

# The Leper's Bath

Matthew 8:1-4  
*Halifax: 7 November 2004*

## **Introduction:**

This morning we come to a new section in Matthew's gospel.

- This section begins at chapter 8 and continues through chapter 9.

Matthew has just finished presenting to us a marvellous example of Jesus' teaching and preaching ministry in chapters 5-7,

- Now He presents to us His healing ministry in chapter 8-9.

As we begin this section, it is very important for us to understand why this material is given to us.

- Many souls have been tormented by supposing that this record of Jesus' healing ministry is given to show us what we are to expect from Him today.
  - That whenever we are sick, we should expect Him to heal us as soon as we ask— if, of course, we have enough faith!
  - False teachers have seized on this and have presented themselves as healers, gaining fame and wealth through ministries of deceit that ignore the plain teaching of scripture.
- Let me be very direct...
  - It is simply contrary to the plain teaching of scripture to look at Jesus' healing ministry as a pattern for physical healing today!
  - The Bible is very clear that rather than expecting freedom from physical suffering in this life,
    - we should expect physical suffering to continue.
  - In Romans 8, the Apostle Paul says:
    - Romans 8:22-23: For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. Not only *that*, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.
    - Until the resurrection when our bodies are redeemed, we can expect to groan and suffer in this fallen world—
      - We are called to bear the cross!
    - Jesus Himself, far from teaching His disciples to expect an end to the curse now, said:

- John 16:33: “In the world you will have tribulation.”
  - As long as you remain in this world, you will have affliction of all kinds.
- In 1 Cor 15, Paul speaks specifically with reference to our physical body when he says that this corruptible body must put on incorruption when we go to heaven.
  - We are all in dying bodies now that are subject to all sorts of affliction. Our bodies are falling apart
  - Those who seek healing in this life from all physical infirmity hope against what God has promised...
    - They ignore one particular fact that debunks their whole theory—
      - Death remains! All die! We will all return to dust!
      - Until that changes, we can expect sickness and suffering.

So what is the purpose of the miracles that Jesus performed if they are not a pattern for our own physical healing today?

- Here are four things...

1) First, the miracles of Jesus are given to you to demonstrate that He is the Messiah who came to establish His kingdom in this world.

- This is emphasised throughout the Bible as the reason for these signs.
  - Isaiah had said that when the Messiah came,
    - Matthew 11:5 *"The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them.*
    - When someone came and started doing all these things, that person would be the Messiah.
- Jesus told the Jewish officials who rejected Him:
  - John 10:28: though you do not believe Me, believe the works, that you may know and believe that the Father *is* in Me, and I in Him.
    - The mighty works He performed showed that He was the Son of God.
  - The apostle John summaries this for us very nicely towards the end of his gospel when he says:
    - John 20:30-31: And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.

- The purpose of recording these works is not for us to imitate them, but that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ (the Messiah), the Son of God.
- After Jesus is resurrected, Peter speaks of Jesus as:
  - Acts 2:22: “Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know...”
  - In these words, you see again that the miracles are to verify who He is.
- And those he appointed to be apostles to see Him and then proclaim Him to the world were likewise given signs to verify their words...
  - In Hebrews 2, the scripture speaks of the salvation that Christ brought which (and I quote):
    - Heb 2:3-4: was confirmed to us by those who heard *Him*, God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will...
    - The signs showed that they were speaking the truth about Him, that their words can be trusted as the very word of God.

TRANS> And so you see that Jesus did miracles and that these are recorded for us to confirm that He is the Messiah.

2) Secondly, Jesus’ miracles show us that show that His kingdom has come into the world already in a very significant way...

- This is especially shown to us by His casting out Satan and claiming authority over him.
- The great change from the Old to the New Testament is that Satan no longer has dominion over the nations—Jesus does...
  - Matthew 12:28-29: "But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. Or how can one enter a strong man’s house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house.
  - By casting out Satan when He was here, Jesus showed that He no longer could deceive the nations!
    - This is a huge change that came about when the kingdom of God broke into the world in the day of Christ.
    - Now the gospel is to be preached to the whole world, not just to the Jews...
      - And the world will hear and believe!

- Not only that, but there has also come with Christ a new way of access to the Father...
  - Jesus has actually opened that way through His suffering for us so that we may now worship in spirit and truth rather than in the shadows of the OT service!
    - We come now by way of His blood He shed for the remission of sins, not merely the blood promised—
      - This is called a new and living way that has been inaugurated for us!
  - His work is finished and it brings us into eternal life **now**... in this life, though we wait for the redemption of our body...
    - Jesus speaks of this new life as resurrection from spiritual death!
      - John 5:24-25: Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life. Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live.

TRANS> So you see that the first reason for Jesus' miracles is to show us that He is the Messiah, and the second is to show us that His kingdom has now come into the world.

- 3) Thirdly, these miracles are recorded for you to reveal to you the glory that His kingdom will attain when it reaches its final perfection in heaven...
- Through His miracles, Jesus gives us a picture of what He will do for all His people in the final state...
    - by raising the dead, Jesus shows us that He will raise the dead at the last day.
    - by calming the storm, Jesus shows us that He will put an end to all destructive storms in the final state of His kingdom
    - by feeding the five thousand, He shows us that He will end all poverty
    - by healing all sorts of sickness and infirmity, He shows us that we will be made perfectly whole at the last day who are in Him.

TRANS> So now have seen three reasons for Jesus miracles:

- to show that He is the Messiah
  - to show that His kingdom has come into the world.
  - to show what we can expect to attain in that kingdom when it is perfected...
- 4) The fourth reason Jesus' miracles are recorded is to give us helpful illustrations about coming to Jesus for salvation now...

- The miracle stories encourage us to come to Jesus because they show us His compassion
  - All the miracles Jesus does are miracles that help people in distress...
  - He doesn't do things like turning frogs into stones... just to show off...
    - His miracles relieve human suffering and pain.
    - They demonstrate to us His compassion and desire to save all who come to Him...
      - They also show us that He is **able** to save us... that He has authority over sickness, Satan, wind, and wave.
- Related to this, His miracles also give us **visible** physical illustrations of **invisible** spiritual changes that He brings to us now by the new birth...
  - When you see him raise the dead,
    - you see an illustration of how He gives spiritual life to those who are dead in sin...
  - When you see Him open the eyes of the blind,
    - you learn about how He opens our eyes to see the truth...
  - When you see Him feed the hungry,
    - you learn about how He nourishes our souls, giving us strength to obey...
  - The physical miracles are presented to you to encourage you to come to Him for spiritual blessings now.
    - Throughout the word of God, these physical blessings are used to illustrate spiritual blessings.
- And not only that, but the miracle stories themselves show you **how** to come to Him now...
  - You see a leper come with humility... you are to come in the same way...
  - You see a centurion come with faith... you are to come in the same way...
  - You see a Gentile woman who will not take no for an answer... you are to come in the same way...
    - We learn lessons about how we are to come to Him and are encouraged by the example of those who did come.

TRANS> So to summarise, Jesus' miracles are recorded in the Bible:

- to show you that Jesus is the Messiah...
- to show you that His kingdom has come into the world...
- to show you the glory that His kingdom will attain...
- to encourage you to come to Jesus for salvation and to show you how to come.

Now let us look at Matthew 8:1-4, the first of Jesus' miracles that Matthew records for us.

- It is about the cleansing of a leper.
  - I want you to observe that the leper is not said to be **healed**; but cleansed.
- Matthew tells us that this miracle occurred right after Jesus preached a sermon that showed everyone how unclean they were in God's eyes!
  - The connection is very deliberate!
    - Jesus has just come down the mountain after preaching this sermon that has unhinged all those who may have imagined themselves to be righteous...
    - "And behold, a leper came."
      - "**Behold!**" it was something striking to see!
        - How dare a man like this come to Jesus!
          - A leper!
          - He was unclean!
            - What could He want with Jesus?

## I. **My friends, after hearing the Sermon on the Mount, you are supposed to identify with this leper!**

A. Let me tell you about leprosy!

- Leprosy was perhaps the most dreaded disease that afflicted God's people.
- 1. Its affect on the body is horrendous...
  - a. After consulting with two physicians who ministered to lepers for years,
    - William Hendriksen gives the following description of leprosy:
    - The disease which we today call leprosy generally begins with pain in certain areas of the body. Numbness follows. Soon the skin in such spots loses its original colour. It gets to be thick, glossy, and scaly. In fact, the affliction is called *leprosy* because it makes the skin *scaly*, the Greek word *lepos* or *lepis* means *scale*. As the sickness progresses, the thickened spots become dirty sores and ulcers, due to poor blood supply. The skin, especially around the eyes and ears, begins to bunch, with deep furrows between the swellings, so that the face of the afflicted individual begins to resemble that of a lion. Fingers drop off or are absorbed; toes are affected similarly. Eyebrows and eyelashes drop out. By this time one can *see* that the person in this pitiable condition is a leper. By a touch of the finger one can also *feel* it. One can even *smell* it, for the leper emits a very unpleasant odour. Moreover, in view of the fact that the disease-

producing agent frequently also attacks the larynx, the leper's voice acquires a grating quality. His throat becomes hoarse, and you can now not only feel, see, and smell the leper, but you can hear his rasping voice. And if you stay with him for some time, you even imagine a peculiar *taste* in your mouth, probably due to the odour. All the senses of the well person are engaged in the detection of the leper.

- b. We do not know for sure that the leprosy of the Bible is the same as modern leprosy which is also called Hansen's Disease,
  - but there is no doubt that it is very similar.
  - It does seem that the Bible speaks of several varieties of skin disease under the name leprosy,
    - and that some of these were less serious than others...
    - but Luke, in his gospel account, adds that this man we read about in Matthew was "full of leprosy."
      - His leprosy was not a mere spot on his arm, but was in an advanced stage.
      - He was in a very pitiable condition.
2. But the physical suffering, and the sight of his body rotting before his eyes was only a part of what the leper had to bear.
  - a. God, in His infinite wisdom, ordained that leprosy was to be a type of sin under the Old Testament administration!
    - 1) A person who contracted the disease was pronounced unclean as soon as it was detected that he had leprosy!
      - This meant that he was cut off from God and from God's people.
    - 2) The command for the leper is given in Leviticus 13:45-46:
      - Lev 13:45-46: Now the leper on whom the sore *is*, his clothes shall be torn and his head bare; and he shall cover his mustache, and cry, 'Unclean! Unclean!' He shall be unclean. All the days he has the sore he shall be unclean. He *is* unclean, and he shall dwell alone; his dwelling *shall be* outside the camp.
      - This was an awful existence!
  - b. Many people superficially suppose that the reason for these laws was primarily to keep the disease from spreading, but that is not correct.
    - 1) I wouldn't necessarily say that had nothing to do with it...
      - but it is not the reason God gives in scripture for avoiding the person...
      - the scriptural reason is because he is ceremonially unclean and God is holy.

- 2) You see, under Old Testament law, a thing could be holy, clean, or unclean;
- and that which was unclean was **never** supposed to come into contact with what was holy.
- a) The leper, so long as he had leprosy, was unclean and therefore cut off from the ceremonial worship of God...
- He could certainly pray to God and meditate on his word, but he could not worship at the temple or the synagogue.
  - He was unfit to come into the presence of God.
- b) There were many other ways that a person could become unclean as well...
1. In fact, almost anything that had to do with our fallen condition could make a person unclean...
    - Dead bodies were unclean...
    - A woman during her period or following childbirth was unclean (remember that the woman was cursed in connection with bringing forth children)...
      - This was certainly not because she was contagious.
      - It was because God is holy and she was not fit of the external worship of the OT in that condition.
  2. Likewise, a man could not serve as priest who had a defect in his body...
    - Lev 21:17-20: 'No man of your descendants in *succeeding* generations, who has *any* defect, may approach to offer the bread of his God. 'For any man who has a defect shall not approach: a man blind or lame, who has a marred *face* or any *limb* too long, 'a man who has a broken foot or broken hand, 'or is a hunchback or a dwarf, or *a man* who has a defect in his eye, or eczema or scab, or crushed testicles.
- 3) God prescribed such laws to teach His people that He was holy!
- a) That which was defiled could not come into His holy presence.
- The worship at the tabernacle and temple was given to be a picture of the heavenly sanctuary.
  - And it is good news that God does not allow anything that is unholy or defiled in His presence...

- because this teaches us that God who sanctifies us will do so completely—body and spirit—when we enter heaven!
  - The curse will be removed!
- b) This is one of the most rudimentary teachings of the Bible...
- That God is holy and that what is unholy (imperfect) cannot come before Him until it is sanctified!
  - That is the whole reason that Jesus had to come and die on the cross...
    - It was to sanctify the people of God so that they could have communion with God...
    - And that communion will not be complete until our bodies are also redeemed so that the curse is completely removed!
      - Then we will come fully before Him.
  - When Revelation 21 speaks of heaven, it says:
    - Rev 21:27: But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.
    - In God's presence, there will be nothing cursed, nothing unholy, nothing with any blemish or defect.
- c) Understand as well that there was **no one** in the Old Testament who was considered to be holy in himself...
- God ordained all sorts of complex cleansing rituals to cleanse both the priests and the people before they could enter His presence.
  - He wanted them to understand that they were unclean until He Himself sanctified them!
    - The cleansing rituals were ongoing, and without them, the people would be cut off from the earthly worship.
    - They were shown again and again,
      - “You can't come before God unless you are cleansed.”

TRANS> So here is the leper—unclean—coming to Jesus!

- A mass of living death, cut off from God and cut off from man!

B. You are to identify with this leper because sin has made you defiled and unclean before a holy God.

1. Like leprosy, sin is loathsome,

- The human race is God's masterpiece, created in His glorious image!
  - But sin has spoiled that image, disfigured what was beautiful and made it twisted and mangled.
  - It has made what was beautiful and holy ugly and defiled.
- a. Like leprosy, sin is debilitating
  - It keeps us from being able to serve God and one another...
    - Now there is division and bitterness and hostility instead of love and peace.
    - We are unable to do anything out of pure love to God, but every act is corrupted and twisted by sin.
    - The glory has departed from man.
- b. Like leprosy, sin cuts us off and isolates us from communion with God and man...
  - It causes God to reject us and curse us and cast us from His presence.
    - He has justly sentenced us to eternal death and suffering.
    - It causes us to be alienated from one another, to be outcasts and lonely.
- c. Like leprosy, sin is incurable...
  - What I mean is, you cannot cure yourself of this loathsome, debilitating, isolating disease...
  - You can no more change yourself than a leopard can change his spots!

TRANS> Oh what an awful thing sin is! It has ruined the whole human race!

2. If you have understood the Sermon on the Mount and the righteous requirement that is set forth there,
  - you cannot walk away without the painful awareness that you are unclean!
    - You are full of leprosy...
    - How can you come before a holy God?

TRANS> Yes, you are a spiritual leper... You are unclean...

## **II. But now I want you to see how Jesus cleanses lepers!**

A. Look—He touches this loathsome creature, this walking death!

1. He reaches out and touches him with His hand!
  - a. It is unlikely that any clean person had touched this man for years—

- but Jesus reaches out and touches him.
- b. It is pointed out clearly in the text that Jesus did this.
- To touch a leper would make a man unclean!
  - Jesus did not always touch those he healed, but you see, He touches this man!
2. I want you to consider what this touch means!
- a. It speaks of the Son of God who came into this defiled, sin-cursed world...
- even though He was holy and pure and perfect...
    - even though it was all so repulsive and grotesque to Him.
  - He deliberately touched us even though to do so meant that He would be made unclean!
- b. If you look over in Matthew 8:17, Matthew comments on Jesus' healing ministry with these words from Isaiah:
- "He Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses!"
- 1) Do you see what this is saying?
- In order to cleanse leprosy Jesus had to become the chief leper!
  - In order to cleanse from sin, Jesus had to become the chief sinner!
- 2) See how He—all because He came here and touched us—
- was cut off from God the Father when He became for us an offering for sin!
  - Jesus came and took our defilement and our uncleanness upon Himself and that is why He hung on the cross!
  - He took it on Himself in order that He might take it away from us!
- 3) And I say, what a horror it was for Him to bear the rejection of the Father!
- Here is the Son of God who had lived in perfect union, perfect love, perfect fellowship with the Father for all eternity...
    - cut off!
  - This is a suffering that we cannot understand the thousandth part of!
  - And to think that He should do this for loathsome creatures who had made themselves so defiled and unclean that they were utterly detestable in His sight!

- I say, He took this very defilement upon Himself!
- He has been touched with the feeling of our infirmities!
- He has borne the curse of God for us!

TRANS> That is the first thing Jesus does to cleanse His people—

- He touches you with a touch that defiles and brings the Father’s rejection...

B. And after He touches the leper, He speaks two very wonderful words: *yelw kayarisyhti*, which are translated: “I am willing, be cleansed.”

- These two words say everything!

1. *yelw* means “I will,” or “I am willing.”

a. This is Jesus’ response to the leper’s words: “If you are willing, you can make me clean.”

- This word (*yelw* I am willing) is there for you if you will come to Jesus!
- It is there to show us the response of our Saviour to every unclean sinner who has ever come to Him for cleansing!
- To such, Jesus has never said, “I am not willing!”

b. There was a question here—“If you are willing...”

1) Surely there was no moral obligation on the part of Jesus to cleanse this man...

- Surely there was a question if Jesus would willingly undertake for sinners the humiliation of human flesh and obedience to the point of death, even the death of the cross!
  - Why should He?
  - Why should He who had no sin suffer for those who are full of sin by their own fault?
  - Why should He bear their curse?
- There is only one answer to this question...
  - It was because of the great love that He has for us...

2) It was because of this love and grace that He said *yelw* “I am willing.”

- a) When the Father asked Him before the foundation of the world if He would do this for fallen sinners,
- He said *yelw* “I am willing.”

- b) When the Father asked Him at Gethsemane when His sweat was mingled with blood,
  - He said *yelw* “I am willing”
- c) And when every sinner comes to Him for cleansing, no matter how covered with leprosy and how defiled that sinner may be, Jesus says:
  - *yelw* “I am willing”
- c. How this word must have made this desperate man’s heart leap for joy!
  - His sorrow was turned to dancing!
  - And so it is for every desperate leprous sinner who comes to Jesus and finds that He is willing.

TRANS> *yelw*, This first word is His word of compassion...

- 2. The second word, *kayarisyhti*, (be cleansed) is a word of power!
  - a. When the Son of God speaks this word: *kayarisyhti*, everything is changed for this man!
    - On Jesus’ lips, this is a word of divine power like the words that the Son of God spoke when He created the world...
      - All He did was say, “Let there be light,” and there was light.
      - All He has to do is say the word and it is done—
      - His word is power.
  - b. And so it was that as soon as Jesus said *kayarisyhti*, (be cleansed), the man was completely cleansed...
    - The scripture says:
      - “Immediately his leprosy was cleansed!”
    - What an amazing transformation this must have been!
      - It was not a gradual change, but an immediate change!
        - Immediately, the scaly skin became smooth and clear...
        - Immediately, the eyebrows and the hair were restored...
        - Immediately, the twisted bones were made straight...
        - Immediately, the fingers and the toes and the ears grew back in their places.
      - Everything was restored as soon as the Lord spoke the word!
  - c. And so it is for all of you who have come to Jesus for cleansing!
    - 1) Jesus said to you,

- “Be cleansed”
- and immediately, everything was changed!
- a) Immediately, you were given a new heart,
  - a heart of flesh to replace your stony rebellious heart,
  - a heart that will always return to God and will always seek His way...
  - a heart that you will have for all eternity!
- b) Immediately, all your guilt and defilement was washed away and to you was imputed a perfect righteousness before God...
  - a righteousness secured by the blood of Jesus Christ...
  - a righteousness as complete as His perfect obedience in our flesh!
    - Immediately, you were given a new standing before God for all eternity that can never be changed...
    - No longer unclean, no longer cut off!

TRANS> These glorious changes occurred immediately and completely, and two other changes immediately become your possession by promise

- 2) As soon as you were given that new heart,
  - The powers of heaven and earth were unleashed to begin transforming you from glory to glory until you become like Jesus Christ.
    - The leper could still get sick and he could still be injured and he would still die, but he had a promise of a glorious resurrection yet to come.
  - And that leads to the second thing that is yours by possession of promise...
    - That He will, on the last day, speak the word, and your body will be changed from corruption to incorruption!
    - There will be no more pain, no more sickness, no more injury, only perfection forever.

TRANS> See how wonderfully the Lord cleanses lepers with two wonderful words!

### **III. And so now I urge you, my hearers, to come to Jesus the way this leper did!**

#### **A. Come to Him with humility,**

- realising that you are defiled and unclean!

1. This man did not come to Jesus as one who was proud and full of himself.

- He knew that he was loathsome and unclean.
  - He did not come strutting up to show himself to Jesus as one with whom Jesus ought to be quite impressed...
    - “What a prize to get this man for my kingdom!”
    - He came to him as one broken and needy.
    - He was beyond pretending that he was something special.
2. His attitude shows in what he says.
- a. He does not make demands of Jesus,
    - He does not presume anything...
    - He simply and reverently says,
      - “Lord, if you are willing, you can make clean.”
  - b. Now of course, this man did not have a promise from Jesus that He would cleanse every leper that came to him,
    - So he does not come claiming anything, but with great humility.
- 1) We do have a promise from Jesus as sinners that He will cleanse us and not cast us out if we will come to Him.
    - He says,
      - “the one who comes to me I will in no wise cast out.”
    - But we come in the wrong way if we somehow turn this promise into something that we deserve or something that He owes us...
      - When we act as if we are doing *Him* a favour to come and offer ourselves to Him.
  - 2) I would have to say that if you come to Jesus like that, I hardly think it is possible for you to realise what you really are in His sight—
    - a spiritual leper, defiled and unclean...
    - and I must say that it is quite questionable that you have really come to Him for cleansing at all!
      - You have come to show off, not to be cleansed.
  - 3) Lepers don’t come to do Christ a favour by offering to become His disciples...
    - They come with humility to plead for His mercy.
      - And since there is a promise, then plead they may...

- with the desperation of Jacob who wrestled with the angel of the Lord and said,
  - “I will not let you go until you bless me...”
  - That is commendable only when it is done with humility that is demonstrated by this leper...

TRANS> So you see first of all that you must come to Jesus with humility.

B. Secondly, come to Him with worship, confessing His divinity.

1. You see that the leper is said to worship Jesus.

- a. Now there is a lot of discussion about whether this man was giving him divine homage or was simply showing reverence for him as a great man...
  - Calling him “Lord” could be equivalent to anything from calling him sir to calling him Jehovah....
    - Likewise, the word “worship” can mean that he simply bowed down to him in a show of respect, or it can mean that He worshipped Him as God...
- b. It seems to me that it means a lot more than a mere show of respect to a man...
  - In the New Testament, whenever anyone bows down to any of God’s servants...
    - be they angels or apostles,
    - those angels and apostles always refuse it:
      - They respond like the angel in Revelation did to John when John bowed down to him:
        - Revelation 19:20: “See *that you do not do that!* I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God!”
- c. Of course there is no way for us to get down inside of this leper’s mind and know how much He understood about the divine nature of Christ.
  - But what we can see with absolute certainty is that Jesus does not at all refuse this man’s homage as He should have done if we were not God.
    - He doesn’t say,
      - “See that you do not do that. I am your fellow servant...”
      - And so whatever was in this man’s mind,
        - we are taught here by Jesus’ reception of this worship that we must come to Jesus as God.

2. And there is yet more in this leper's worship...
  - a. In his simple statement, he attributes to Jesus what belongs to deity alone...
    - He says,
      - "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean."
    - 1) First, you see that the leper does not say:
      - "If God is willing," but He says, "If **you** are willing!"
      - He places all his hope in the will of person before whom he bows!
      - If this person is willing, that is enough...
        - It doesn't matter what anyone else thinks about it,
          - Everything is up to this man and whatever He chooses to do!
          - Nobody else in the world has to agree to it, if He is willing, it is enough.
    - 2) Neither does this leper say:
      - "You can pray to God and He will make me clean," or
      - but He says, "**You** can make me clean."
      - He confesses that Jesus is the one who has the power and authority to make him clean.
      - Clearly He attributes to Jesus divine power...
  - b. Once again, you see that Jesus,
    - far from denying that He has divine power in Himself, rather confirms it.
    - 1) Do you remember what happened when it was suggested that the apostles of Jesus had divine power in themselves?
      - When the people gathered around them all amazed, Peter said:
        - Acts 3:12-13: Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this? Or why look so intently at us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His Servant Jesus.
    - 2) But Jesus confirms this leper's confession of His divine power by saying,
      - "I am willing, be cleansed!"
      - He intentionally leaves this man and everyone who reads this passage with the impression that in Him is the power and authority of God!
        - He shows with certainty that He Himself has the power to save.

- c. And so you learn from this leper to come to Jesus as God.
  - When you see that you are loathsome and unclean,
  - Come to Jesus, worship Him, and say:
    - “Lord, if you willing, you can make me clean.”
    - And when you do, Jesus will say,
      - “I am willing, be cleansed.”
      - and immediately you will be cleansed!
  - This leper has shown you the way.

TRANS> He teaches you to come with humility and reverence...

- C. And last of all, you are taught in this passage what to do **after** you have been cleansed!
  - 1. Jesus told this leper what to do.
    - He said,
      - Matt 8:4: “See that you tell no one; but go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded as a testimony to them.”
    - Now I could go into a long explanation about the possible reasons Jesus told him not to tell anyone—
      - probably it was because Jesus did not want to be overrun by people seeking Him as a healer before He had opportunity to preach to them...
      - but I want to focus on what Jesus does tell this man to do...
        - He tells him to go to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded.
  - 2. This does not mean that when Jesus has cleansed you, you are supposed to go and get two birds and take them to priest and go through a complex washing ritual...
    - a. But it means that you are to give thanks to God in the way that He has commanded now.
      - God does not want you to give thanks in your own autonomous way, but in the way that He has appointed...
        - And that is, first to be baptised which is a washing with water in the name of Jesus to signify that Jesus is the One who cleanses us...
          - by giving us the Spirit to change our hearts...
          - and by cleansing us through the blood of the covenant.

- b. And then, after that, you are to continue to give thanks to Him by communing at His table...
- 1) At the Lord's Table, you show forth His death...
    - and you continue to give thanks that His body was broken and His blood was shed to cleanse you.
    - Jesus has commanded you to do this in remembrance of Him until He returns.
    - He calls us to assemble together to give thanks to His name for our salvation.
  
  - 2) This is how you are to testify of the great things that He has done for you...
    - And of course, with this service there is to be the preaching of the word, prayers, and the singing of praise.
    - But the central reason for all this is to give thanks to His name for cleansing you from your sin.
    - Jesus commands you to assemble together with your brethren to give thanks to His name.
  
  - 3) And my brothers and sisters, if you truly do this,
    - You will live your whole life as a sacrifice of praise to Him!
      - It is so important that you do not forget what He has done for you!
      - In his second epistle, Peter tells us that he who is barren and unfruitful in the knowledge of Christ is
        - "short-sighted, even to blindness...
          - having forgotten that that he was cleansed from his old sins."

**Please stand now and let us give thanks to our Lord Jesus who cleanses us.**

Oh Lord,

- We have been reminded that apart from your cleansing, we are all spiritual lepers.
  - We confess to you that without Jesus,
    - we are nothing but a loathsome mass of living death...
    - we are unclean and defiled and without hope to ever save ourselves...
  
- But we gladly confess that you have not left us to perish in that miserable condition.
  - We thank you and praise you for sending Your Son, our Saviour to cleanse us...

- And we praise you Jesus that you are both willing and able to save us to uttermost...
  - You are the one who baptises with the Holy Spirit and who has given us a new heart...
  - You are the One who touched us and took on all our defilement so that the curse that should have fallen on us fell on You!
    - We praise you that by Your offering, our sins are forgiven...
    - And that you have given us your perfect righteousness which will always keep us in the Father's favour.

Oh Gracious Mighty Lord,

- We pray that your name will be magnified through the glory of the work that you have done for your people!
  - We pray that the nations would learn of this great work and be glad!
  - That you would make your church to be a praise in the earth for you...
  - That Your kingdom would come and that your will would be done on earth as it is in Heaven.
    - That Satan's kingdom would be destroyed and that Your kingdom would be advanced...
    - That You would exert your power to destroy your enemies and to bring all things under your feet and so hasten the day of your return.

And we pray that you would forgive us for our ingratitude...

- We take so lightly the cleansing that we have been given...
  - Fill our hearts with sincere praise and adoration and make them to be a sacrifice of praise to You.
  - Fill us with love for one another that we might even love one another as you have loved us and given yourself for us...
    - Give us that same care and concern for our brothers and sisters that Christ has demonstrated for us.
    - Keep us back from the things of this world that try to draw us away to inferior things and blind our minds to your glory.
      - Draw our eyes to Christ that we may see His glory and worship Him!
      - That we may see the vanity of this world unless it is wholly devoted to Him.

And please, do not test us beyond what we are able...

- Provide us with food and clothing and shelter that we need for each day...
- And help us to be generous with the poor since Christ has been so generous with us.
- And give us physical strength and health in our bodies according to your will...
- Guard our borders and deliver us from war and strife with other nations...
  - and grant us your peace.
  - Our eyes look to you because we have no other help but you.

We ask all this in Jesus' name, Amen