

FRIDAY – February 13th

CENTERING BREATH PRAYER: If you are willing,...make me clean.

Willing Lord, how often do I need you to make me clean in one way or another? Thank you for the compassion you always display and the forgiveness when I'm the one who makes me unclean for whatever reason. As we commune together once more, make me conscious of how I can act with compassion in the face of life's challenges. In your wondrous name, I pray. Amen.

SCRIPTURE: Mark 1:40-42

KEY VERSES: Mark 1:40-41:

(40) “A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, ‘if you are willing, you can make me clean.’ (41) Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. ‘I am willing,’ he said. ‘Be clean!’” (NIV).

Elisha healed Naaman from afar. He didn't come out to see Naaman, which you'll recall angered Naaman, and he didn't touch him. He sent him to wash in the Jordan and let God do the healing. It was an act of power, political as well as religious. The man who came to Jesus, begging him on his knees, was healed by hands-on compassion, out of love. It's a much different story though the outcome may have been the same; healing from leprosy. Elisha had no real interest in Naaman, he was not drawn to the man, did not care about him as a person. He was only interested in manifesting the power of God to those who did not know him. Jesus could have done something similar. Certainly, he knew about Elisha and Naaman. It might have given many a connection to the prophet. But, Jesus was full of compassion and love. His ministry was up close and personal. He touched people, both physically and figuratively. Of all those he might choose to touch physically, a person with leprosy was the most dangerous and probably considered the most unclean ritually (with the possible exception of those who prepared the dead for burial). Jesus didn't worry about the conventions of the day. We know he clashed with the religious authorities on numerous occasions and his eventual death on the cross ultimately came out of the threat those authorities felt because of these clashes. Jesus was concerned with people – all people. When people came to him with their problems, he was willing to touch their lives with his compassion and with his love. Even his clashes with the religious authorities were precipitated by his love and compassion.

So how does this story connect with us today? Do we wonder if Christ is willing to reach out and touch us in the midst of our day to day problems? Do we come to him with the faith that the man with leprosy approached Jesus – faith that he could make him clean (which implied that Jesus would heal him and make him acceptable to society once more)? Please don't get me wrong. I am not saying that we are not healed of illnesses or have bad things happen to us because we do not have enough faith! But, perhaps we do not come to Jesus with the expectation that Jesus is able to heal us and therefore we do not ask if Christ is willing to do so. The man with leprosy did not come to Jesus and demand healing. He came asking if he was willing to do so. Are we ready to seek the Lord's will in the circumstances of our lives including our need to be healed? Sometimes it seems to me that instead of seeking the Lord's will in our lives, including healing, we tend to come challenging the Lord to heal us, more demanding or even saying, in essence, “If you are able to heal me, please do so at once!” When it does not happen (or does not happen in the way we think it should) we say to ourselves, “God is not able to heal me because I was not healed by a miracle” or “God did not heal me because it was the work of doctors and medicine which brought my healing.” This

attitude is no different from those who stood at the foot of the cross and mocked Jesus with words such as, *“He saved others... but he can't save himself”* (Matthew 27:42a NIV). The reasons why Christ chooses not to heal all our physical ailments are not always known to us, but they exist, none the less. Christ can and will make us clean, acceptable to God and to others. His compassion and love demand nothing less of him. The acceptance of that cleansing is up to us both for ourselves and others. Christ's compassion and love for the man with leprosy is still active and available for you and me. Christ is willing – be clean.

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES: Matthew 27:32-44;

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND/OR JOURNALING:

1. How do I pray for the healing I desire? Do I have an attitude of humility and ask for the Lord's will to be done or do I make demands of the Lord?
2. Do I expect the Lord to heal or do I just wish the Lord would do so?
3. In what ways do I ask the Lord to make me clean?

SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTION:

Make a list of the ways you would like Jesus to heal you. Include physical, mental, emotional, financial and spiritual needs you have. Ask the Lord if he is willing to heal you and then give your needs to the Lord in prayer. In your prayer ask the Lord to make you clean knowing that his sacrifice on the cross was to do just that. Leave the results of your prayer in the Lord's hands knowing that he will do what is ultimately the best things you need.

O, Lord, I do not always understand your healing process and know that sometimes I pray for healing, either for myself or others, which does not seem to happen. Open my eyes to the healing I truly need in order to grow into maturity in the kingdom of heaven. I place myself in your hands saying, “Lord, if you are willing you can make me clean.” In your healing name, I pray. Amen.