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Moved with Compassion!

Truth About God: God is willing to touch and heal those whom society casts aside.
Truth For My Life: I will be the hands of Jesus to those whom society casts aside.
Lesson Text: Leviticus 13:42-46; Mark 1:40-45; Luke 17:11-16
Key Passage: Mark 1:41 - And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean.

Jesus' ministry was marked by compassion for outsiders. He was moved with compassion for the poor, afflicted, widows, and tax collectors. Many rising leaders try to promote themselves to influential people, but Jesus focused on people in the margins of society. Jesus was willing to touch and heal those whom society had cast aside. **As His disciples, we are challenged to look beyond our social boundaries and show Jesus' compassion in our world**.

The Law used many regulations around physical and ritual purity to point to the holiness of God. Since God is holy, humanity's impurity cannot remain in His presence. Truly encountering God should cause us to pray for God to make us clean. The story of the leper reveals that God's intention was not simply to keep sick people out and whole people in. The leper's faith reveals God's desire for purity that goes deeper than the surface, and our need for healing that goes deeper than skin.

Those with leprous infections were considered unclean—for the rest of their lives. Their status remained unchanged until the illness was healed and they were properly examined by the priests before returning to society. The laws declaring lepers to be unclean could also serve as an example of something beyond medical guidance. Social isolation for lepers was the necessary consequence of uncleanness. They were required to live alone, outside the camp, so their disease would not spread to the rest of the nation (Leviticus 13:46). Leprosy pulled them out of their communities of family and faith and into the painful bonds of shared sorrow. Sometimes we too can be isolated by tragic circumstances that strain relationships and displace us. **In the midst of sin and sorrow, Jesus offers healing that not only restores us as individuals but reconciles us with others**.

Every society has people who are excluded on the basis of bad behavior, undesirable traits, or neutral differences. Those who have been declared "unclean" or "other" may radiate pain and isolation in their speech, appearance, and purposeful distancing from others. Drawing near requires effort and a gracious willingness to look past differences and see people in need. **Jesus calls us to approach those deemed unapproachable, allowing our compassion to push out fear, disgust, or annoyance**. Welcoming the outsider is the Christlike work of individual Christians and the body of Christ together. Through our sincere welcome, outcasts find opportunities to encounter Jesus in the miraculous.

Any ministry without tenderness toward others is hollow. We cannot truly glorify God without compassion. We should not expect to experience the miraculous without it either. Jesus did the unthinkable: He reached out and touched the leper (Mark 1:41). He restored more than his health; Jesus restored his humanity. Everyone gasped. They expected Jesus to be unclean, but Jesus was not defiled. Instead, Jesus made the leper clean. This act of ritual cleansing was a testimony to the priest of Jesus' power and reverence for God's law.

When the leprous man was diseased, his ailment isolated him from society. When he was cleansed, he became highly influential, broadcasting his testimony from Jesus throughout his city. Even though Jesus urged him to tell no one but to go directly to the priest, the joyful man went away and shared his testimony everywhere in the region. His witness was so effective that Jesus could no longer publicly enter the city because people from every quarter came out to see Him. Ironically, the leper and Jesus changed places; the man was welcomed back into the city, while Jesus was forced to receive the masses from without. **We may be surprised at the impact of ministering to one lonely person**. The most isolated individual can become the greatest witness.