similar manner, contrary to normal human expectation, Peter's admission of his sinfulness, his acknowledgement of his shortcoming, his failure and unworthiness, it does not distance him from God, but instead that draws him closer.

Because in God's wonderful mercy, he calls the sinful and cleanses the unclean. Recognizing our own sinfulness and unworthiness before God is the first step toward God.

So if you feel pretty good about yourself before God, if you are self-righteous, if you don't have enough of God's light in your life to expose your darkness, if you think that you deserve to be saved more than other people around you, that's a sign actually of your distance from God.

You're further away from God than you think. But the converse is also true. If you feel out of place here this morning, if you feel unworthy to be here, if you feel unqualified to worship God and to be in his presence, if you feel that you're too much of a sinner to approach God, if you feel that God would want nothing to do with you, that's all the more reason for you to be here, to approach God.

[17 : 09] Because that humility is necessary for approaching God. It's your sign of nearness to God. You're exactly the type of person that God seeks. As God says in Isaiah chapter 66 verse 2, but this is the one to whom I will look, he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my work.

For this reason, instead of scolding and shunning Peter, and Jesus had every right to do that, he's the holy one and here lies a sinful man that Jesus had every right to reject and shun.

Yet instead, Jesus tells Peter not to fear and gives him this wonderful promise from now on. That's a key phrase in Luke that indicates that life-transforming effect of an encounter with Jesus.

From now on, you will be catching men. Instead of catching fish, Peter will be catching men. Peter's life is now changed. So normally, you catch fish in order to kill and eat it, right?

So the image is a little bit jarring for some people because that's the normal function of catching fish. So that's actually, that's why the image of catching fish is usually used in the Old Testament as a metaphor for God's judgment.

[18 : 32] So God says he will catch them like fish with hooks and he will consume them with his wrath. So that's the typical image that's used in the Old Testament. But Jesus here transforms that imagery in a surprising way because the word catching here is actually, it actually means more precisely to catch alive.

In the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the same word is used to refer to sparing people from death or from judgment. It refers to saving them from the judgment that they deserved.

So Peter then will join Jesus on his mission to seek and save the lost. They will take those people who deserve to be caught and killed and instead catch them alive.

They will rescue people who are set for judgment so that they might be spared. That's the call. And these fishermen's response to Jesus' call is incredible.

It says in verse 11, And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him. The word follow is the standard word that indicates discipleship.

[19 : 45] A disciple is someone who follows a master to learn from his instruction and to imitate his example. And notice that they didn't here sell their record haul of fish to set up their retirement accounts and then follow Christ.

It says that they left everything at the height of their greatest professional success. They left everything and followed Jesus.

This is not an exception reserved for special cases. This is the rule of Christian discipleship. So many people say, Oh, after I grow up, I'm a little older, after I become an adult, I will really follow God and serve Him.

Oh, after I have graduated, I will really follow God and serve Him. Oh, after I have job security, I will really follow God and serve Him.

Oh, after I'm married and have a family, I will really follow God and serve Him. After I've made enough money, I will really follow God and serve Him. But that's not Christian discipleship.

[20 : 54] Christian discipleship is to leave everything to follow Christ because Jesus is extremely worth it. Now, don't hear what I'm not saying.

I'm not saying that all of you should quit your jobs right now, text your bosses to become ministers and foreign missionaries. But please do hear what I'm saying. Leaving everything and following Jesus is not the exclusive call of ministers and foreign missionaries.

It is the call of every single Christian because Jesus later says to all of them in Luke 9, 23, he said to all, if anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.

With all due respect to all of you and all your jobs, you guys, some of you have, a lot of you have great jobs. Your job is not your calling. That's not where you're supposed to derive your purpose and meaning in life in an infinite ultimate sense.

And that's why when you seek to get from your job that meaning and purpose that only Christ is supposed to fulfill, it always disappoints you and leaves you wanting. Your job is the context in which to live out your Christian calling to follow Jesus.

[22 : 27] It's not your calling. That's why 1 Corinthians 7, 24, says, so brothers, in whatever condition each was called, there let him remain with God.

R. Kent Hughes, a pastor and a Bible commentator, puts it this way. Jesus calls his people to diverse vocations, but all are to devote their lives to catching men and women alive.

This is to be our perpetual vocation. No matter what condition your life is in, whether you're well or sick, rich or poor, married or single, employed or unemployed, no matter what job you might have, if you are a Christian, you have a God-given calling to leave everything and follow Jesus so that you can catch men and women alive.

The center of your life is no longer you, it's no longer your boyfriend or girlfriend, it's no longer your spouse, nor your child, nor your parent, nor your boss, nor your professor or advisor.

The center of your life is Jesus. Your purposes and priorities revolve around Jesus. Your decisions serve Jesus. Your life belongs to Jesus.

[23 : 46] That's what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. So that's why we can't compartmentalize our lives and say, well, this much of my time belongs to God.

The rest is mine. This much of my money belongs to God. The rest is mine. These relationships I have belong to God, but these are for me.

There's no such thing as my time, my money, my relationships, when you're following Christ. All your time is Christ's.

All your money is Christ's. All your relationship is Christ's. All that you are is Christ's. Have you left everything to follow Jesus? Or are you still serving your own desires and ambitions, selfish ambitions?

And Christ's mission of fishing men is worth leaving everything behind for. There's a quote I love to use. I'm sure you've heard this before. C.T. Studd, one of the famous Cambridge Seven.

[24 : 55] Unfortunately, it's not Cambridge, Massachusetts. It's Cambridge, UK. These students from Cambridge University who became foreign missionaries, all of them went to China. And he wrote this.

Sorry, I'm getting this slight error that keeps going back. It says, Some want to live within the sound of church or chapel bell. I want to run a rescue shop within a yard of hell.

All around us, there are people about to be caught like fish and consumed by the just wrath of God. And Jesus calls us to join him in catching fish, catching them alive.

Is evangelism a priority in your life? Jesus said that his purpose in his mission was to proclaim the good news of liberation and salvation to people.

Is that your purpose in life? If it were, how would it look different? The king, Christ the king, has summoned you and he has commissioned you for this mission.

[26 : 03] Are you answering your call as a disciple of Jesus? So verses 1 to 11 taught us that Christ calls sinful people to be his disciples.

And then in verses 12 to 16, we see that Jesus' mission of fishing men involves cleansing the unclean. So verse 12, read with me, says that while Jesus was in one of the cities, there came a man full of leprosy.

The term leprosy is used more technically narrowly nowadays, but in scripture, it refers to a wide range of skin diseases. It can cause scaly patches, swellings, rashes, blisters, and or scabs all over your skin.

Leprosy, also known technically as Hansen's disease, is a long-term bacterial infection that inflames the skin and damages the nervous system. And it can, in fact, damage your nervous system so severely that an infected person no longer feels any pain in his extremities.

So this often leads to further injuries and infections because he can no longer feel any pain when he touches something that he shouldn't touch, like something really sharp or scalping hot. And so I got a picture.

[27 : 20] Here's a picture of a man from 1886, a 24-year-old man who has leprosy. Now, so the physical symptoms alone were severe enough, but the social consequences of being a leper was even worse because leprosy was contagious.

It was associated with ritual uncleanness. Leviticus 13, 45-46, commanded this, The leprous person who has the disease shall wear torn clothes and let the hair of his head hang loose.

And he shall cover his upper lip and cry out, Unclean! Unclean! He shall remain unclean as long as he has the disease. He is unclean. He shall live alone.

His dwelling shall be outside the camp. This was not intended to be cruel. Lepers simply had to be quarantined in order to protect the rest of the population.

As a parent of a child in school, I receive an advisory email every year from the Cambridge Public School District, and they tell us to keep our child at home if they have, one, temperature over 100 degrees, vomiting or diarrhea, discharge from the nose that is not clear, eye inflammation or crusting, or undiagnosed rash or skin eruption.

[28 : 42] So it's really not all that different. It's the same idea. You isolate the people who are contagious so that you can keep the disease from spreading. The difference, of course, is that a sick child could return to school as soon as he or she gets better, but the leper in the ancient world had no hope, usually, of getting better.

The bacterium that causes leprosy wasn't discovered until the 19th century, and a cure for it wasn't developed until the 1940s. So for this man in the Bible, leprosy was a permanent and incurable condition.

And so, for that reason, lepers lived as, in their entire lives, as social outcasts, excluded from normal human interaction in life. And it says in the rest of verse 12 that when he saw, this leper saw Jesus, he fell on his face and begged him, Lord, if you will, you can make me clean.

The very fact that this leper has come into the city and has approached Jesus is daring and remarkable because it would mean putting other people at risk and he would face tremendous criticism and pressure, perhaps even abuse.

He's putting himself out there, counting on Jesus' power to heal. If Jesus heals him, then everything will be well and the man can return to a healthy, normal life.

[30 : 06] But if he does not heal, this leper will remain in sickness and experience much shame and score, probably even worse, for having dared to do this. There's a lot of dramatic tension here about this leper banks on Jesus' ability and willingness to heal.

And just as Peter fell down at Jesus' knees and called him Lord in verse 8, here the leper also recognizes that Jesus, when he's with Jesus, he's in the presence of a divine messenger and he falls on his face to beg Jesus and addresses him again as Lord.

And pay attention to how he phrases his request. This is important. He doesn't say, Lord, if you will, you can heal me. He doesn't say that. He says, if you will, you can make me clean.

Clean is the language of ritual purity. As I said, leprosy was associated in the Old Testament with ritual uncleanness. So the leper knows that he not only carries a physical disease, that he also carries with him spiritual defilement.

He's unclean. He's polluted by sin. The leper, knowing this, asks to be made clean. Notice also that the leper does not say, Lord, if you are able, please make me clean.

[31 : 28] He says, Lord, if you will, you can make me clean. The leper knows that it's not a matter of Jesus' ability to heal, but a matter of his willingness to heal.

I wish that all of our prayers would be filled with such faith. Lord, I believe with all of my heart, I know that you can heal if you will.

Oh, Lord, you can make me clean. If we had such faith, wouldn't we be quick to throw ourselves before Jesus' feet to pray? You have faith that spurs you into prayer like this leper.

Even if you feel unworthy of God's favor, even if you feel like your life is a mess, even if you feel like you've been shunned by everybody else, you can turn to Jesus because Jesus calls us sinful and he cleanses the unclean.

It says in verse 13, and Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him saying, I will be clean.

[32 : 37] And immediately, the leprosy left him. The Gospel of Luke often mentions that Jesus touched someone or laid his hand on someone in order to heal them.

This is an expression of Jesus' tender care, especially in the case of this leper. You saw the picture earlier. This leper is contagious. He's ritually unclean.

You almost get this visceral aversion to getting near a person like that. To touch him was to be contaminated spiritually and it was to put yourself at risk of contracting leprosy yourself.

But instead of putting on the sanitary gloves and a face mask and backpedaling to keep the man at a distance, Jesus stretches himself out to touch the man.

I will be clean. That's the kind of king that Jesus is. Do you feel lonely and unwanted?

[33 : 45] Do you feel dirty and defiled? Do you feel sinful and unworthy?

Other false gods will tell you, hey, get clean before you come. Clean yourself. But Jesus comes, God comes to us, the Son of God comes to us and makes us clean so that we might live forever with Him.

That's the kind of God we have. That's the king that we serve. So instead of the leper making Jesus unclean as everybody around Him expected to happen, Jesus makes the leper clean.

If you bring your sins to Jesus in repentance, you can be made clean. There was a 19th century Christian minister named Damien.

He moved to Molokai, an island in Hawaii where a village had been dedicated. Quarantined as a leper colony, a place where only lepers live.

[34 : 49] For 16 years he devoted his entire life, the entirety of that 16 years to serve the lepers. He lived with them, he spoke their language, he bandaged their wounds, he touched the hands that no one else would touch and he preached to them the good news of Jesus Christ.

He built homes for them to live in, schools for them to study in, church buildings for them to worship in, and he handmade 2,000 coffins so that when they died inevitably of this disease that they might be buried with dignity.

And because of him people said that this village in Molokai became, it was no longer a place where people would come to die, but it became a place for people to live. And one day when Damien was preparing a bath, he accidentally dipped his foot in the scalding water, which caused blisters on his foot.

However, he did not feel any pain from the burn, which alerted him to the fact that he had two contracted leprosy. The next time he preached, instead of addressing them as he usually did as brothers and sisters, he addressed them as fellow lepers.

He had become one of them. And he died as one of them. In his sacrificial ministry, Pastor Damien was not blazing a new trail.

[36 : 17] He was following in the footsteps of Christ, his Savior and King. The King who stretched out his hand to touch the leper and made him clean. Do we have the compassion of Christ to serve the sick in our midst?

Do we serve the outcasts? Those who are rejected and ridiculed by society, do we stretch out to minister to them?

Christians should be on the front lines of any such kind of minister. And we must do more than that. We should care for the physically sick, but we also need to care for those who are spiritually unclean.

The doctor cannot heal the sick without first getting in contact with them. And we cannot share the saving news of Jesus Christ with our neighbors unless we first get to know them and talk to them.

Yes, there are a lot of self-righteous people in the world who think that they have no need for Jesus. But there are also a lot of people in the world who are aware of their sinfulness. People with checkered pasts and broken relationships who are afraid to talk to Christians because they fear judgment and condemnation.

[37 : 43] And we should be addressing these people as fellow lepers, fellow sinners saved. We are all sinners before God, but we have been saved by the grace of God.

We should be sharing the goodness of Jesus Christ with them. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Sorry, I just heard from an old friend. They made really bad decisions, did a lot of bad things.

And now she's in the area and we're inviting her to come and her husband to come. and they feel unworthy to come. If you feel unworthy, you're exactly the type of person that should be here.

Because Jesus calls the sinful and cleanses the sick, cleanses the unclean. So after making the leper clean, it says in verse 14 that Jesus charged him to tell no one but to go and show yourself to the priest and make an offering for your cleansing.

[39 : 01] As Moses commanded for a proof to them. Why doesn't Jesus want this leper to tell others about his healing? Verses 15 to 16 tell us why.

He says, 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.

So Jesus' reputation as a healer always gathered large crowds around him. Jesus, because of that, would withdraw to desolate places and pray. So instead of basking in his fame and his glory and compulsively checking the number of likes he has on his Facebook and Instagram account, he retreats to solitude to converse with his father through prayer.

And earlier in Luke 4, 42 to 43, Jesus also withdrew to a desolate place and left the crowds that sought him. And the reason that he gave there was this. And when it was there, he departed and went into a desolate place.

And the people sought him and came to him and would have kept him from leaving them. But he said to them, this is the reason, I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well, for I was sent for this purpose.

[40 : 23] So it seems that Jesus, withdraws from the crowds and tells the leper not to tell others because his reputation as a healer would bring so many crowds that he would prevent him from fulfilling his mission of preaching the good news of the kingdom, the preaching the good news of salvation to these people.

Yes, the signs and wonders are great. Yes, the healing's great, but that's supposed to serve to authenticate and prove the message. That's not the main point because Jesus must preach the good news that we must repent of our sins and believe in him for salvation.

Even though he tells the leper not to tell anyone about his healing, Jesus does tell him to go show the priest what has happened and offer a sacrifice.

This is a reference to Leviticus chapter 14 which speaks of the procedure for declaring a leper clean. It was a week-long process that began with two birds.

One was dipped in blood. One was sacrificed. One bird was sacrificed and its blood was sprinkled on the leper and the other bird that was not sacrificed was dipped in the blood of the sacrificed leper.

[41 : 39] It was released to go free. This was intended to serve as a picture of removal of sin and cleansing and ultimately pointed to Jesus, the sacrifice that he would make.

So the bird that is sacrificed serves as the substitute for the other bird and for the leper. This bird is sacrificed and its blood is used for the cleansing of the bird which represents the leper so that both can now be released and go clean and be released to go free.

So that's the picture. And the reason why Jesus is able to say to this leper not only to heal him but also to cleanse him, to declare him clean, it's because Jesus is looking ahead to the substitutionary sacrifice that he will make on the cross for our sins.

Just like that bird that sacrificed, Jesus himself will die on the cross as our substitute so that we can be sprinkled with his blood, metaphorically speaking, and be made clean.

This is why the blood is significant. Hebrews 9.22 says, Without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins.

[42 : 54] The reason for this is because blood represents life. And the penalty for sin is death. The just penalty for sin against God is death.

So only the blood which represents life must be shed, must be poured out in order for that penalty to be satisfied, in order for the justice of God to be satisfied.

And so Jesus comes as God's agent. God the Father sends his only son, Jesus, to be the substitutionary sacrifice for our sins, and so that when he dies to pay the penalty for our sins on the cross, and he's raised victoriously on the third day, all of us who turn to him, all the sinners and unclean, who come to him and turn to him and trust him for salvation, can be cleansed by the blood and receive eternal life.

That's what 1 John is talking about. But if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his son, cleanses us from all sin.

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

[44 : 11] If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. So this is my plea with you this morning. Let's not make God out to be a liar.

Let's confess our sins. Acknowledge our sinfulness. It's only those who acknowledge that they're in the darkness that can step into the light that Christ offers.

sinners. It's only the unclean that offer themselves to Jesus to be cleansed by the blood of Christ. So if you are not yet a follower of Jesus, today you can make that commitment to become his disciple, to leave everything and follow him.

But if you're already a follower of Christ, I implore you to make it your daily practice to confess our sins and to receive joyfully and gratefully the forgiveness of sins and cleansing from all unrighteousness that Jesus has freely given to us.

Let me close by reading a verse from this hymn, There is a fountain filled with blood. I think we're singing it at the end of service. It says, There is a fountain filled with blood, drawn from Emmanuel's veins, and sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains.