

“TOUCHED BY THE MASTER”  
IMAGINE MEETING CHRIST SERIES #2  
Leviticus 13:1-8, Romans 6:1-8, Mark 1:40-45  
April 18, 2021

What would it mean to you to meet Christ Jesus? What would you ask of Him? What would you say to Him? Would it be enough that He noticed you, and talked to you and invited Himself home with you, or would you want to go deeper in your relationship with Jesus? Would there be more that you would want in your encounter with Jesus? That’s what we’re exploring in this series, “Imagine Meeting Christ”

“When you consider who He was, compared with who we are, the glory of His past, with the shame of ours –

“When you remember that He merits the worship of all the world’s kings and the obedience of all heaven’s angels –

“If you were able to comprehend the power of one word of His mouth or the impact of one millisecond of His attention,

“And if you could conceive of the strength of His personality as He walks into a crowded room, the spine-tingling force of His passing, even at a distance, or the compelling appeal of His physical presence,

“You would share with me the awe of the words, ‘Jesus stretched out His hand and *touched...*’”<sup>1</sup>

Rarely do we take the time to contemplate the person of Jesus for our lives today. Oh, we learn about Him in Sunday school, we talk about Him in Bible studies, we sing about Him in songs (both old and new), but do we really understand the fullness of the One we call Savior and Lord? Sadly, no. Unfortunately we have become so accustomed to talking ABOUT Him that we fail to really UNDERSTAND Him, because if we were to fully understand the true nature of Christ Jesus, we would **live completely differently**, we would **feel completely differently** about the challenges we face today,

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<sup>1</sup> (Robert Rasmussen, *Imagine Meeting Him*, [Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, 1998] pg. 29)

and we would **think completely differently** about the value of having Jesus as the true Lord of our life.

We have lost the awe of the power and glory that are in Jesus, and so we go on to live our life any ole way that we want, and we miss the potential for Him making an exponential difference in the way we live and breathe and have our being. Because we only know about Jesus, we miss the intimate relationship we might have with Him because we do not know Jesus personally. And because we do not know Jesus personally, we do not feel comfortable approaching Him with the struggles that we face today. So we muddle through life, completely unaware of the magnificence of His presence, the power of His words, and the life-changing capability of His touch.

But today let's look at one example in the New Testament of the Bible of the difference that Jesus made in the life of a man who resigned himself to come to know Jesus. This man not only was noticed by Jesus, but he took the next step to allow Jesus to touch him. Listen to how the account is told in Mark 1:40-45. (READ Mark 1:40-45)

Leprosy is a disease that was addressed by God to Moses in the Old Testament, to keep His people safe. Leviticus 13 outlines the detection and diagnosis of this dreaded bacterial disease in an effort to prevent it from spreading to the general populace of the Hebrew people as they traveled from Egypt to the Promised Land. This skin disease, leprosy, was considered serious enough that any person contracting it would be isolated from the rest of the public in order to prevent any spread of the disease. And one could think that isolation was pretty sever, and it is. But there was no judgement on the person who contracted the disease. This was just a preventative measure to keep everyone else safe.

Leviticus 13:45-46 indicate the way a person with leprosy was to be identified, *“A person who has a dreaded skin disease must wear torn clothes, leave his hair uncombed, cover the lower part of his face, and call out, ‘Unclean, unclean!’ He remains unclean as long as he has the disease, and he must live outside the camp, away from others.”* God wanted to keep his people “clean,” so those who developed skin diseases were carefully observed, since there was no medical cure for the disease at that time. They were isolated from the rest of the public until they were healed. Sound familiar?

Anyway, the diseased person was often isolated from the others for the rest of their life, separated from spouse, children, other relation, friends and neighbors. It was horrible because we are created as social creatures and to be isolated from the ones we love, from everyone else, is torment at its worst. So people were very careful about coming into contact with anyone with leprosy, and they were very careful about preventing it. So God set up guidelines as to how the priests were to determine if a person was “clean” or “unclean” based upon the look of the spot on the body.

Imagine what the wife of the diseased man in the Gospel of Mark might have said about her husband’s situation. Maybe it would have gone something like this, “It used to be that when Reuben returned from a trip the children would run into his arms, his infectious laugh rolling through the house all the way to the back bedroom. It wouldn’t be long before he was completely absorbed in reunion: cuddling the smallest, wrestling the oldest, and later, when alone, sharing with me the high points or disappointments of his journey. His zest for life made him seem invincible.

“Perhaps that’s why his illness caught us all by surprise.

*“I couldn’t bear widowhood. I’d rather die myself than be without Reuben.*

“But death did not visit him. At least not in the normal sense. Our lot was a kind of living death: chronic disease. My dear husband was left on earth but removed from us who loved him, separated from us by a great gulf of awkwardness and empty wishes.

“His illness robbed us of his playfulness, of his laughter. Friends withdrew. Even our own children couldn’t bear to be with him very often. It hurt so much.

“I miss his touch most of all. At night I longed for his caress.

“It was so different. I just wanted him back again the way he used to be...”<sup>2</sup>

We can hear this same anguish even today, as people become isolated from their loved one for a variety of different reasons – Covid19, tuberculosis, cancer, imprisonment, deportation, protective custody, commitment to a mental institution. Any time we are separated from the ones we love, our

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<sup>2</sup> (Rasmussen, *Imagine Meeting Him*, pg. 32)

whole being yearns to be with that person again. Our hearts long for their touch, their embrace, their presence. Leprosy put this man into isolation, to associate only with others who had the same disease – period! Maybe there would be short “through the window” visits, but certainly no physical touch or lengthy interaction. What else could they do? There seemed to be no real future for them, and certainly life would be completely different from then on out.

But this man was blessed in that he did not lose hope. He came to know of One who could help him. In the middle of his anguish and worry about what life would be like isolated from his family, “Reuben” somehow heard about all of the healings that were being done by the new Rabbi, Jesus. He was healing the sick and He was casting out demons (Mark 1:32-34) from many people in Capernaum. Many of those who had no hope left were being given new hope as Jesus healed them and released them from demonic possession. The accounts of these healings and spiritual restorations would have spread quickly, bringing curiosity and hope, especially into the desperate colony of those outcast because of leprosy. *Maybe?* was the question that coursed through their minds. *Just maybe...*

Thousands of people around the world today are beginning to find this same hope in Jesus because of this “pandemic” called Covid19. They are hearing the news of One who can heal and restore life. They are finding hope for newness of life in the land of hopelessness and disease and doubt. They are gaining encouragement from One they are becoming sure can make a difference.

So this leprous man in Mark 1 also came to trust that it was possible for Jesus to heal him. He made up his mind that Jesus was his only hope for any return to normalcy in his life. So desperate for newness of life, this man sought out Jesus, knelt before Him, and pleaded with Him to heal him, too.

Imagine all of those around when “Reuben” came into their presence. There may have been great fear in everyone who saw him. Folks would have backed away, or maybe turned and run from him. But Jesus did not turn from him. He was not repulsed by the diseased riddled man. Jesus did not chase the man away, either, but looked intently at him and listened to him, and recognized the need in his heart. The man spoke clearly, *“If you want to,” he said, ‘you can make me clean”* (Mk. 1:40).

This man presented himself at the feet of Jesus, believing beyond a shadow of doubt that Jesus could heal him. He had taken a pilgrimage from the land of despair to seek out the One who spoke like no other. He left the territory of hopelessness in search of the Man from the land of the living. He left his isolation to find renewal and regeneration. There at the feet of Jesus, “Reuben” was broken, shriveled up because of his disease, crushed because of his infirmity, and desperate because of his projected future. Yet there IS great strength in brokenness, there IS great possibility in faith, and there IS huge potential in the hands of the Savior. “Reuben” had grown weary of his condition and he resolved to find healing from Jesus. *“If you want to...you can make me clean!”*

Folks, where do you turn when the bottom drops out of your life? Where do you find hope when there seems to be none? What do you do when you come to the end of yourself, only to find emptiness, fear and misery and death? Do we look for new life at the promises of rescue from our government? Do we turn to “quick-fix” remedies offering safety from the medical experts? Do we put our resolve in a medical treatment, or trust in a vaccine, or rely upon the promises of other people? None of these will bring us lasting hope! None of this will bring us newness of life! None of these things will provide us the restoration and regeneration that we so desperately long for! We must turn to and believe in the One who can bring us complete new life.

But so many times the Lord lets us get so low that all we can do is to look up. And when we look up we see Jesus, the Son of God, with pierced hands and feet and side, looking down at us. We see the glory of God in Jesus and all we need say to Him is *“if You want to...You can make me clean.”*

The man with leprosy gave up on all that this world could provide for him, and he sought out Jesus. He put himself at the feet of Jesus and asked for His help. He turned to the only One who could change his life, and he trusted Jesus to make him clean. And Jesus did not disappoint him.

*“Jesus was filled with pity, and reached out and touched him. ‘I do want to,’ He answered. ‘Be clean!’”* (Mark 1:41). Jesus saw his desperation. Jesus heard his cry for mercy, and He reached out and touched him! “His strong hands embraced Reuben’s contaminated flesh without hesitation, as if He had

so touched a thousand other outcasts.”<sup>3</sup> And that powerful touch released heaven’s cure, coursing through his veins, wiping out every last bit of bacterial infection, and immediately cleansing the man completely. His faith had made him well. And Jesus instructed him to go to the priests in order to be proclaimed “clean” once more so that he could return to his family. Jesus had not only touched the man with his leprosy, but had touched the life of the family as well, giving them all new life in the healing that took place.

So many people today respond to this with the words, “Ok, well that happened way back then, but it doesn’t happen anymore! How could it? Jesus isn’t here to touch the lives of people today, so what hope do we have?” Listen folks, Jesus WANTS TO bring us new life, even now. Let me give you a recent account that dispels this doubting attitude and provide you with hope, too.

In the April 2021 report from the Jesus Film Project we hear this fantastic account of Jesus touching the life of a man today to free him from his own form of leprosy. “Leon was a man fervent in his beliefs. He heard that a group of Christians, whom he regarded as ‘infidels,’ were going to the villages around him. Worse, they had the **audacity** to show his people a **blasphemous** film, the movie “JESUS.” Enraged, Leon decided to hunt them down, determined to put a stop to their heresy. **But then...God intervened!**

“Leon followed every report, every rumor about the team’s location, every sighting, yet he kept arriving too late. They had just left. He later said, ‘**It was as though an unseen power was preventing me from finding these people.**’ **That power was the Holy Spirit.**

“Greatly frustrated, Leon returned to his home, only to discover that his mother was gravely ill with COVID-19. And she blamed him for her illness, saying, “**Their God came and visited me. Now you must go and find them. Bring them back here and have them pray for me. Only their God can save me.**”

“Immediately, Leon got back to his search. But this time he said, ‘I felt like I was being led.’

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<sup>3</sup> (Rasmussen, *Imagine Meeting Him*, pg. 33)

**Within one hour Leon found the film team!**

“At his request, they went with him to his mother and prayed for her healing. **That very day she began to miraculously recover.**

“In the evening, using a small, portable film set, the team showed his mother the “JESUS” film. She became a follower of Jesus! Seeing the miracle, his family wanted to know more about this God. So, the team showed them “JESUS.” Several believed, **including Leon!** Next the team used their equipment to show others “JESUS.” Before the team’s work was complete, 1,640 families became followers of Jesus and were baptized – thousands of people – in a highly dangerous area!

**“Today, Leon is being trained to be the first church leader in his region – a house pastor. Rather than hunting down ‘infidels,’ he is now discipling believers for Christ!”**

And that’s what happened to the man that Jesus touched and healed. Jesus told him to keep it quiet, but to show himself to the priests in order to be pronounced “clean,” but he and his family were so moved by what Jesus had done in “Reuben’s” life, they told everyone around them, to the point that Jesus could not go into the towns any more without being swarmed by people desiring to be healed. They had become beloved blabbermouths telling everyone all that Jesus had done for them. So many people were putting their trust in Jesus, and He touched many in order to bring new life to them.

But why had Jesus touched this particular man? Why did He heal him? Because this desperate person had heard about Jesus, put his faith and trust in Jesus, and boldly proclaimed his faith in Jesus before all the people around him that day while Jesus was traveling around Galilee. The man gave up on all other hopes and put his trust in Jesus alone. He was what we call today a *Person of Peace*, one who encounters Jesus, trusts in Him, and then has the influence in his own community to draw others to not only hear about Jesus, but to trust in Him, too.

You see folks, Jesus does not want us to be stuck in our hopeless situations. He wants to free us from all that holds us bondage. He wants to release us from all of the prisons that hold us captive so that we might believe in Him, trust in Him and rejoice in Him. Jesus came to heal the world from the effects

of sin, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (I John 1:9), but unless we come to **know** Jesus rather than just **knowing about** Jesus, we will continue to chase after everything here in this world that “promises” life, when all it really does is bring disappointment and fear. When we put our trust in Jesus as the Son of God, the Savior of this world, we can begin to experience His new life as He touches our lives.

Jesus IS willing to touch our lives and bring hope back to us, but there has to be faith before He can bring new life. He looks at us with pity and desires that our own lives be made “clean,” not only from physical impairments, not only from diseases and illnesses, not only from demonic possession, but to be made completely clean from all the sin in our lives. He desires to unlock all those prison doors of our lives to set us free to share with the rest of the world all that Jesus has done for us.

He died on the cross to put an end to sin’s misery on us. He took our sins upon Himself and paid the price for that sin by enduring such rejection and torment and cruelty and then dying for us. **He did that for us!** But in order for us to become beneficiaries of His grace, we must put our trust in Him and give up on all of the things of this world. We must stop chasing after our own way and seek Jesus with all our heart, soul mind and strength. Only then can we become released from the diseases that plague us and isolate us and drive us into despair.

So what is the “chronic disease” affecting our lives today? What is it that so consumes us that we find ourselves isolated, fearful, and hopeless? What are the conditions that we are forced to endure because we have not yet trusted in Jesus to touch our lives and bring to us release and healing? Bring them to Jesus, search Him out, kneel at His feet and let Him touch you and heal you and bring new life to you, too. Let’s pray...

Father, thank You for Your great work of redemption for us through Jesus Christ. Thank You that you love us enough to see us right where we are, burdened by our own chronic conditions. Thank You that You do not want us to remain there, but to give us new life as Jesus touches us. Help us to believe in Him, seek Him, and humble ourselves before Him, so that we might find eternal life with You, for He is the only One who can save us, through Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. AMEN.