

Message

In the 19th Century the finest hospitals were losing one out of six women after childbirth to what they called "childbed fever." A doctor's daily routine would begin in the dissecting room where he performed autopsies. From there he made his way to the hospital to examine expectant mothers without ever washing his hands!

A Hungarian doctor, Ignaz Semmelweis (1818-1865), was the first man in history to associate not washing with the resulting infection and death. He washed with a chlorine solution before examining expectant mothers and after eleven years of practice, his death rate was only one in fifty. But in spite of his success, he spent his life arguing in vain with his colleagues. Although he lectured widely, virtually no one believed him. Doctors and midwives had been delivering babies for centuries without washing, and no outspoken doctor was going to change them now! Semmelweis died insane at age 47 with his colleagues still laughing in his face.

In Luke 5:12-15 we read how a man who was full of leprosy came to Jesus for cleansing. This man was told that because of his condition he could not be part of the community he was even cut off from his own family.

William Barclay describes Leprosy in its worst form. He says this 'It might begin with little nodules which go on to ulcerate. The ulcers develop a foul discharge; the eyebrows fall out; the eyes become staring; the vocal chords become ulcerated, and the voice becomes hoarse, and the breath wheezes. The hands and feet always ulcerate. Slowly the sufferer becomes a mass of ulcerated growths. The average course of that kind of leprosy is nine years, and it ends in mental decay, coma and ultimately death.'

Leprosy might begin with the loss of all sensation in some part of the body; the nerve trunks are affected; the muscles waste away; the tendons contract until the hands are like claws. Their follows ulceration of the hands and feet. Then comes the progressive loss of fingers and toes, until in the end a whole hand or a whole foot may drop off. The duration of that kind of leprosy is anything from twenty to thirty years. It is a kind of terrible progressive death in which a man dies by inches.

Luke the physician tells us that this man was full of leprosy (Luke 5:12). His disease was in advanced stages. But he was desperate enough to break the taboo and approach Jesus, falling on his knees, on his face before Him, begging, "If You are willing, You can make me clean." I can see the disciples recoiling with a gasp of fear at being so near to this diseased man. Imagine their further shock when instead of drawing back, Jesus stretched out His hand, touched the man and said, "I am willing; be cleansed"!

Application

1. Listen to the advice that is given to us from others to keep us safe
2. Help others that need our help and don't turn them away or ignore them

May you 'Love your Neighbour as you Love Yourself' in this season.

Prayer

Thank you Jesus for your healing touch of this man who was full of leprosy. We thank you for Ignaz Semmelweis and his discovery and the importance of washing hands. When we are in need may we come to you. Lord help us at this time.

With God Nothing is Impossible

Grace and Peace

Elan