

*Sickness, sin, and opposition are no match for Jesus and his mission to bring God’s kingdom from heaven to earth as he forgives, heals, restores, and invites God’s people (even now) to join him in his mission.*

**Introduction & Background** – Would you still want all the benefits of winning the lottery if it meant your life would become much more complicated, difficult, stressful, and lonely than it is now? Is this also how you think of the kingdom of God? Jesus is proclaiming the kingdom of God as he goes from town to town in Galilee. As he does so, he is challenging the status quo of the culture and the guardians of that culture (the Jewish religious leaders). The kind of kingdom Jesus preaches is radically different from anything heard before. Those who oppose Jesus do so strongly; those who welcome Jesus rejoice as if God has finally arrived to bring salvation here and now.

## **I. Two Extraordinary Healings**

### **A. The Leper’s Story (vv. 12-16)**

Leprosy, its health and social effects, and how it symbolizes sin in its defilement. Jesus has the power to heal uncleanness, and the compassion to touch untouchables. Jesus is dramatic, but only so he might dismantle wrong belief.

### **B. The Paralytic’s Story (vv. 17-26)**

Palsy, its health and social effects, and how it symbolizes sin in its disablement. Jesus attracted the attention of friend and foe. Faith is illustrated as bursting through all obstacles to get to Jesus. Jesus discerns hearts (the paralytic and his friends; the religious leaders). Jesus can forgive sins.

## **II. Why Are We *Impressed* With Jesus But Not *Moved* By Jesus?**

These familiar stories are wonderful. Meditating on them should be enough to move us to love like Jesus loved in thankfulness for his love for sinners. So why aren’t we moved by Jesus?

### **A. We don’t really believe we are Pharisees at heart**

We want to be associated with Jesus, but also maintain our distance from his ministry methods and his choice of friends. We want to reserve the right to judge whether we believe the hard sayings of Jesus apply to us. We prefer Jesus to build God’s kingdom as we envision heaven should be. Why? Because we want to be in control, keeping safe distance from anyone or anything that makes us afraid.

### **B. We don’t really believe our primary need is forgiveness**

We only ask for bodily healing and material blessings (and occasionally “amnesty-type” forgiveness when we need to shed those nagging feelings of guilt). Our prayers are dominated by “give us this day,” with an occasional “forgive us our debts.” But they are rarely focused on our profound need to be forgiven by a holy God, and rarely full of praise to the Father for sending his Son to die in my place—to reconcile me and the world to himself.

### **C. We don’t really believe Jesus’ mission is our mission**

We do not reach out because we think it is Jesus’ (and other religious people’s) job to reach out. When we examine closely the mission of Jesus, it makes us uncomfortable because it promises to disrupt (even destroy) our personal mission of *life* without responsibility, *liberty* without cost, and

the *pursuit of happiness* without concern for the needs of others. So we assent to the goodness of Jesus' mission, but we leave it to the ministers, missionaries, and others to adopt Jesus' mission.

### **III. How to Join in the Mission of God**

#### **A. Cultivate a heart like Jesus: pray like a missionary (v. 16)**

The great crowds wearied Jesus. Although he had compassion for them, and healed them all, he needed to withdraw to desolate, lonely places to pray. He needed to draw spiritual strength from the Father to minister on the front line. Luke emphasizes that Jesus was a man of prayer throughout his gospel account (Lk 3:21; 6:12; 9:18, 28-29; 11:1; 23:46). His example teaches how important prayer is, especially when life becomes busy and there are needy people pining for your attention.

#### **B. Act in love like Jesus: reach out and touch untouchables (vv. 13, 20-24)**

Jesus touching the leper displays his compassion and mission—to save by reaching out and entering the lives of outcasts. Jesus left his throne in heaven to walk the dusty roads of Palestine so he might live among sinners and touch them with his compassionate, healing care. The paralytic was untouchable in the sense that he was irrelevant to society. But when this insignificant man interrupts Jesus' public teaching, Jesus gives him his attention. The man walks away healed, and more importantly forgiven!

#### **C. Give glory to God for Jesus: bring others to the Great Missionary (vv. 14-15, 18-19, 26)**

1. In the leper's story, Jesus sent the cleansed man to the priest for inspection and approval to reenter Jewish society and religious life. This was required by the Law of Moses for "unclean" people to reestablish normal social contact (Lev 14). His testimony to the power of Jesus to heal in the name of the Lord brought the religious leaders and the masses to the Great Missionary. In the paralytic's story, remember the men's energy, commitment, and persistence to help their friend. In faith, they pushed, climbed, and dug through any obstacle, working as a team to get to Jesus (cf. 2 Cor 8:9).

2. Although Jesus wanted to keep a low profile about his healing ministry throughout the towns of Galilee, he did not stop amazing the crowds. Why? Because Jesus is in the business of bringing glory to God, and that is what his healing and teaching ministry caused the crowds to do—glorify God. Amazement seized them all. Although most did not realize it yet, they were glorifying God in the presence of the Son of God!

**Conclusion** – Jesus is the Man on God's Mission. When he lived on earth, he loved God, taught God's love, demonstrated God's love, challenged those who opposed God's love, and invited people to participate in the loving mission of God. He reached out to the poor, the social outcasts and pariahs, the notorious sinners, the captives, the sick, the deformed, the lost. He is the faithful missionary. He broke through the roof of heaven to reach out and touch the untouchables. Only when the love of Jesus begins to touch your heart will you stop merely being impressed with him and start being moved by him. Only when you see yourself as untouchable yet forgiven in God's sight will you begin to love in the extraordinary way Jesus loved. Only when you begin to see his love for the untouchables for what it really is—love for you—will your heart be moved to true faith that moves you to join the mission of God. Behold the Son of Man! Fall at his feet, seek forgiveness and healing from him, follow him, glorify him, and join him in his mission of salvation!