

05.04.25

Luke

Chapter 5 - An Unconventional Intent
A Different Kind of Testimony (12-16)

Luke 5:12-16: While He was in one of the cities, behold, there was a man covered with leprosy; and when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and implored Him, saying, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean." And He stretched out His hand and touched him, saying, "I am willing; be cleansed." And immediately the leprosy left him. 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, as a testimony to them." But the news about Him was spreading even farther, and large crowds were gathering to hear Him and to be healed of their sicknesses. But Jesus Himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray.

I think one of the hardest things about Scripture is to make it applicable to you. There are a lot of students out there and there are a lot of classes that are teaching about Scripture, but how does this really apply to me? How do I make it real in my life? I mean, really every Sunday should be life changing in your life. We have a plethora of sermons available to us from all over, but I don't see a whole lot of change in people. I think that's pretty interesting, don't you? We have all this Word, but you don't see any change? I think in some way, as we were quoting from the Gospel of Luke, "Why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and you don't do the things I say?" So, as we read through these incidences, stories, circumstances, situations that are divine, recorded by God so that they might teach us, they might train us, but that they might change us. The word "repentance" is used over and over again, which literally means you need to start thinking differently. I know there's a grand possibility that we actually think we think right already, but I have found that God is continually revealing things to me in which I'm just not thinking like He is.

Romans 3 tells us that all have sinned. That pretty well covers it. There's not one of us that's righteous. No, not one. So, that kind of rules out that I'm hitting the mark because I'm clearly not. We all fall short of the glory of God, and because we fall short of the glory of God, we really fall short of the blessings of God, and we really miss why we're here. God has a marvelous plan for our lives, and as we read through the Gospels, we begin to see in particular in the Gospel of Luke, that God is working in lives that would normally think, "Well, I don't even think He's going to even talk to me," or "I don't think He could possibly work through me." And these are the very ones that God begins to reveal Himself to. Luke is conveying that He's fundamentally saying, "Don't think that way." God is wanting to use you in a great way. God is wanting to speak to you, but more than that, God is wanting you to walk by faith and see Him work in your life. The world does what they do because they think they control their destiny. So, by virtue of the things that they do, they try to manipulate oftentimes and sometimes they'll kiss up to people to try to cause things to happen for their benefit. But their fundamental perception is that "I'm in control."

We as believers walk in a different world. We actually walk by faith, not by sight, and we believe that by pleasing God, by walking in accordance with His will and according to His standards; in other words, we actually believe that He's with us right now and that He cares about us and the things that He tells us to do are actually the things that are going to make our life better. We believe that He has a better way than we do. So, because of that, we willingly submit. Unfortunately, we oftentimes compartmentalize our life and we submit in certain areas and we submit in certain ways that are comfortable to us. But as the song so aptly puts it, "I surrender all" is really what God is looking for, and because we don't surrender all, we find pockets in our life causing problems as well as our life in general is not really victorious. We wonder why and God begins to reveal to us, "You're not walking all."

So, as we come to this passage and we begin to look at the unconventional way in which God does things, and I say unconventional because it's not the way man would do things, but it is unconventional as well because we don't even think like that. All the way through Scripture,

God is saying, "That's because you're sinners and you need to think differently."

I was thinking in Luke 13, if you look with me in Luke 13, it fundamentally says that no matter how good you think you are, and we have a tendency to look around at everybody else and going, "I'm not as bad as that person," or if something really bad happens to that person, we go, "I'm sure they deserved it." So, in a way, chapter 13 kind of conveys that.

It says,

(Luke 13:1) "Now on the same occasion there were some present who reported to Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices."

They must have done something really bad because blood mingling, you died in the midst of giving a sacrifice to God. God wasn't happy with you.

(Luke 13:2) "And Jesus said to them, "Do you suppose that these Galileans were greater sinners than all other Galileans because they suffered this fate?"

(Luke 13:3) I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.”

Now, because we don't have the same issues or the same problems as somebody else and they have certain consequences that happen to them, it is easy for us to kind of conjure up in our head this sense of, “Everything's ok with me. So, God must be ok with everything that I'm doing.” And God goes “No, you need to repent too.”

“Well, aren't you talking about them?”

He actually gives the interesting point,

(Luke 13:4) “Or do you suppose that those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell...””

We're not talking about an event that came into place because somebody “was doing something wrong,” but just the tower decided to fall on somebody. What were the odds of that happening? So, the tower Salom fell and it killed all of these 18.

“Were they worse culprits than all the men who live in Jerusalem?”

(Luke 13:5) “I tell you, no, but unless you repent...””

Now, the fundamental point of the text is that everybody needs to think differently and it is not our nature to think the right way is what God is saying. We realize that as Christ goes and He begins to minister, He expresses His intent to save us from not only our sins, and not only from the consequence of those sins, but the way of life that we live. God wants to free us from this.

So, the way it's put in Luke 19:10 is,

“For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

That's an interesting intent, isn't it? God has come to seek and to save that which is lost. I found that I'm real good at being lost. The problem is I'm not good at admitting it. You know, especially guys, I think when they're driving. The women will admit that they're lost, they'll roll down their window and ask. My wife oftentimes [says] “Look, do you want to ask somebody?” I said, “No, no, I think I know where I'm going.” But the tendency is to put up walls and put up barriers. So, Christ is coming to save that which is lost. Part of the process of Him saving us is helping us admit it, and that's not always an easy task.

When we see what happens, especially in the Gospel of Luke, we see that Christ says earlier in Chapter 4, “I came to save the poor, the prisoners, the blind, the downtrodden.” These are people that would have a tendency to admit that they've come to the end of their rope, and the fundamental point is that it's those who are weary and heavy laden that will come to Him. But even at that, it's hard for men, it's hard for women, it's hard for anybody to really admit that they have a need and that that need would be Christ. I think that's one of the reasons why Isaiah 53 says, “Who has believed this message,” that God would actually care for those kind of people, and that He would present Himself in such a way that would have no stately form or majesty, that He might even associate with those kind of people? “Who would believe this kind of thing?” And once again, the whole concept of faith kind of eludes us. It's kind of something that seems to escape our reasoning. How is it that I can fully believe that God really loves me?

(Luke 18:8) “... when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?”

Now, what's interesting about that particular passage in Luke 18 is it's followed by a parable or a story, in which Jesus tells about a Pharisee and a tax collector, and they're both in the temple praying. The story goes that the Pharisee says, "I thank you that I'm not like this sinner, this tax collector." And then the tax collector is crying out, "Have mercy on me, a sinner." Jesus, of course, says, "Who do you think I heard?" And then He goes on in the text and He says, "I tell you, unless you become like a child, you won't come into the kingdom of heaven." Well, the point is pretty clear that the one thing that seems to be holding us back is pride, and it's that pride that works in very subtle ways. Quite frankly, very few of us would walk around saying, "Yeah, I really am a proud person." But if we were honest ourselves, or if we truly examined ourselves, or if God would reveal it to us, it'd be hard to admit, even in the light of His glory. In some ways, this is what this chapter is about. Christ is coming, obviously His intent is to seek and to save that which is lost.

The first person that is actually mentioned in this chapter is Peter, and we would think that would be the last person I would think of because of course, we have our ideas of Peter and of how things worked out for him and he was really a great apostle but he wasn't always there. In fact, the passage begins with calling him a fisherman. So, the passage is telling us that's how he was known. He was Peter, the fisherman. That's who he was. He wasn't Peter the apostle. He wasn't Peter the disciple. He was just Peter, the fisherman. The passage then begins to reveal us the work of Christ in seeking and saving those that are lost. We talked about this last week, but I just want to reiterate the fact that the wisdom of God in bringing things to mind, in bringing Peter into the process and calling him to in some way participate in what Jesus is doing. It is a very interesting text to me because the thought would be that Peter would be all in. I mean, Jesus is talking to a multitude of people. They're gathered together to such an extent that He has to be put in the boat, which He asked Peter for. It happens to be Peter's boat, but he pushes Him out in the water because the crowds were too massive. Yet, Peter is sitting over there

fixing his nets, and I'm thinking, "Come on, you should be involved in this." The text is revealing to us that Peter's not all in yet. I'll tell you what else is very interesting and to be noted, we just read in the previous chapter that his mother-in-law was healed in his house, and that alone, I'm going, "That would be a game changer, your mother-in-law." What Luke is revealing to us all along is that there are people that are very religious, there are people that are oftentimes "good" people; Peter would kind of fit in the category of conscientious, hard worker. I would put him in the category with quotes, he was a "good" man in the sense that he was at least taking care of his mother-in-law. Who does that? He had opened his house. But you can sense in the passage his frustration. I mean, just imagine yourself going out and doing something really good and then, imagine yourself doing something good for a long period of time, and then imagine yourself doing good for a long period of time and it costing you a lot, and then imagine yourself doing something good for a long period of time and there's hardship involved, and now your income begins to suffer. Because in the text, he's fished all day. Zero. It's very easy to understand and see in

the passage that he's frustrated about this and not real happy about the way things are going. I mean, I remember turning to God on a number of occasions going, "I'm trying to help You out here, and the only thing You're doing is throwing me a bone." And you know, there's a lot of frustration that comes out of that because once again, there's a problem with you. There's a problem with me, and that's one of the things that this whole chapter is revealing, that we need to change and there are things in our life that need to change. Faith just doesn't come easy for anybody.

You go all the way back, if you just take a moment, to Luke 1. I'm not going to preach through the chapters again. But if you go back to Luke 1:6, it's describing Zacharias, who is the priest. Zacharias and his wife Elizabeth are the ones who have John the Baptist, but not yet, and they're of age. They're pretty old. So, it's like, "Where have you been all my life God? I've been serving You in the temple." So to speak.

But it says,

(Luke 1:6) “They were both righteous in the sight of God, walking blamelessly...”

Now, what we see in the passage is they're not bad people. They've been doing the right things. But there is a missing ingredient, faith.

As you see the angel come to Zacharias, what you see in particular in verse 20 is the angel getting mad at Zacharias because he wouldn't believe the message that God is going to bring them a child and that child is going to be John.

So, the angel declares in verse 20,

(Luke 1:20) “And behold, you shall be silent and unable to speak until the day when these things take place, because you did not believe my words...”

Now, what the passage is saying is, “You're a really godly guy, but you don't believe.” That's kind of a bizarre mixture, isn't it?

The same thing is true even with John the Baptist in Luke 7, where John the Baptist is, as Jesus will say, “I tell you, this is the greatest prophet.” He actually used the word

great. So, we have “godly” in Chapter 1; in Chapter 7, we have “great” and John is going, “Ok. So, are you the guy?” So, we have this great prophet that doesn't know who the Christ is, because the Christ isn't matching his way of thinking, and with Zacharias, things are not matching his way of thinking. I mean, when you're old, it's too late. I could just see you coming to God, “That would have been nice. But You're just too late. About 40 years.”

So, all the way through, we're seeing these individuals and in this particular chapter we're seeing Peter, who is a “good” guy, has worked hard with his hands, is conscientious, is caring; is really fulfilling 1 Timothy 5, where it says you have a widow in a house, you have somebody in need, you need to take care of them. He's doing that. But now he's gone out fishing and nothing. Nothing, absolutely nothing. We can feel his frustration. We can feel his upset and the bottom line is that Peter, though he has seen a miracle in his household, has not embraced the faith himself. That's a very interesting point, and I think in many regards you can see God work in other people's lives and you go, “Yep. Wow. That's

pretty great stuff.” But somewhere along the line, you're sitting back going, “But not going to happen to me.” Now once again, I don't think you would say that vocally. But somewhere in your head, somewhere in your mind, and Peter is this great example of somebody that's so involved, so entrenched, so predisposed in his way of living. I see it all the time. I mean, you have a job, you have a career, you have things that you do and it just takes up your thoughts. I mean, he's mending nets. That's what he does. “Jesus has this thing. He's preaching to the multitudes. I have my thing. I mend nets and I've got to fish and I've got to make a living. I mean, I appreciate the fact that Jesus is ministering to people, but really, I've got work to do.” And there are good people, and we could even put them in the category of “God fearing” people, but they're not walking by faith, and something real has not happened in their life.

With Peter, the magnificent thing within the passage is that God in a wonderful way, shows Himself intimately acquainted with Peter. Though, I'm sure, Peter cared for his mother-in-law; I don't know what she was like. It

doesn't say anything about what she was like, she may have been hard. She may have been difficult. He may have been glad that she was finally serving. But anyway, in the passage it doesn't say anything about the relationship. But what it does clarify is that wasn't enough to make God personal in his life. But when God worked in that which concerned him, then God was real. When Christ says, "Go, take the nets out. Do it again." "Come on. It's the middle of the day. I've already been out and done all this." "Do it." And he does it, and God begins to put in this huge catch. He goes, "I really am a sinner." Now, his point is, "I've been thinking wrong all along, because fundamentally, the way I thought was, He didn't care for me."

It should not surprise you that in 1 Peter 5:7 Peter will pen this phrase, "Casting all your cares on Him for He cares for you." Peter will come from a perspective, now, "You can talk to Him about anything and He actually cares about everything."

I think one of the verses that's a favorite of many of you is Psalm 138:8, that God actually, according to His

lovingkindness will accomplish what concerns you. There are a lot of things in our lives that that we go, "Ok. I know He's going to do this. I know He's going to answer that. I know He's going to work in other people's lives and other people, but this thing that concerns me, I don't even think He's interested in that." And God will do a work. Watch Him. He'll do a work and He'll go, "No. I'm interested in that."

Now, after saying all that, I want to add this, that not only does Christ have a ministry that is to save sinners; which once again, I'm very thankful about that. He saved the lost. So, I'm very thankful about two things I'm very really good at being lost. But not only does He do that, but Christ has a ministry and I believe in many respects it's our ministry as well, to work in a way that is iconoclastic. The reason that I use this particular word is that word specifically is dealing with the tearing down of icons, and what it's really referring to is that it's you and me destroying those things that well, let's just read it from Scripture. It's actually better to read it from Scripture, in 2 Corinthians 10. Now, to be an iconoclastic, which "icon" is

basically the things that we value, the things that we cherish; sometimes it's beliefs and institutions that we hold on to. God is saying, "You need to tear those down." The beliefs that we have elevated in our heads, the thoughts that we have elevated in our heads that are above God, that distort God.

(2 Corinthians 10:3) "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh,

(2 Corinthians 10:4) for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.

(2 Corinthians 10:5) We are destroying..."

"Iconoclastic," "icons". We're destroying icons.

Watch the phrase,

"We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing..."

That's an icon.

"... raised up against the knowledge of God..."

Anything that distorts who God is, is an icon. It's a thought that's higher than God. "I have a way better than Him."

When you look at the life of Peter, I don't think Peter was thinking that he has an icon, but he does. When you look at the icon that he has, it's fundamentally, "I have my own business. So, I can take care of myself." That's an interesting icon, isn't it? Because that's not walking by faith. "I mean, I got stuff to do. I appreciate the fact that Jesus is healing people, and I really appreciate the fact that He healed my mother-in-law, but I've got work to do. If the family is going to be fed, if everybody's going to be taken care of, who's going to do it? Me." I mean, don't look surprised, Peter, all the way through had this icon. Even when Jesus is going to the cross, "I'll take care of You. It's up to me, I know. I'll protect You" until he finally comes to the end of the rope and finally comes into reality. He realized, "I can't protect anybody. I'm even afraid of a little girl." But he has to come to that point, and Scripture is revealing the graciousness of God in revealing these things to us. My hope today is that you will become an iconoclastic with me. That you'll actually begin to tear down these icons of your mind that are hindering you from putting your trust in Him. It's a very unique work that the Lord is doing.

As we come to this passage in particular, and you read a passage in which a leper is healed, and immediately the thought is, “Well, God did a wonderful miracle. He healed somebody, and this is the testimony, that He healed somebody.” But that's not the testimony in the passage. The testimony in the passage is a different kind of testimony. It's not a testimony about healing. It's a testimony about cleansing. The leper will come up to Jesus, and he says, “If You're willing, You can cleanse me.” That's what the passage says, and Jesus will say, “I'm willing for you to be cleansed.” And then He'll send him to the priest, and the whole process is about cleansing. This is a testimony that is not for show, but it is for proof, and the reason why you have to go. This is not about the leper. This is about God and others. So, the whole thing about the testimony is different, and the reason why is that this leper has had something that he has elevated above God all his life, and that's why he's in the condition that he's in, and that is “It's all about me.” And it's that pride and that arrogance. I know you're going to say, “Well, how do you know that?” I'm going to show you how I know that, because what we have is this disease

that is an outward manifestation of an internal problem throughout Scripture. Now, we're not saying everybody has ever had leprosy, that's the case, but it was in Scripture. So, as Scripture begins to reveal to us what the issue is, we begin to understand what this man's problem was.

(Luke 5:12) “While He was in one of the cities, behold, there was a man covered with leprosy...”

Now, the fact that it's emphasizing “covered” is telling us that there was really a problem. We're going to kind of jettison back and forth in the Old Testament. But in the Old Testament, especially when the leprosy went from head to toe, there was a strong emphasis that there was a really big problem here, and it was beyond the physical realm and into the spiritual.

“While He was in one of the cities, behold, there was a man covered with leprosy; and when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and implored (beg) Him, saying, “Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.”

Of course, everything about leprosy was about you were detestable, and you lived outside of the city. You see this,

and we don't really have time to go through Leviticus 13 and 14 and many of the things; there was a cleansing of the leper and there were specific things you had to do with that. There was the cleansing of his clothes, and you had to do specific things with that and then there was a cleansing of the house. Actually, the house could have leprosy on it. So, you had to clean it, and if there were certain blocks on the house, you had to pull them out. Very interesting. We won't go in all the detail of that.

But if you go back to Leviticus, what you begin to see is that it seems to be associated with something in particular. So, if you go back to Leviticus 13:40. We're not hitting on people that have lost their hair.

It starts off this way,

(Leviticus 13:40) “Now if a man loses the hair of his head, he is bald; he is clean.

(Leviticus 13:41) “If his head becomes bald at the front and sides, he is bald on the forehead; he is clean.

(Leviticus 13:42) “But if on the bald head or the bald forehead, there occurs a reddish-white infection, it is

leprosy breaking out on his bald head or on his bald forehead.”

Now, you almost have to stop and go, “Ok, what's all this about the head?” But it's going to become clear, because the biggest problem with leprosy is that it's bold, abrasive rebellion and it always kind of gives the picture of the forehead, so to speak. It's somebody that's presumptuously bold and taking positions that they shouldn't take, declaring authority that they never should have had, and thinking only of themselves in so doing. So, it goes on, and talks about the bald head.

So, it says if this is true,

“Leviticus 13:44) “he is a leprous man, he is unclean...””

Now, what this guy has to do, once again, without me going into a lot of detail, is not only does he have to separate himself, but he has to go around declaring, “Unclean! Unclean!”

It states that in verse 45,

(Leviticus 13:45) “As for the leper who has the infection, his clothes shall be torn, and the hair of his head shall be

uncovered, and he shall cover his mustache and cry,
'Unclean! Unclean!'

(Leviticus 13:46) "He shall remain unclean all the days
during which he has the infection; he is unclean. He shall
live alone; his dwelling shall be outside the camp."

And it's just a horrible thing. It's a despicable thing. If you go into Chapter 14, it then begins to kind of convey to us how this is cleansed and what he has to do.

Now, keep your finger there, but I want you to go back to Luke 5, because he comes to Jesus and Jesus miraculously heals him. Now, let me just say this, this leper, I'm sure is taken back by this because of the fact that all his life, he's never thought about anybody else. He's never been willing to help anybody else. But now, he's in the condition where he has to cry for somebody else to help him. So, his one cry is, "Are You willing to do this?" And Jesus says, "I'm willing." Which is so unlike the way he's lived his life, without caring for anybody.

(Luke 5:13) "And He stretched out His hand and touched
him..."

I mean, who wants to touch a leper? You're not supposed to touch a leper. The cleansing maybe comes first and then you could touch him.

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

Now, verse 14, then Jesus tells him to do certain things, and sometimes it kind of gets lost in the mix, but it says, (Luke 5:14) “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, as a testimony to them.””

The passage is making reference to the fact that he's got to show, to display. The word “show” is actually talking about “You have to give proof that a cleansing has transpired and you have to go to the priest to do this.”

Once again, I'm not going to turn to all the passages, but when you go all the way back to like Deuteronomy 24, in particular verses 8-9, will say something like this, if there's a leper, and he has the infection of leprosy on him, you

want to make sure you do everything the priest tells you to do. That's what he goes on and says, and then he says this in Deuteronomy, very interesting, "For I want you to remember what happened to Miriam." He says that right there in Deuteronomy. So, what he's doing is he's actually tying the leprosy together with what Miriam had done.

Now, without you going to the passage, if you were to go to the passage in Numbers 12, what you would find is that Miriam and Aaron, of course, come up to Moses and they go, "Well, who made you lord of all? We're just as good as you." And I'm going, "Why would Miriam throw herself in the mix? I mean, Aaron's a high priest. I get that. But why would Miriam do that?" And at that moment that she does, she's struck by leprosy, and it's demonstrating that she was presumptuous, she was arrogant, she was only thinking of herself, and God would not let that stand. So, it's a very interesting picture. Now, almost every time you see leprosy in the Old Testament, it is in regard to that kind of behavior. Let me give you a couple of examples.

In 2 Chronicles 26, you're probably familiar with the story; you don't need to turn there, but 2 Chronicles 26 is about

King Uzziah. King Uzziah is a pretty good king all his life until it comes to the point where he starts getting full of himself. Once he starts getting full of himself, he builds all these war machines and he starts winning all his battles. Then, he thinks, "Well, I can go into the Holy of Holies and I can offer incense to God and do whatever I want to, and the priest goes, "You better not do that." He says, "I'm going to do that." God struck him with leprosy for the rest of his life. I mean, are you seeing somebody that's presumptuous, somebody that's arrogant, somebody that's proud and just going to do whatever they feel like doing, taking those kind of liberties?

The same thing is true when you look at 2 Kings 5. You're dealing with Naaman, who is a warrior, a soldier. He's actually a commander of a large army of Syria. He has a slave girl that was actually an Israelite, and she's serving his wife, but she's very concerned for him because he has leprosy. So, she sends a message, "You've got to talk to this guy named Elisha because he's like a really wild and powerful prophet." So, he takes his horses. I mean, he has an entourage. He takes his horses and he takes his

chariots and they surround Elisha's house. You just see Elisha going, "Ok, who's at the door?" So, Elisha comes out with this guy with this big army and long story short, I think fundamentally Naaman is going, "So, I hear you can do something about this." And of course, the king of Israel's going, "You don't want to help this guy, he's our enemy." And Elijah says, "We need to let him know that God is the God." So, he turns to him and he goes, "Ok, this is what you do, seven times in the Jordan." Now, Naaman has a problem. What do you think it is? The reason we know that is, "I'm not going to bathe in that dirty water. I mean, I'm from Damascus. We have a lot of cleaner water there. So, I'm just going back home." And he starts heading off, and his second in command goes, "Look, if he asks you to do something fantastic, something in the war, you would do that. Just go ahead and do it." So, he does, and he's healed. He gets over this. Now, strangely enough, Gehazi, which is Elisha's helper, decides that he's going to be bold and go into a realm in which he shouldn't, and take gifts from him, which Naaman was going to give gifts to Elijah. He said, "I'm not taking anything." And because he does that, he's struck with

leprosy. All the way through, you're going to see this. What you're seeing is this arrogance, this boldness, this brashness, that says, "I deserve better. It's all about me."

The wonderful thing about what Christ is telling him to do, and it says,

(Luke 5:14) "And He ordered him to tell no one..."

Now, if in fact somebody's going out there and they're starting to tell everybody about something. Who's it about? You. Don't make this about you. All your life, you've made this about you. God is saying you need to think differently. Now, look, with Peter, it was, "I can do this myself. I'm in charge." God says, "You've got to think differently. If you're going to walk by faith, you've got to think differently." And it was enough to cause him to lay down his nets and never mess with them again.

The same thing has to happen to this individual. If he's going to come by faith, he's going to have to do something that somebody tells him to do. He has to willingly submit. As you'll read through the list of things that he has to do, it's quite extensive. I mean, after he does the initial and is actually pronounced clean, he still

waits 7 days and then has to offer more offerings, and then on the 8th day, and then finally he's presented. So, it's part of the process. It's a process in which a very proud man would have to humble himself to go through all these things. But Christ is saying, "I'm going to give you an opportunity here to get real. Because what you need to do is change your way of thinking. You need to stop thinking proud. You need to start thinking humble. You need to start submitting to what I tell you to do, what God tells you to do. This is an opportunity not only for you to be cleansed, but this is an opportunity for you to show proof that you've truly changed, and what you're going to do this day is not for you. It's for God. What you're going to do this day is not for you. It's for others, and they're going to see your humility, and they're going to see your willingness, and they're going to see the cleansing, and they're going to see the priest deem you clean because you submitted."

What's more interesting than that is one of the things that he has to do, and once again, I don't want to go into

all the details, but if you turn with me to Leviticus 14, it says this,

(Leviticus 14:1) “Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

(Leviticus 14:2) “This shall be the law of the leper in the day of his cleansing. Now he shall be brought to the priest.”

There's the law, right? Now, what's the priest going to tell him to do? Here again, I'm not going to go into all the details, but the very next thing he's going to say is, “You need to bring two birds.” Now, the perception is they're not big birds. They're like doves or something like that. “You need to bring two birds and this is what's going to happen. You're going to take one bird and you're going to kill it and the blood of that bird is going to go in the bowl and you're going to add water to that. That bird's going to die. And then you're going to take that blood that's in the bowl, and you're going to put it on the other bird. And then you're going to let that bird fly away, and he's not going to fly to this city and he's not going to fly to his old place, but he's going to fly in the wilderness.” And it's a very wonderful picture that fundamentally says, “Grow a

conscience. The things that you have done have hurt people. They've destroyed a life. The only reason you're set free is because One has died for you, and now we're going to set you and fly you in the wilderness. So, you'll never go back the way you went back ever again." It's such a wonderful picture that God has given. But what He's doing is He's growing in him a conscience. Because up to this point, He's been thinking, "It's all about me. It's all about me" and you need to show to the priests, you've changed, and really, by submitting to these things and by involving yourself in these things at your cost, you began to demonstrate the reality. But what God is doing is He's freeing that person, not only from his uncleanness, but from the shame. Because for once in his life, he's thought about somebody else, and it's been God. There are things that God's going to do in our lives that are going to be speaking to us. This passage actually ends with Christ going up in the mountain by Himself to pray. You know what that text is saying? You've got to start doing things for only God. Everything. Hey, leper, you're doing this to show God this is not a show thing. This testimony is to demonstrate to God that you've changed, you've taken on

a different way of thinking, and Christ shows and demonstrates He's not seeking the multitudes. He's not seeking the position. In John 6, the multitudes are wanting to make Him King. He slips away because He has no involvement in that. His only desire is to do the will of the Father, and it's a different way of thinking. If in fact you're thinking in the terms of like Peter, "Look, I'm responsible for everything. It's all up to me. Maybe God will bless me; maybe He won't. I don't know. It's kind of like a luck thing." Then you're thinking wrong. I don't care how good you are. I don't care what you've been doing. You're not walking in faith. If you're thinking that everything's about you and it doesn't matter who you hurt and who suffers, then you're thinking wrong. It's extremely destructive and it will ultimately put you in a place where you literally feel like you're untouchable and unreachable. But Christ is showing you you're not, and He's visiting you today. He's telling you, "We can fix this. But you're going to have to change." And all the way through this chapter, you're going to see God wroughting change in people's lives.

Closing Prayer:

Father, we come before You today and we give You thanks for Your lovingkindness to us; for You're changing the icons of our minds and of our hearts and our way of thinking. I found that the greatest icon in my life is me; whether it's my ability to do things, my will, it's all about me. And with both these individuals, though, they are seen to be worlds apart, they were both saved in one way, and that is they had to believe that God's way was best and their way was wrong; that they just weren't thinking right.

Your head's bowed and your eyes closed, we're asking you to stop thinking the way that you're thinking. The most difficult thing that you're going to have to do is to submit the will of your mind, that you would take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, and that you

would destroy every lofty thought raised up against the way God really is and the way things really work. You can live your whole life and be a godly, good person, but never, never come into faith. So, come.