

"Live as examples of Christ Jesus"

Devotions for Deacons

Title: Teach Us to be Merciful

Scripture: Luke 5: 12-15

Text: James 2:12-13

“With Jesus’ example before you, His love in your heart and a prayer on your lips, you will begin to show mercy.”

“Lord, if you are willing, make me clean.” These words are probably full of anguish; yet underneath of the pain, there is probably also faint hope –hope that Jesus will have mercy on this man who is lying at His feet. The man does not directly ask for healing; he asks to be made clean. This is a man with leprosy.

Like so many words outside of our experience, the word “leprosy” does not produce much of a reaction. We know it is a disease, but we do not think too much about how disfiguring it is. There was no cure for leprosy in Jesus’ day. People with leprosy often lost fingers and toes, and even limbs. Their faces became twisted. But perhaps even worse than this was the humiliation and loneliness. They were forced to leave everyone they loved, and to keep them away by continually shouting out society’s judgement on them and their condition: unclean!

In Luke 5, a man “covered with leprosy” comes and falls “with his face to the ground” before Jesus. It is a gesture of reverence; perhaps it is also one of shame. He is unclean. By Old Testament law, his disease is an outward sign of sin and separation. How dare this man approach anyone! Yet what happens next is amazing. Jesus *touches* the man. Can you imagine what that must have meant to him? He is untouchable. He is pushed beyond the margins of society into isolation. He is not someone that anybody touched. Nobody would dare.

But Jesus dared. Jesus touches him. And by touching Him, Jesus restores his humanity and his dignity; He touches the man in love. Jesus

does not need to do that. Many people are healed throughout the Gospels by the power of Jesus’ Word alone. Jesus knew that this man needed more –he needed mercy and love.

Jesus’ mercy triumphs over the judgement of His day. It relieves suffering. It restores dignity. It is full of love and compassion. In Hebrews 2, it says that Jesus became human, like us in almost every way, so He could show us mercy on the cross and in our lives. Praise God for His humanity! Praise Him for His mercy!

As deacons, we are called to live as examples of Jesus Christ –to reach out in love as Jesus did. We are also called to *teach* mercy. Mercy, though, is not something that can simply be taught. Mercy must be shown. If our hearts are full of love for God, and we know deep in our hearts the mercy we have been shown through Jesus, we will want to show mercy to those around us. Then, where there is injustice, we will work for justice. Where there is need, we will respond in love.

Perhaps you do not feel that you are there yet. Perhaps there are times when judgement triumphs over mercy in your life. Or you do not feel like loving your neighbour, let alone showing her mercy. Don’t worry. Offer your weakness to God in prayer. For God uses us as we are, even as He is molding us into something better. Pray that through the power of the Holy Spirit, He will impress on your heart God’s mercy. With Jesus’ example before you, His love in your heart, and a prayer on your lips, you will begin to show mercy, teaching those around you that mercy does indeed “triumph over judgement.”