Introduction

This past year, Yoko Ono, the widow of John Lennon, rented a full-page ad in the New York Times calling for December 8th to be a day of healing. December 8th is the anniversary of John Lennon’s death and she called on everyone to focus on global healing. In the ad she promised, “One day we will be able to say that we healed ourselves and by healing ourselves, we healed the world.”

Now, several months after she invited people to focus on world healing, it is safe to say that the world is no closer to being healed than it was on December 7th.

Without a doubt, the heart of mankind knows, without ever being told, that our world is a broken world. We need fixing.

Humpty Dumpty, the lyrical metaphor for mankind – the egg representing all of humanity, has fallen and broken apart into many pieces, and no one can put him back together again. Not even the king with his horses – his military power and all his men and political connections – can put Humpty Dumpty together again.

We need fixing – we need healing.

The problem is sin – the solution is a Savior.

As we prepare our hearts to participate in the Lord’s table, be aware that this table is a reminder that God takes sin seriously; so seriously in fact, that His son died because of it. As Isaiah wrote,

. . . by His stripes we are healed. (Isaiah 53:5b NKJV)

By His crushing we were made whole; by His chastening we were redeemed.

We are not healed by some combination of needy people getting together and meditating on world peace and healing. Getting sick people together in a room does not make healing more likely. Combining graveyards together will not bring about a resurrection.

Spiritual healing is a gift – from God our Savior through His son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

I was flying back on Friday, from a conference in Los Angeles – the last leg of the flight, between Charlotte and Raleigh – and had my Bible out on the tray, reading. That might sound really spiritual, but the truth is that I was behind on my personal Bible reading schedule and was cramming to catch up.

A young woman sat next to me who was raised in the Episcopal church and her husband was raised in the Catholic church. I had the chance to do something I absolutely love to do – to show her that her church and my church and church in general cannot save. I told her, “You are in deeper trouble than you thought. The church wants to throw a little water on your problem, or maybe an extra church service or two, but you’re broken and sinful.”

I showed her several verses to which she exclaimed, “I’ve never seen that before.”

The plane touched down and I was not even close to being finished – I had only made it to Romans chapter 3. I told her how to contact me if she was serious about the gospel and wanted to know more. I pray she will.

I could tell though, that she was struck with the realization that religion in general merely creates a system of works so that a person can check off the boxes and hopefully do a good enough job to get into heaven by their own efforts.

However, this is nothing more than Humpty Dumpty getting out his little bottle of Elmer’s glue and saying, “I think I can make it happen; I think I can fix my broken life. I can’t reach that spot back there, but maybe it won’t matter.”

No, the gospel means you and I are hopeless. This is the reason we have to be saved. We cannot swim to shore – we are drowning and must be rescued.

Leprosy – The Hopelessness of Sin

There is probably nothing in the Old Testament that depicts the hopelessness of sin and the inability of man to heal himself more than the disease of leprosy.

The Torah defined leprosy among the children of Israel as the ultimate symbol of moral failure. The whole ceremonial law emphasized this fact. God used leprosy as a powerful symbol of moral depravity – with its mysterious beginning, its slow, yet
powerful process of destruction and corrosion, and its rendering of the sufferer as absolutely helpless to rid themselves of it.¹

The leper was excommunicated from the assembly. He was experiencing the discipline of God. He was separated from his family and from the community of Israel. His disease made him unclean to any human touch. If he was accidentally touched by another, that person would be considered unclean for a period of time.

One author said, “This kind of leprosy that came from the hand of God was nothing short of a living death, a corruption of all the body; a poisoning . . . a dissolution, little by little of the whole body, so that one limb after another actually decayed and fell away.”¹¹

Leviticus chapters 13 and 14 detailed the discipline of the leper and also the restoration of a leper that was cleansed by God – involving repentance and sacrifice for sin.

Those who bore this disease in their bodies, undergoing this demonstration of judgment against sin, usually lived in bands, apart from the villages and cities of the Old Testament Jews. The Jews would have pity on them, depositing food for them at select places.

When someone would approach the lepers, they had to inform them that they were unclean – with their heads uncovered and their chins traditionally wrapped in bandages.

Lepers were:

- Defined by the law – in a word – hopeless.
- Described in life – in a word – isolated.

The leper actually became God’s visual aid – His “Exhibit A”; His demonstration – of the corrupt and corrupting nature of sin and the inability of man to heal himself – his need for the healing power of salvation.

**Leprosy Healed By – The Savior from Sin**

It is no surprise then, that with the coming of Jesus Christ, the Savior of lost and corrupt humanity, His demonstration of not only the power to heal, but even the power to heal the leper, would be shocking.

In fact, when John was in prison, discouraged about the Messiah, Jesus Christ sent an answer back to him, by the disciples, that basically asked, “Have you forgotten, lepers are being cleansed?” (Luke 7:22)

Leprosy was always spoken of as filth. That is why it says that Jesus cleansed the lepers.³

Jesus’ power to cleanse the terminal symbol of sin marked Him as the true Messiah.

Let me point out one incident, recorded for us in the Gospel by Luke chapter 5, where we have the first recorded Jew being cleansed of leprosy. Notice Luke 5:12.

**While He was in one of the cities, behold, there was a man covered with leprosy; . . .**

Only Luke, a medical doctor, took the time to add this medical footnote. The word “covered” could be translated “full of”. It is the same word used of our Lord being full of the Holy Spirit. In other words, this man did not have much time left – so sick was he; so eaten up with this dreaded disease.

This leper’s point of repentance is trusting in the ability of Jesus Christ to heal him. His statement of faith is risking everything to enter into this crowd and make his way to Christ. The text says,

. . . and when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and implored Him, saying, “Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.”

Imagine this shocking encounter. It is no wonder that Luke starts out by saying, in the first part of verse 12, “Behold!” or “Would you look at that!”

Divine purity meets depraved pollution; the true Savior and a terminal sinner come face to face.

This man is desperate. He is risking the infection of many people around him – perhaps accidentally touching others around him. In fact, if this fails, he could, and probably would have been stoned to death for entering the city and violating the laws of excommunication and putting so many people at risk.

To touch a leper was not only to become ceremonially defiled, but to invite disaster of potential infection. This is the reason I love Christ’s immediate response in Luke 5:13,

**And He stretched out His hand and touched him, . . .**

Jesus did not have to touch this leper to heal him. He could simply have spoken the words, “Be healed.”

Jesus touched him, however,

. . . saying, “I am willing; be cleansed.”

**And immediately the leprosy left him.**

It is as if Jesus Christ was clearly saying, “I am not defiled by sinners – I cleanse the sinner.”
Jesus was not dirtied – the sinner was cleansed.

Herbert Lockyer wrote this application from the text, “The sun shines on earth’s pollution, but it remains unscathed in its splendor.”

In the same way, Jesus Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, was not diseased by our sin – He was not polluted when He touched us by His grace – we were made whole.

Oh the grace of God! We were dead in our sins and trespasses, but were made alive by the power of God which touched our death; our terminal disease of sin – and He, being God, remains holy and perfect, while we are cleansed.

We are:

- Described by the law – hopeless – but now we have a living hope.
- Described in life – isolated – but now we have been brought near to Him and have become members of the family of God.

**Conclusion**

Ladies and gentlemen, our world is isolated in its sin – there is no true community. That is the reason space is rented in newspapers to implore one another to focus on global healing. Somehow we have got to come together. Maybe it will help us find a way to put the pieces back together again – but it will not.

It is the grace of God that takes us, as individuals, isolated by sin, now saved by grace, and drives us together into a community. What brings us here?! We are formerly incurable, helpless, hopeless lepers, filled with sin, but now are living, cleansed, filled with the Spirit, redeemed disciples.

We are terminal sinners, now cleansed by our triumphant Savior. As Isaiah said,

> . . . by His stripes we are healed. (Isaiah 53:5b NKJV)

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iv Powell, p. 124.