

The Touch of Jesus

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[0 : 00] Good evening and a very warm welcome to you all to this live stream service being broadcast by Stornoway Free Church. Thank you wherever you are in the world where you're watching this from.

We're deeply grateful to you all for supporting our efforts to maintain gospel services during this difficult lockdown time. It's only because of your support that we're able to meaningfully do this. So we're grateful to you for joining us again this evening. We're going to begin by a reading from scripture that's from the Gospel of Mark chapter 1 and at verse 29.

Mark chapter 1 and verses 29 to 39. And immediately Jesus left the synagogue and entered the house of Simon and Andrew with James and John.

Now Simon's mother-in-law lay ill with a fever and immediately they told him about her. And he came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. And the fever left her and she began to serve them.

[1 : 03] That evening at sundown they brought to him all who were sick or oppressed by demons. And the whole city was gathered together at the door. And he healed many who were sick with various diseases and cast out demons.

And he would not permit the demons to speak because they knew him. And rising very early in the morning while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place.

And there he prayed. And Simon and those who were with him searched for him. And they found him and said to him, Everyone is looking for you. And he said to them, Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also.

For that is why I came out. And he went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons. We pray God will bless this reading of his word.

We'll read the final part of this chapter in a few moments' time. But firstly, let's join together in prayer. Join me as we call upon the Lord in prayer. Almighty God, we give thanks once again for this opportunity we have to worship you together.

[2 : 15] We give thanks, O Lord, that while we are not able to be together in the usual way in one place, yet, O Lord, we are still together bound by your Spirit.

And bound by the way in which your truth has come to occupy our hearts. And by the way in which we recognise our privilege and our duty to worship the Lord. And we give thanks, O Lord, for the way in which your church is bound together as one people.

And bless you that throughout the world today, there have been many millions of people who have worshipped you, the same God we worship this evening. We bless you that you have brought us to acknowledge that there is but one God, that you alone are God and worthy to be worshipped.

We thank you that you have demonstrated that to us through the person of your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, whom you sent into the world so that we might come to know you through him.

We thank you tonight for your word. O Lord, our God, make us thankful that your word occupies our hearts, and that while we are privileged to read it for ourselves and have copies of it in print, yet, Lord, we thank you that even in times when such were not available to us, your people nevertheless knew your word in their hearts, as they learnt it and harboured it and treasured it up in their minds.

[3 : 41] We thank you, Lord, that even in times of imprisonment, times when the authorities from time to time in parts of the world removed Bibles from people's use, yet nevertheless, Lord, your Spirit had access to people's hearts.

And we give thanks tonight that your same Spirit is able to apply your word to us this evening. So bless us, Lord, we pray in this way. As we come before you, we bring before you our sin, our need of your cleansing, our need of your acceptance, our need of being rehabilitated and restored to

friendship with you.

For we acknowledge, O Lord, that our sin has come between us and yourself, this holy God that we read of and know from your word. All blessed to us, we pray, your holiness.

Bless us, we pray with a further insight into what that means, that God is perfectly holy, and that it is in perfect holiness that he holds us accountable to him for our sin.

Yet, Lord, we give thanks too that in perfect holiness you have worked out redemption for us. You have come to send your Son, our holy Saviour, into this world of sin.

[5 : 00] And we bless you for the holiness of his work and for its completion through his death and resurrection and ascension to glory. Bless us, we pray tonight, O Lord, as we come to you through him.

We acknowledge him as the way, the truth, and the life. And as we come to you, we acknowledge too our need of his intercession. As we present our worship through him, we give thanks, O Lord, that through him we appear accepted in your sight.

We pray for your blessing upon the world in which we are placed at this time. And we thank you, Lord, that even from the privacy of our own homes, and even the privacy of our own mind and thoughts, we may bring before you the needs of a whole world.

We do so, Lord, tonight when the world is caught up in this virus, this dangerous situation that has removed so many lives already, and has affected and blighted so many families, so many homes. And has caused such concern and such emergency throughout the world, as we find so regularly reported, O Lord, on our news items.

[6 : 12] You are reminding us, O Lord, that our human resources are slim and limited, and that we cannot cope with such things without your help.

Even though we may think at times that our own resources and our own technology and discoveries will be adequate for us, yet, Lord, help us to see that we cannot overcome death by them, and that the death that is inevitable for us all has already been taken account of by you.

And you have already gained victory over it for us, through the resurrection of our Lord. We pray tonight, O Lord, that you bless all the families devastated by this virus.

So many millions throughout the world, O Lord, who have been affected in different ways. We think especially of those who are ill with it, those who seek to give them medical assistance and help.

We thank you for them throughout the world. In our own nation particularly, we give thanks for all those who work in the NHS and all its associated forms of ministry.

[7 : 22] We bless you that such dedication exists, Lord, and that you have given gifts to such people as look after others in their need.

Lord, we are grateful to you for this. We pray that our hearts may be filled with thanksgiving, as we do, Lord, give thanks for this. We pray that that thanksgiving will abound more and more, for we acknowledge that every good and every perfect gift comes down from above.

We have not produced them ourselves, even though you have given human beings the ability to think and to devise means. O Lord God, help us to see that the source of all our health, the source of all our wealth, the source of all our well-being is in yourself alone.

O Lord God, help us to see that the source of all our wealth, we are affected in different ways by this situation.

We think of those who live on their own and may feel lonely and anxious. Lord, bless them, we pray. We give thanks for the means of communication we have, though we cannot go physically to see them.

[9 : 01] Now, we pray too that you'd bless throughout our land and throughout the world businesses that have had to shut down. Lord, we pray that you would bless those who have lost work and who may never have these jobs to go back to after this is over.

Remember them, we pray, and provide for them and for their families. Help them, we pray, to look to you for their strength. Remember, we pray too, those who are engaged in looking after our care homes as well as our hospitals.

Remember those who work as carers in our communities. We thank you for them too, and we acknowledge, Lord, the dedication that they show and the risk that they pose to themselves as they seek to minister to those in need.

Lord, we ask that your blessing will be with us in all these situations and more, as we know that you are able to do for us more than we can ask or even think.

Remember our children as well. We pray that you'd bless them at this unusual time for them and the pressures of living under lockdown may also be affecting them and their families.

[10:11] We pray that you bless our teachers who find it so unusual not being in school and in the work that they have dedicated themselves to, the teaching of our young people.

Lord, we pray for them and ask that you would be near them and help them at this time to be conscious of your own support. We pray that you would grant your blessing too to those vulnerable families, vulnerable children who have to go to hub schools for their meals at this time.

We pray for them. We pray for their families too, asking, Lord, that you would bless the agencies, the charities that are involved in attending to their needs and supplying them.

Remember all, we pray. Grant that you would bless too those in charge of our food banks and those who need to resort there day by day. Oh, Lord, our God, we pray that you would bless all of them too in the ministry they provide and the provisions that are made.

Grant your blessing then to us now. We further wait upon you here. Receive our thanks. Cleanse us from our sin and accept us. For Jesus' sake. Amen. Now, children, good to say a word to you.

[11:26] I'm sure there are some children watching tonight, so thank you again for joining with parents, others, with our service tonight. Let's go to read a verse from Matthew chapter 23. It's a verse that Jesus speaks about, that tells us about how Jesus spoke to the people of Jerusalem as he made his way towards the cross eventually.

And he says here, O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it, how often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you would not.

Now, last week we looked at an illustration Jesus used of a plough and ploughing a straight line. Here is also an illustration that Jesus took from the natural world, where he had observed a hen, a mother hen, whether it be a chicken or another bird, looking after her brood, her chicks.

And as you know, the mother hen very often spreads her wings and the chicks, especially when they're very young, find their shelter in there. Sometimes you'll find if they're roaming about and picking away at the grass or the earth and some danger appears, whether it's a dog or a cat or whatever, they'll scuttle back to the mother hen and she'll take her wings and put her wings round them.

So she looks after them, she cares for them. And what Jesus was saying to the people of Jerusalem, just like a mother hen wants to take her chicks in for safety under her wings, so I would do that for you, Jesus was saying, but you don't want it.

[13:02] In other words, Jesus was saying to them, I would love to have you under my care, under my shelter. I'd love to have you accept me as the saviour, but you don't want that.

And Jesus was sad that these people of Jerusalem kept refusing it, most of them. And even after he had died on the cross, they were still not prepared to accept him as the saviour.

And just like a mother hen has her chicks under her wings, so Jesus wants to bring us people under his care, under his protection. Because it's when we come to be in Jesus and to know Jesus as our saviour, that we have the best possible protection.

He won't necessarily keep us from things which hurt us, things which cause us pain and trial and difficulty, but the thing is he'll be with us in that. And he'll have us under his care, directing our lives, even in all these situations in life.

And you know also how when the chicks come under the wings of the mother hen, that's where they develop after they're hatched, when they're very young. It's in the safety and in the warmth of the mother hen's wings, under the wings of the mother hen.

[14:19] And that's where they develop further. That's where they grow. That's where these conditions help them to grow. And what Jesus is also alluding to here is that for our human lives to develop the way they should, we need to be under the sheltering care of God, of Jesus.

That is where we find our refuge, but also our best possible circumstances for our lives to develop as they should, morally, spiritually, in every possible way in our relationships.

It's coming to know Jesus and accept Jesus and be under the care of Jesus. That's really where we develop as we should develop in our lives.

So, as a mother hen would gather her chicks under her wings, so Jesus is saying to us tonight, so I would gather you too and I would have you to come under the provision that I make for you.

So, let's say the Lord's Prayer again together. Amen. Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

[15 : 32] Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory. Amen. Now, we're going to read once again, and it's from Mark chapter 1, the final part of that chapter, from verse 40.

Mark 1 at verse 40. And a leper came to him, imploring him and kneeling to him, and said, If you will, you can make me clean.

Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand and touched him and said to him, I will be clean. And immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean.

And Jesus sternly charged him and sent him away at once, and said to him, See that you say nothing to anyone, but go and show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded for a proof to them.

[16 : 36] But he went out and began to talk freely about it, and to spread the news, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter a town, but was out in desolate places, and people were coming to him from every quarter.

And I'd like us to think of the teaching of that passage from verse 20 down to the end of the chapter there. Human touch is a very, very precious thing, and we convey so much, sometimes without even perhaps thinking, we convey so much through human touch.

Love, sympathy, concern, support, reassurance, many other things that we convey just through human touch, through an embrace, through a kiss, through taking someone's hand, various ways of touch by which all of these things are communicated by us as we seek the well-being of other people.

And that's what makes it so difficult at the moment that we cannot actually touch, that we cannot engage in handshakes, in embracing, in the usual way of showing affection, and that makes it exceedingly difficult for us all.

For us as ministers too, it imposes its own limitations and frustrations and difficulties. For example, it's a very precious thing to be able to take the hand of someone at a bedside in hospital or in a hospice and take their hand as you pray with them.

[18 : 18] And that conveys not just something from our side as we pray, but for their side it grants, it gives to them a sense of support and reassurance. And of course, it's the same at funerals.

With recent funerals that we had here, even for those who are keenly bereaved, we cannot go towards them and shake hands with them and show our sympathy and support for them by way of touch.

And this is a very difficult situation that we need to bear in mind and to adapt to. And we're trying to do that. Now, the Bible and the Gospels especially frequently refer to Jesus touching.

Last week, we looked at the subject of Jesus' self-isolation. Tonight, we're looking at the touch of Jesus. It refers in the Gospels many times to Jesus touching.

And every single context in which Jesus touches people is very significant and is very often to do with illness, disease, or even death at times where you find Jesus coming to touch people or to touch the beer, the way in which the dead were transported towards their funeral where Jesus with the widow of Nain as she's known came and touched the beer that her dead son was being carried on and then having risen him back to life.

[19 : 47] The wonderful emphasis in the Bible is he gave him back to his mother. He was the only one she had. And you can see the love of Jesus and his concern to give back this precious, precious son from death back to this mother.

No, it doesn't always happen that way that people recover from illness and though we know Jesus in that case touched somebody who was dead or touched the beer, here we find him in this chapter touching people who were ill.

For example, verse 31, this is Simon's mother-in-law, Peter's mother-in-law. She lay ill with a fever and when they told Jesus about her, he came and took her by the hand and lifted her up.

He didn't just come and stand there and say, now I'm going to heal you, I'm going to make you better so you can stand up. He took her by the hand. He conveyed through this wonderful touch, his support for her and his healing power.

And when you come to this leper that Jesus healed, as we'll see, he actually touched him and he touched him in a very significant way as part of the healing process by which this leper was made clean.

[21 : 00] So let's look first of all at the leper's appeal to Jesus in verse 40. He came to him imploring him and kneeling said to him, if you will, you can make me clean.

That's the first thing, the leper's appeal and then secondly we look at the Lord's response where the Lord did three things, he touched him, he healed him and he directed him.

The leper's appeal first of all, now one of the most important things to remember is that this man is appealing to Jesus not just from a personal condition of illness, illness, he's also appealing to him from a situation of isolation.

Luke chapter 5 verse 12 dealing with the same thing, same person, same incident, says that this man was full of leprosy. It wasn't a mild case.

Remember Luke was a doctor and when you take into account the fact that Luke knew his patients, knew his human condition physically, you can see how important it was.

[22 : 06] he took note, this man was full of leprosy. It was a condition that affected him entirely. Leprosy is itself such a shocking condition, it affects the skin, it affects the limbs, a wastage of muscle, and in fact, effective treatment for leprosy was only 40 years ago, so in the 1980s, we came to have an effective treatment that could be applied successfully to leprosy.

But leprosy more than just leaving people with a very extreme condition physically, and indeed mentally too, but one of the other things that leprosy does, it makes a person an outcast.

This man would be isolated, this man would be unable to come into the community, he would not be able to gather with others, he would not be able to share in worship, even if he wanted to in the temple or whatever, he was quarantined, he had to stay away.

And when you go to the Old Testament, you can look later for yourselves at Leviticus chapters 13 and 14 deal with God's instructions regarding leprosy.

Chapter 13 deals with that, and then chapter 14 with the various ways in which God instructed Moses as to how lepers were to be pronounced clean and so on.

[23 : 32] Now leprosy was itself an image of sin's consequences. God wasn't choosing lepers and just making a deliberate example of them as if they were worse than other people.

Remember every illness, every condition like that, whether it's leprosy or even a common cold, is a result of our fallenness, as a result of our sin against God, it's the legacy of sin.

And what God was doing in the Old Testament was taking leprosy, there were other things as well that he used, but he took leprosy as an image or an illustration of what sin had done to human beings, that it had isolated them from God and also from one another meaningfully, because sin had caused not only the relationship with God to be broken, but relationships to human to human to be broken as well, devastating at times.

And so in that Old Testament context, God took leprosy as an image of sin's consequences, so that you find when you come to this individual here that Jesus dealt with, that's why he would have been outside of the community, outside of the worshipping community, outside of the believing community, because for his own good and also for prevention of transmission of that disease, he would be cast out, but that of course was still, because this is still effectively the Old Testament law is becoming the new, and so that regulation is still in place.

And here's an appeal from isolation, this man doesn't just want to be cleaned from his leprosy, from that condition, he's really desperate to be rehabilitated, he's desperate to be reintegrated into the community, and that's why he's making this appeal, as we'll see in a moment.

[25 : 30] The appeal is genuine, and it is very earnest, you see, how it's described, he implored Jesus, and kneeling said to him, if you will, you can make me, this man is really in earnest, he's absolutely serious about this, have you had asked this man, what in the world, what would you in the world most like to have done, what would you like, where would you like to be in terms of your relationship to other people, I've said, the first thing I would want to get rid of is this leprosy, because that's what's left me in this isolated position, in this lonely position, I would like to be clean, I would like to be clean so that I can get back to sharing with other people in their lives, and that's where he's coming from, he knows his need, if you were to be asked tonight, if I were to be asked tonight, what is your greatest need, what would you say, this man knew his need physically was to be cleansed, but our greatest need is what this represents, isn't it, this Old

Testament way of representing the sin between us and God and how it needs to be dealt with, that is my deepest need tonight, that's what I need to come to God with and confess to God and seek God's healing over, a healing that will get to the very core of my being and deal with this sin, with my estrangement from God.

Now you notice, as he comes to make his appeal, he didn't in any way doubt Christ's ability to heal him, you see what he said, if you will, you can make me clean, he didn't say to Jesus, if you are able, you can make me clean, he knew that Jesus was able to make him clean, what he's saying is, he's deferring the matter to Christ's will, if you will, if it is your will, if really, because you have this authority, if you want to exercise that on my part, and for me, I know that I'll be clean, if you can do this, if it's your will to do this, then I know that you can do it.

He's deferring to the will of Jesus, and that's so important for ourselves. There's a man in the Old Testament called Naaman in 2 Kings chapter 5, he was a commander in the Syrian army, and he was held in high reputation, but he was a leper, and a slave girl who had been taken from one of the conquests of the Syrian army to work for Naaman's wife.

She said, it's a great pity that my master is not back in Samaria, where the prophet Elisha lives, because then he would be cured from this leprosy. And of course, Naaman, as the story goes, as the account is, made his way, all the way to Elisha, to where Elisha lived, and he stood at Elisha's house, and Elisha actually didn't come out to meet him.

[28 : 39] He sent somebody to Naaman, standing there waiting for a miracle, and what does Elisha do? He sends somebody, and he says to Naaman, go and wash seven times in the Jordan, and you'll be cleansed.

And then what do you read? Naaman was furious. He was absolutely livid. He said, why can't I use the rivers of Damascus, Farfar, and Abana?

Are they not just as good as the waters of the Jordan? And then he went and said, I thought that this man, Elisha, would come and that he would call upon his God and put his hand over the place, that's the place of leprosy, and I would be healed.

You see, there is the key to Naaman's limitation. I thought. I thought.

I thought this was how he would go about it. You know, there are thousands, millions of people in the world who wouldn't mind being saved, but not according to God's way.

[29 : 49] I thought it would be this way. I thought that this is how it should be done. There are many people who would want Christ to be their saviour, as long as they're able to retain something of what they think is essential in terms of their lifestyle.

God is saying, it's not your thought, it's not your will that really matters, it's mine. And this man, this leper, recognises the authority of Jesus, and he places himself under that authority of Jesus when he says, Lord, if you will, you can make me clean.

God's way is always the best. God's way is always the best. God's way is always the best. God's way is always the best.

God's way is always the best. And so here is something that reminds us of that. Here's the appeal of the leper from his isolation. He makes this earnest and genuine appeal, knowing his need and deferring the matter to the will of Christ.

[31 : 15] He's in a good place, isn't he? He's in a good place because he's prepared to let Jesus take charge of his life. What's better than that? And secondly, let's look at the Lord's response.

Verse 41. First thing you notice is that Jesus touched him. As we said, this man would have been isolated. This man would not have had a human touch.

Maybe apart from another leper, but probably not another human touch for years. And this is a bit of a shock to those who are looking on at this moment because Jesus, as he came and touched this man, was doing something which seriously was actually out of order.

Of course, Jesus is Lord of life. But if you touched a leper or a dead person in the Old Testament, you are ceremonially unclean. You are in the category of being ceremonially unclean.

And you had to then go through a process of ceremonial cleansing. And so it would really have been a shock to see Jesus touching a leper, but that's what he did.

[32 : 25] Remember, Jesus doesn't contract any defilement from touching this man or any other because he is himself above that as God.

and nevertheless he's associated himself with this person and with this person's need. So he touches him. That's what you read here. Moved with pity, stretched out his hand and touched him

and said to him, be clean.

You notice, where did the touch come from? It didn't just come from Christ reaching out his hand unthinkingly. See what it says?

He moved with pity. He stretched out his hand and touched him. That's the source of the touch. That's letting you in to see something of the heart of Jesus.

It's out of the heart of Jesus that this touch moved over him. In other words, the touch of Jesus is from a heart that seeks reintegration of sinners back into a proper relationship with himself and with one another.

[33 : 38] Friends, tonight, more than anything else, we need the touch of Jesus. We need the touch of Jesus. You might ask, how does the touch of Jesus come into my life?

He's no longer physically there to touch us. Well, the touch of Jesus is through the work of the Holy Spirit. And when the work of the Holy Spirit is known in your life, in your heart, in the entirety of your life, that is actually Jesus touching you.

That is the Savior working through the Spirit in your life. Working in such a way as to touch you meaningfully, spiritually, for your healing, for your reintegration, for your rehabilitation, for everything you need as a sinner and I need as a sinner, whether it's in a relationship with God or with other people, it's the touch of Jesus that makes all the difference.

And so tonight, for your anxiety, for your anxious heart, for your troubled heart, for your tempted heart, for a heart that's so often, as we all are, especially in situations like we are in today, where we need the touch of Jesus, it's the touch of Jesus that is indeed going to make all the difference to your mind, to how you think, to your conclusions, to your motives, to your emotions.

It's the touch of Jesus if you're isolated tonight and lonely and sad or bereaved or distressed. What you need more than anything else is the touch of Jesus.

[35 : 15] Is Jesus through the Holy Spirit coming into your heart, touching you, reassuring you, bringing you more of himself, more of his love poured into your heart?

That's what we need, friends. That's what the world needs. That's why it's so important to maintain services like these through these means, so that people will come to know who don't perhaps know it already, the touch of Jesus.

But even if you've known this, a thousand times already, every single day we live, we need this more than anything else. However experienced we are as Christians, whatever we've been through before, however much we might say, well, I've been here before, it's the touch of Jesus that still makes all the difference.

So tonight, before you go to sleep, pray that Jesus will touch you, that he will take his truth and through the Holy Spirit really touch your heart, really come to still your mind with peace, really bring comfort into your soul, really bring you advance in your knowledge of salvation, in all the things that you need in order to develop, as we were saying to the children, illustrated by the chicks under the care of the mother hen.

This is where Jesus will have us to develop in our human lives, under his touch, under his loving, saving touch. So he touched him and secondly, he healed him.

[36 : 55] He said, I will be clean, I will be clean. And what you admire first of all there is the very fact that Jesus spoke his healing into being.

He didn't just stand there and mentally do something that conveyed healing to this man. He very deliberately said, I will be clean.

What you're seeing there is the creative word of Jesus. At the beginning of John's gospel, we read all the things that were made, the whole creation, nothing was made without him.

And when God spoke at the beginning so that the creation came into being, that's what he's been doing ever since. Speaking things into being, sending forth his word to bring about changes in people's lives, whatever changes in history he has purposed.

God speaks and things happen. And when God speaks, when Jesus spoke here, inevitably something happened. You never find Jesus speaking and wasting his words.

[38 : 06] He speaks creatively. He speaks in a way that brings healing into this man's soul. And so he moved with pity, he stretched out his hand and touched him and said, I will be clean.

See, Jesus' concern is that he be clean so that he can be rehabilitated, reintegrated into the community. That's the answer, friends, tonight. For our broken lives, for our broken relationships, for our estrangements, for our alienation, one from another and from God especially.

It's the touch of Jesus. It's the healing of Jesus. It's the word of Jesus. It's the creative word of Jesus, the creative touch of Jesus. Here's your encouragement tonight and my encouragement. There's so much to discourage us in the world at the moment, I know, but here's your encouragement because what you're seeing here is the mind of Jesus Christ towards you. The mind of Jesus Christ towards us in our predicament as sinners and in our need, whatever our condition may entail, the mind of Jesus is that he is willing that we come under his care. [39 : 24] But are we willing to come under his care? That's the question for me and for you tonight. It's not a matter of whether or not Jesus is willing.

This man said, if you will, you can make me clean. And Jesus said, I will be clean. Are you willing tonight to come under the care of Christ?

Come under what Kenny was referring to this morning, the shepherding care of Jesus, the shepherding love of Jesus, the wonderful provision that he makes us, the shepherd of our lives. You see, if we are unsaved tonight, or if we're unprepared to advance in our Christian walk, it's not because Jesus is unwilling. You have to trace the reason for that to your own will and to my will. It's not a question of whether he is willing or not. He is. And you know, it's the instant effect. as soon as Jesus spoke creatively, he was healed.

[40 : 31] Immediately, the leprosy left him and he was made clean. There are no pretense about this. There's no show about this. Not like one of these meetings where you find lots of dramatic events taking place, where supposed healings take place.

I'm not denying that God doesn't heal people nowadays. But you see, there's nothing here in advance, three weeks before, saying there will be a healing meeting. Please come to it. There's nothing here by way of any kind of pretense, any kind of show, any kind of human self-congratulatory note of praise.

It's all about him. It's all about Christ himself and God's glory immediately leprosy left him. And it's interesting too, isn't it? It's not just ceremonially that Jesus dealt with his condition in a way that would restore him ceremonially to the fellowship of God's people or worship or whatever. He actually dealt with his whole condition. He dealt with the very thing that kept him back from that fellowship, that kept him back from a proper relationship with his fellow human beings.

[41 : 53] You see, that's what Christ does. It goes right to the root of your beings. You and I tonight, we need far more than just thinking about the edges of our lives.

We need something far more than a patch-up job. We need something far more radical than just dealing with a few symptoms. That is not what Jesus does. He goes to the root of your being. He goes to your soul. He goes to your heart. He goes to where the root of the problem is. And immediately the leprosy left him.

Immediately this man was in a different situation. Immediately Jesus answered his case. And so tonight he will do it for you too.

Here's the touch and here's the healing word of Jesus. Jesus. And then he directed him. The final point. He straightway charged him and sent him away at once and said, see that you say nothing to anyone but go show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded for a proof to them.

[43 : 02] Now if you go back to the chapters I mentioned in Leviticus 13 and 14, you'll see that the priest was, I suppose you could call him a kind of health inspector with regard to things like leprosy. Sometimes the word leprosy covered more skin conditions than actually leprosy itself but it was the duty of the priest to be a kind of inspector so that he would pronounce someone clean from leprosy if that was the stage at which he was at.

And then there were two ceremonies actually by which the cleansed leper was rehabilitated firstly in regard to rehabilitation into the camp as it was called, the camp of the people, the gathering of the people, and then rehabilitation in terms of relationship with God.

What was represented there was nothing less than a restoration or reconciliation spiritually. And so you find that the direction that Jesus gave here was very much in line with what the Old Testament had specified.

Go and show yourself to the priest for a proof to them for a proof to everyone else that you have been cleansed. But he went out and he began to talk freely about it.

Now it's a bit of a question, it's always been a question, why did Jesus straightly and seriously charge people like this not to go and not speak about him?

[44 : 31] Why didn't he just allow them to go and broadcast? Well Jesus knew when the right moment was for him to be more widely publicized and accepted as the Messiah and that moment was not yet.

Whatever you say about that, this man went out and began to talk freely about it and to spread the news so that Jesus could no longer openly enter a town that was out in desolate places.

Well we don't need to go to a priest. The proof of our cleansing is in how we live our lives. Proof of Jesus' touch, of Jesus' healing word, the proof of our lives being changed by Jesus, is how we live and live for him and live in a way that other people can see that we are indeed God's people, in love with the Lord and in love with his ways and with his will.

And people were coming to him from every quarter. Let me just finish with this. that is surely what we want. Through this time of lockdown, I understand that people and there was a report on the news today or yesterday, was it, that people are showing more religious concern, spiritual concern and coming to more prayer emphasis since this lockdown began and since this virus outbreak took place.

And I hope that that's true and I pray as you and Shurer pray that that will actually continue, that it won't be a flash in the pan, that it will be something that will actually bring people lasting commitment to God, to Jesus, to salvation.

[46 : 16] And what we were praying for is that we would see people coming to him from every quarter. When all this is over, is this not our prayer tonight?

That people from all parts of the world, due to the heightened awareness of need that this virus outbreak has brought to us, that God will use it to bring people like this man to a sense of need, to cry out to God, to seek his healing touch, and to be directed by Jesus in the way of their lives as well.

May he bless his own word to us. God we're going to conclude this evening by singing Psalm 113. That's in the Scottish Psalter, Psalm 113.

That's on page 393. If you're using the blue books we usually use. So verse 5 down to verse 8, double verse 8.

And from verse 5, unto the Lord our God that dwells on high, who can compare himself that humbleth things to see in heaven and earth that are, he from the dust doth raise the poor, that very low doth lie, and from the dunghill lifts the man oppressed with poverty.

[47 : 39] And we'll try and sing to the tune St. Ethel Reader, these verses 5 to 8. And to the Lord our God that dwells on high, who can compare himself that humbleth things to see in heaven and earth that does.

He from the dust doth raise the poor, that very low doth lie, and from the dunghill lifts the man oppressed with poverty.

That he may highly him advance, and with the princess said, with those that of his people are the chief in princess great, the barren woman house to keep, he may giveth and to be, of sons the mother full of joy, praise to the Lord give ye.

we'll close now with a benediction. Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you now and ever more.

Amen. thank you once again for watching or taking part in the service with us. As I said at the beginning, we're grateful to you all for your support, and I pray that God will bless you as the week unfolds.

[50 : 05] Thank you.