

Thus Saith God

by Pastor Ted Brooks, West Saddleree Baptist Church

"The World of Jesus In Which He Entered."

"And the leper in whom the plague, in his clothes shall be (torn) and his head bare and he shall put a cover upon his upper lip and he shall cry-unclean, unclean. All the days wherein the plague shall be in him, he shall be defiled, he is unclean and he shall dwell alone outside the camp shall his habitation be." Leviticus 13:45-46

"And there came a leper to him blessing him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, if thou wilt, thou canst make me whole." Mark 1:40-41 "And Jesus moved with compassion put forth his hand and touched him, and said unto him, I will be thou clean."

Lepers were unwanted people. They were their own neighbor. When entering into town they would cover their faces, crying unclean, unclean.

Loneliness, my friend, can often be more than one can bare. To be left alone with a phone that never rings and a door knob which never turns, mail boxes and yet no mail, a table which once occupied a large family and one day you are your own company. Ask any mother or dad who once had the pleasure of the company of his family now they are left alone.

Lepers were left alone. What food they got was thrown to them. No one took time to speak to them. When entering a town you could hear them crying unclean, unclean, his or her head was bare and yet their face and lips were covered. With them was putrid odor, along with ears and nose and face of decaying, a breaking down of mankind.

Lepers did not enjoy being plagued with this sin. Also in the world Jesus entered was always on the verge of economic disaster. Therefore, many

of them went to bed a night not knowing whether they would eat on the morrow, for them the prayer of Jesus would be very real "Give us this day, our daily bread."

In fact, life was very difficult, they had and lived a marginal type of living which means that poverty was never far away. A severe illness or a season of drought could result in economic ruin. The people in Jesus world in which he entered were heavily taxed, paying tithes on their crops and making countless offerings such as first born children, animals, the poor, the temple, synagogues, priests and rabbis, also poll tax, salt tax, crown tax, bride and bridegroom, land tax, cattle tax. You can see, my friend, as modern communists have demonstrated anew, poverty and economic unrest and breeding grown for revolutionary change, such as the world Jesus entered. In fact, Matthew 4:15 said, "by the way of the sea beyond Jordan, galilee of the nation."

The people who sat in darkness saw great light, and to them who sat in the region and shadow of death, light is springing up. This was the world Jesus entered. John, the Baptist, declared, is this him or do we look for another?

Jesus loved everybody. He went about doing good. He was not a provincialism, He was truly His brother's keeper.

He taught as he healed, healed as he taught. He prayed all the time, suffering ceaselessly in his wearied body. He never left off fighting evil. He fought evil and taught us that our mortal bodies are of little importance compared to our immortal souls. Yes his love never failed to leap out in our defense of our suffering bodies.

Verily, verily, he would cry, I say

unto you, believe. He would only heal where there was faith or belief in His power.

In Jesus world in which he entered wherever He went, the sick and the dying were everywhere. He was pressed upon by the sick, the mad and the dying.

You and I, my friend, live in a world of hospitals, ambulance service, urgent care, well trained doctors, it is hard for us to imagine how the sick was, where they had none of these things. Here in Robeson County we do not see the crippled, blind beggars lying in dark corners, covered with sores, dirty ragged, sobbing and crying. Here in these United States the dying and starvation, the ill, the mad, care hid away in sanatoriums.

The sights and smell was real in Palestine and Jesus was pressed night and day.

Think of it, my friend, Matthew said they sat in darkness and rain and shadow of death. They laid in the street. No drug stores on every corner, nothing for pain. The only portion for the women who were of large discharge of blood from hemorrhage were told to straddle a ditch and to burn fresh grape vines.

Bro. Paul cried out, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?" Romans 7:24

Brother Paul was looking for an open window through which a soul may find liberation from the confinement of those things which bind and to expand a bit to meet the ever-expanding love of God. David in Psalms declared the Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. Matthew's book says that Jesus declared, "Our father, which are in heaven."

Now look at the leper sitting by the wayside. He had for years been an outcast. No one spoke to him, or came near him, except others like him. His face, eyes, ears, feet, hands, were eaten away by the disease. He slept where he could in rocks and stony places. You

must remember he had been shut up and declared a leper. His clothes had been burned, his home was destroyed. Oh, my friend, sin will cause you to lose all the things you loved.

Now, he is sitting by the way side begging. He was in pain and going blind. He was slowly getting worse. Then one day he heard about Jesus who was going about healing the sick just by laying hands on them.

He probably considered himself too repulsive. Jesus would never heal him. But the leper cried out, "If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." Mark 1:40

The leper stretched his muscles. It is not the muscle that are seen that are so important as the muscle that are unseen. We are talking about the muscle under the rib, that muscle that Israel said "Hear, the Lord our God is a One Lord, and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart and with all thy might." Deut. 6:4-5. You see, you must take and stretch the mind to take in all of God. He is and there is no one else beside Him. This kind of mind is out of sight, the mind that is under the rib.

Jesus, my friend, had a power of overcoming trouble. A power of triumphing over the Prince of this world, which was unique in the history of mankind. "Verily, verily, I say unto you" Jesus stretched his mind. He that believed on me, the works I do shall he do also and greater works than these shall he do because I go to my father. Jesus, my friend, looked at reality through the lens of divine imagination. Trouble vanished around him. Obstacles fell away. The lost became found. The sick became well. Sinners became redeemed. And rough places became smooth. Moreover, he promised those who followed him and used the way he used should have similar dominion over all things on earth. My friend, this art of healing has been lost in our churches today. Our imagination of the promise of the things of God has grown weak beneath our rib.

We can't say we love God all our heart. Jesus loved his father with all his heart, soul and mind. Notice with me in Mark's gospel in Chapter 5 verses 38-42 every time Jesus converted a fact into reality the people exclaimed that a miracle had been wrought. Bear in mind we do not imply Jesus disregarded or overlooked the facts of life. But he looked at them so much more steadily, understanding the needs of mankind. Notice when he came to this house and he saw the treatment of those who wept and wailed greatly. Verse 38. He asked why all the crying? "The child is not dead." You see, he looked steadily at the dead girl until he could utter with absolute conviction based upon perfectly clear understanding these startling words. "The maid is not dead, but sleepeth." Verse 39. Jesus, my friend, was one above all others who never let his lips say what his mind and head did not authorize. Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh.

So the leper stretching the muscle of his mind saw the crowd coming his way. Possibly he asked some one what was happening. It is Jesus of Nazareth. He is coming and he is preaching and healing in the hills of Judea.

Oh, my friend, it is always a glad day when Jesus comes to town and walks the aisles of our churches. I imagine the leper drew back into the rocks. He did not want to be ridiculed or have rocks thrown at him or be told to get out of the way.

When the crowd got close, he saw the face of the young man, unconsciously, he moved and crawled out from those rocks. The eyes of Jesus compelled him to get up. Pulling his sore feet, scarcely carrying him, leaving his crutches, lying against the walks, he staggered to his feet in all of his filthiness and wretchedness. HE fell at the feet of Jesus for pit and for power.

From beneath that spiritual muscle, he cried out, "Lord, help thou me. If thou wilt, thou canst make me whole." Jesus moved with compassion, put

forth his hand, the leper felt the touch of Jesus. No one had touched him before, yet Jesus laid his hand upon him and said, "Be thou clean."

Do you need a touch? Let me ask you a question. How is your thinking? Jesus said for us to think on honest things, things which are just and pure, things which are lovely, if there be any, please think on these things. Philippians 4:8

What about you sinner man? Are you tired of sinning? Stretch your imagination of your mind, reach down and cry out "Lord if thou wilt thou canst make me whole."

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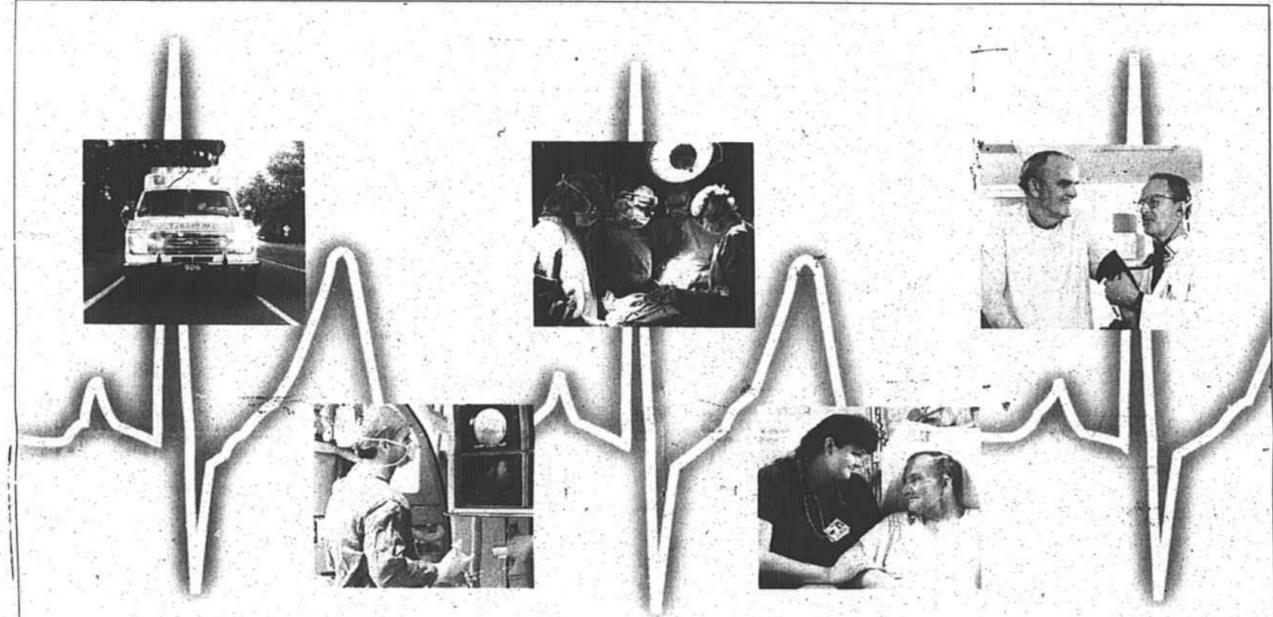
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The Sunday School Lesson

BY JOHN R. BRAYBOY
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God's Great Gift (Matthew 2:1-12)

- I. Wise Men (2:1-2)
- II. Troubled Man (2:3-6)
- III. Deceptive Plan (2:7-8)
- IV. Joyful Worship (2:9-12)

I. Wise Men (Matthew 2:1-2)
The wise men came from the East, looking for Jesus. Bible scholars say that these wise men were probably astrologers, and that they lived in Persia (present day Iran). They saw the star in the East and came to worship Jesus. They must have had some knowledge about Bible prophecy because they recognized the star as that of Jesus. Apparently they were looking for the Messiah that the prophets had foretold. They came to seek out the one who was born King of the Jews.

II. Troubled Man
Herod was King of Israel at the time of Jesus' birth. When the wise men asked about where the King of the Jews was, the news got to Herod and he got very upset. Herod was disturbed mainly because he was insecure. He loved being King and did not want to give up his throne. When he heard the wise men asking about the King of the Jews, he thought Jesus was coming to take his throne. Herod was like many people today, they love their social standing, wealth, etc. more than having the peace that Jesus can give. In other words, Jesus is a threat to their life, as they see it. In Herod's anxiety he called for the Scribes and Chief Priests to find out where Jesus would be born. It is like the natural man when he gets disturbed about something, he asks advice from a man of God to get an answer to his problem. Sometimes the answer is not what they want to hear, but it may also soothe things over for a while. The Chief Priests and Scribes told Herod what he wanted to know. Sometimes lost

people know what they need to do when under conviction, but they want to work it out some other way. Herod found out that Jesus was to be born in Bethlehem of Judea, the first of the princes.

III. Deceptive Plan (2:7-9)

Herod sent for the wise men and asked them when they saw the star. After talking to them, he told them to find Jesus and come back to let him know where he was. Herod told them that he wanted to go and worship him. Of course, Herod's plan was to find Jesus and kill him. Many people today would like to rid the world of Jesus because like Herod he is a threat to their life style. Sometimes like Herod they use deception in the name of religion to try to thwart the gospel of Jesus Christ. They cannot see that Christ offers them eternal life and peace that passes all understanding.

IV. Joyful Noise (2:9-12)

The star led the wise men to the house where Jesus was. They rejoiced at seeing the star. The star stopped over the house where Jesus was and they went in to worship him. They had brought gifts of myrrh, gold and frankincense. The myrrh was symbolic of the death of Christ because it was used in the preparation of deceased bodies. The gold was a symbol of the purity of the Son of God. The frankincense was symbolic of Jesus' authority, after worshipping Jesus, the wise men left, but God warned them in a dream to go home another direction. God let them know of Herod's deceptive plan to kill Jesus. Many times we are faced with people who try to deceive us, but if we listen to the Lord, He will reveal it to us. When we are in God's will, we will be able to see deception of others. The day that we live in we definitely need the wisdom of God more than ever to know when people are being deceitful or are for real. In today's world, people will use other people in the name of Jesus and think nothing of it. If you have not found the Lord's will for your life, first of all God's will for your life is to save you for Christ's sake. If you don't know Jesus as personal savior, why don't you accept God's greatest gift to the world right now and find out the real meaning of Christmas.

God bless you until next week.

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