

**Hear me today. I don't know who this is for. You've been in a lonely place. It's a lonely place. Not just a little bored...a lonely place. You think this message is just for single people? It's not. I think it's the loneliest thing in the world to have people around you, but you can't really touch them and connect with them for who you really are because you just keep trying to give them who you think you're supposed to be. That's a lonely place.**

You think I'm talking about people who don't have followers on Instagram? I'm not. I think we all have spots. I used to not think that. I used to think certain people didn't. I used to be embarrassed because I thought I was the weird one, but I think we all have spots. I think we all have insecurities. We don't wear them on the outside so the priest can't see them. We don't wear them on the outside so sometimes even the people who love us can't see what we really wrestle with. We all have spots. Now here you are in a pandemic, and you can't even come to church like you used to. That used to be the one time every week where you could get around other people and sing and let somebody's faith carry you, and now you're even having to have church in your lonely place.

God gave me a word for you today in the lonely place. He said, "I will". And then he did. He didn't just speak it. He didn't just say it. He demonstrated it. "Be clean". And he touched the man. Remember what I told you? If the clean touches the unclean, the clean becomes unclean. But this is not just any priest. We don't come to a high priest who is unable to be touched by the feeling of our infirmity. One of the first things leprosy would attack was your ability to feel. One of the first indications that you had leprosy wasn't on your skin; it was the fact that you lost the ability to feel. It's a bacterial infection that touches the nervous system.

So now this man who is unable to feel is being touched by a priest who is feeling for him. Splanchnizomai, the Bible says. Jesus felt for him. He feels for you. He sympathizes with you. He sits with you. He lives with you. He weeps with you. He walks with you. He gets angry with you. He feels what you feel. He said, "I will," and he touched the man.

Now, here's the interesting thing about the text. We expect now that Jesus, the Great High Priest, becomes unclean and is disqualified because he touched something that was defiled. But since this isn't just any priest; since this priest does not originate from men; since this priest did not come from earth; since this priest is without sin, the spotless Lamb of God; since this is not just any priest, when the unclean touches the clean, the clean does not become unclean; the unclean becomes clean. Immediately, that man's leprosy fell off. Immediately, shame is broken off your life. Immediately, what used to hold you doesn't hold you anymore.

***Touch them, God. They've been in a lonely place. They don't even like themselves anymore, but touch them, God. They're so sick of this, God, but touch them. They're wondering "How much longer? God, will my kids ever go back to school? Will I ever be able to go out again"? Touch them like you touched that man. Touch them beyond the issues they face and remind them that you came to touch what others would push away. You are not intimidated by our spots. O God, whatever has been keeping them at a distance, I pray that they would have the courage to come close to you today.***

You've been in a lonely place, because we all have spots. We all have insecure places, inadequate places. We all have spots. When he touched that man... This is so beautiful. When I was texting my friend about it, I started to cry. I was just texting the idea how when this passage started the leper was in a lonely place. I'm going to imagine thousands of people who are living in a lonely place today, and maybe nobody even knows that but you. In the Bible, the lepers had to stay outside in the camps.

Leviticus 13:45 says anyone who has this defiling disease on their skin has to wear torn clothes. We do that by choice now for fashion. All of these little worship leaders with their skinny jeans and the holes. But when you dressed in these clothes, it was to identify you from a distance as somebody who couldn't come close. You identify yourself as someone who can't get close. Some of you can't get close to others. You can't get close to God. You can't really pray because you're not even praying about the real things. You're pretending to be somebody in God's presence that you're not, and he can't touch that. These lepers were identifiable from a distance because their clothes were torn.

The Bible says they had to have unkempt hair. I was like, "Dang. This is like it was written in 2020". Do you see it? All of the barbershops were closed. The Bible says that these lepers... This gives us a picture of what the man had to live like. Unkempt hair, torn clothes, and they had to cover the lower part of their face. The Bible is not relevant, is it? The Bible is very relevant to the moment we're in. You have to cover your face and cry out with your mouth, "Unclean! Unclean!" "As long as they have the disease they remain unclean. They must live alone". When this passage started, the leper was in a very lonely place, identified by his issues, and that's where some of you have been. What brought a tear to my eye is how the passage ended.

The Bible said that when Jesus healed the man, he told him, "Don't tell anyone what I did for you". That's the opposite of what we teach you in church. We tell you to click "Share," and if you have a testimony, and praise the Lord, and what has he done for you. But Jesus was governed by purpose, and he knew that if people started coming to him just to perform external miracles, it would miss the intention for which he came. When he told the man not to tell anyone, the Bible says he gave him a strong warning. The Hebrew image here is that his nostrils flared. Have y'all ever heard of savage Jesus? How about snorting Jesus?

**I know y'all saw sweet Jesus; sweet little baby, six to eight pounds, six ounces Jesus; superstitious Jesus; Little Stitches Jesus. I know you've seen all of those Jesuses, but this is snorting Jesus. He gave the man a warning. He said, "Don't tell anybody what I did". The first thing the man did after he got healed was go tell everyone. I thought, "Well, now, come on, Jesus. You know the future. You knew the man was going to go tell everybody and it was going to cause you to have to go out, and it was going to cause you to have to move on, and he went and did exactly what you told him not to do. You knew he was going to be disobedient. Why did you heal him"? He said, "I wanted to let you know I'll do it anyway".**

I need you to know this. You think when God saved you, he didn't know what you were still going to struggle with? I have news for somebody in this chat today. He did it anyway. If you know that God saved you and you still struggle with some things, but you can still come close to him and depend on him, just put this in the chat right now: "He did it anyway". He called my name. He gave me grace. He filled me with his Spirit. He did it anyway. He didn't have to. I couldn't buy it, I couldn't earn it, I don't deserve it, but he did it anyway. He did it anyway!

Come on, this is a message for the lepers. How do you get to Jesus? Any way you can, whatever it takes. I'm going forward. I'm not backing up. I'm not dying alone. I'm not going down. I'm coming alive! Anyway. "I know I'm not supposed to touch you, but I'm going to touch you anyway. I know I'm not supposed to use you, but I'm going to use you anyway. I'm going to do it anyway". I hear God saying about 2020, "I know it has been a living hell, but I'm going to grow your faith anyway. I'm going to raise you up anyway. I'm going to get this gospel out anyway". I know there are only 40 people in the room, but I'm about to preach anyway. He did it anyway. I'm not perfect, but he likes

me anyway.

I have some obnoxious parts of my personality, but he likes me with rough edges. He's a carpenter. He's going to do it. He's a carpenter. He needs something to work on. He needs an object lesson. He needs something that looks so unclean. He needs somebody so messy. He needs a situation so desperate that he can say, "This is what I came to do". When the passage started, the leper was in a lonely place. This man runs around running his mouth, telling everybody about Jesus, and now everybody wants to come see him. But Jesus didn't come for that. He came for something deeper. He didn't come just to fix what's on the surface level.

Look at verse 45. "He could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside in lonely places". This is what got me. When the passage started, the leper was in a lonely place, but when the passage was over, Jesus was in a lonely place. It's not just that he touched that man; it's that he traded places with him. You've been in a lonely place. I know you have. God showed it to me in the Spirit. He didn't have to show me your lonely place, because I know mine. Preachers get lonely. Pastors get lonely. Parents get lonely. Kids get lonely. Married people get lonely. Jesus chose his loneliness. The leper didn't choose his.

**Some of you are sitting in a loneliness that was not chosen in this season of your life. This is my message today. "He stayed in lonely places, yet the people still came to him from everywhere". God said to tell you he'll meet you in your lonely place. Lift your hands. He said, "You don't have to hide that from me. I'm willing to touch you. You don't have to stay away from me. You might be having to distance from people right now, but you can just come closer to me". He's near to the brokenhearted. He gave us a gospel lesson that he went outside the camp so we could come in, that he became sin who knew no sin that we might become the righteousness of God. He said he wants to meet you in your lonely place. You know that place? You know that spot? You know that thing you keep trying to fix and you can't? He said, "I want to meet you in your lonely place".**