



St. Paul Evangelical Community Church (SPECC)

Worship Address : Cerritos High School Auditorium
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August 30, 2009

Theme: What Would Jesus Do? Touching the Untouchable

Text: Matthew 8:1-4

Today, we will look at another way that our lives would change dramatically if we would simply ask the question: What would Jesus do? There are certain ways that we cannot do what Jesus would have done. For example, we will not be able to live sinless lives until he returns. However, he calls us to follow Him. In principle we can be involved in meeting human needs like he did. This is one dramatic way that our lives would be changed if we asked the question, "What would Jesus do?" We would become more involved in meeting the needs of people who are all around us. Jesus touched the untouchables of society. He touched sinners of every kind. This requires sacrificial love; and we can follow Jesus in showing this to people.

In our Scripture passage for today, Jesus touched a person who was literally untouchable in his time. He touched a leper. This was forbidden by the Law of Moses. In Jesus' day, the word, "leprosy," referred to several skin diseases which had roots that went below the skin. The Israelis believed that if a person had leprosy, it was because he/she had sinned in some way and that God was punishing the person for their sin. The person who had such a disease had to wear torn clothing. The person had to leave his hair messed up. He had to cover the lower part of his face. When people came near he had to cry out, "Unclean! Unclean!" This was so that no one would touch them, because if they did, they would become unclean also. Finally, the person had to live far away from other people.

Jesus seems to be contradicting the Law of Moses and His own words. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus had said, "Do not think I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them, but to fulfill them." But Jesus touched this leper which was forbidden by the Law of Moses. However, Jesus had the power to cure the leper. Therefore, the leper would not make Him unclean. Instead, Jesus' touch would make the leper clean. This was one way that Jesus fulfilled the Law—He cured the incurable.

Our lives would surely change if we were to ask, "What would Jesus do?" We might be more open to hear the spiritual cries of those in need who are all around us. But we cannot simply wait until people come to us with their need. The leper came to Jesus because he had already been going through the towns of Galilee preaching the Good News and healing all who were sick. According to the end of Matthew's Gospel, Jesus instructed his disciples to go and make disciples in His name. As we go, people will be more likely to come to us with their need.

The first need of those who do not believe is the need to be touched. Some actually need a physical touch. But everyone needs the spiritual touch of God's Spirit that can come



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through us as we go into the world. Every person needs to hear the Good News about Jesus Christ. All people desperately need to be healed from the deadly effects of sin—even if they don't know it themselves. They need a spiritual, supernatural touch from God. That touch can come through us as we are prepared to share the Good News with those who do not believe. The apostle Peter wrote that we must always be ready to do this: "But in your heart, set aside Christ as Lord. Always be ready to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give a reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,..."

The second important spiritual need that people have is to hear God's Word of grace to them. Jesus not only touched the man, he said to him, "I am willing. Be clean!" Every person needs to hear gracious words spoken to them. Psychologists tell us that if children do not regularly hear words of love and encouragement as they grow up they may become workaholics. They may become people who work very hard so that others will speak well of them. Or, they may become people who are depressed much of the time. There are many people in our society who have become caught in sin and emotionally twisted because they did not often hear words of love and encouragement as they were growing up. There are many who need to know that they are forgiven. Jesus touched the untouchable. He has given us the great privilege of doing that in his place!

Because of what Jesus did the Church has a great privilege and responsibility to follow in His footsteps. We have the responsibility and privilege to reach out and touch those who do not believe for Jesus and in His name. We have the great privilege and responsibility to share words of grace with them—words about God's forgiveness through Christ. We can share the Good News about everlasting life with them. As we do this we will come into contact with people whom we may think are "untouchable". We may come into contact with those who are addicted to alcohol and drugs. We may come into contact with those who are living in sexual immorality. We may come into contact with liars and thieves. We may be called to touch people who have AIDS, and so on.

But this is our challenge today. Jesus became sacrificially involved in the lives of people who had deep spiritual and physical needs. If we desire to do what Jesus did, we are called by God to do that also. We must pray that God will give us people with whom we can become sacrificially involved—someone who can never repay us. In the name of Jesus, we must reach out to touch the untouchable. As we do, we become the hands that reach out and touch people until Jesus returns.