

I Will; Matthew 8:1-3

I. Great Crowds

- A. We all follow after things that interest us (sometimes they are not beneficial)
 - 1. 7.53 billion people in the world
 - 2. 2.23 billion people on Facebook
 - 3. That is 30% of the world's population!
 - 4. Sometimes we let these "great crowds" draw us into things which are not beneficial to us
 - 5. It takes self-awareness, or true humility to bypass these temptations
- B. I believe fully in self-awareness
 - 1. We have to know ourselves intimately — both good and bad
 - 2. If we don't know our weaknesses, how will we ever overcome them
 - 3. If we don't know our strengths, how will we ever succeed?
 - 4. All too often we only know ourselves superficially — we are scared of what we might find if we delve too deep
- C. This self-awareness brings about true humility
 - 1. I ascribe the same definition to humility as the Hebrew word, 'meek'
 - 2. Power under control — Moses
 - 3. Numbers 12:3 (ESV); Now the man Moses was very meek, more than all people who were on the face of the earth.
- D. When tragedy strikes we are sometimes forced into this self-awareness

II. Leprosy

- A. A chronic infectious disease caused by a mycobacterium affecting especially the skin and peripheral nerves and characterized by the formation of nodules that enlarge and spread accompanied by loss of sensation with eventual paralysis, wasting of muscle, and production of deformities ¹
- B. In the first century, lepers were forced to live in colonies by themselves
- C. Their families were responsible for bringing them the things they needed to live
- D. They would often drop off these bundles on the outside of the colony — not having any contact with the leper
- E. The lepers were required to yell out "unclean" if they were walking outside their colony so no one would come in contact with them
- F. This disease made you spiritually unclean as well
- G. Leviticus 13:45–46 (ESV);⁴⁵ "The leprous person who has the disease shall wear torn clothes and let the hair of his head hang loose, and he shall cover his upper lip and cry out, 'Unclean, unclean.' ⁴⁶ He shall remain unclean as long as he has the disease. He is unclean. He shall live alone. His dwelling shall be outside the camp.
 - 1. "This writer (*Coffman*) visited a leper camp (a shanty town), in Pusan, Korea, in 1953 and still remembers it as one of the most soul-shaking, repugnant, and heartbreaking scenes ever witnessed.
 - 2. The human misery and wretchedness of such a place is beyond description. Language as a means of conveying thought is unequal to the task of any adequate description, and the emotional impact of the place lingered for days.
 - 3. Having walked through the grounds, laid out in little rows where the inmates had improvised the worst housing ever seen on earth, and the little canals of running water that served the dual purpose of latrines and their source of drinking water, those of us who walked through had a feeling that the soles of our shoes were infected. Some of us cleaned our shoes repeatedly, but the feeling lingered!

¹ Inc Merriam-Webster, Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary. (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2003).

4. Food? It was garbage, not even "good" garbage, but the refuse of the teeming city of Pusan.
 5. People, already desensitized by the horrible leprosy would smoke a discarded cigarette butt, allowing it to burn their stub fingers, no longer sensitive to pain - eyelids missing, lips, teeth, hair, portions of the cheek, stub feet, arms, no ears, or only two holes for a nose. How horrible!"
- H. The realization of having this disease must have been a very humbling experience
- I. Could you imagine these 'great crowds' following Jesus as they came upon this leper?
- III. If You Will
- A. Matthew 8:1–2 (ESV); ¹ When he came down from the mountain, great crowds followed him. ² And behold, a leper came to him and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, if you will, you can make me clean."
 - B. A leper did not approach anyone!
 1. They remained 'outside the camp' in their colony depending on others for their livelihood
 2. They cried out, "unclean, unclean" when anyone came near them
 3. The sheer audacity that he would even approach Jesus!
 4. This leper had been forced to become self-aware
 5. This leper knew where he could find cleansing — but he wasn't so forward as to think that Jesus would just automatically do his bidding
 - C. How do we approach Jesus?
 1. Are we self-aware enough to know the decaying effects of sin?
 - a) We are (were) unclean, dead in our sins, alienated from God, outside the camp
 - b) We are crying all the time, "unclean, unclean" — maybe not audibly, but to ourselves
 - c) Only true humility recognizes the power of sin — and the dire need we are in
 2. Are we self-aware enough to know who is the only one that can cleanse us?
 - a) There are many who claim to be The Way
 - b) Just as this leper understood — we need to understand as well, that Jesus is who we approach to cleanse us
 - c) It is His sacrifice that washes away our leprous sin
 - d) Do we understand the cleansing power of Jesus' blood?
 - e) It takes true humility to see the need, and then to act on it
 - D. Just as the leper recognized the power of Jesus and humbly approached him, we should too
- IV. I Will
- A. Matthew 8:3 (ESV); And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, "I will; be clean." And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.
 - B. Jesus' willingness to be in the very presence of this leper shows His compassion and love for us
 1. How long had it been since this leper had felt the touch of another human?
 2. There have been many studies on the effects of touch deprivation in children
 3. One such study in Romania showed that "the children in the intervention group had shown significantly accelerated physical growth and mental/motor development" ²
 4. I could imagine the crowds watching, aghast, that Jesus would touch someone who is unclean!
 - C. Jesus wants to cleanse us!
 1. He came for this very purpose
 2. Matthew 9:10–13 (ESV); ¹⁰ And as Jesus reclined at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were reclining with Jesus and his disciples. ¹¹ And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, "Why does

² Carter, Carol Sue., et al. Integrative Neurobiology of Affiliation. MIT Press, 1999, p 393.

- your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?”¹² But when he heard it, he said, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.¹³ Go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.’ For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.”
3. Genesis 3:15 is our first look at the redemption of Jesus
 4. Genesis 12:1-3, and verse 7 gives us a closer look at the redeemer (often called the three fold promise — land, nation, seed)
 5. Galatians 3:16 (ESV); Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, “And to offsprings,” referring to many, but referring to one, “And to your offspring,” who is Christ.
- D. When Jesus’ time was drawing near and he is just moments away from being arrested, he stays the course
1. Mark 14:35–36 (ESV);³⁵ And going a little farther, he fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him.³⁶ And he said, “Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.”
 2. Matthew 26:53–54 (ESV);⁵³ Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?⁵⁴ But how then should the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so?”
- V. Salvation
- A. We must be self-aware enough to know we need to be saved
 - B. We must be humble enough to appeal to the savior
 - C. Jesus wants to save us!