

LEPROSY SUFFERERS HEALED

Luke 17 v. 11-19

Information from The Leprosy Mission leaflet Tel. 01733 370505, Fax 01733 370960

What's wrong with the word "leper"? It has been used to mean not only someone with leprosy but also someone who is despised and ignored, thus turning an illness into an insult. For this reason, The Leprosy Mission and the World Health Organisation have banned its use, referring instead to "leprosy sufferers" or "leprosy patients".

Also known as "Hansen's Disease" leprosy is a chronic medical condition affecting mainly the nerves, skin, eyes and nose. Untreated it can lead to loss of feeling in the hands, feet and face, making them vulnerable to injury because of the absence of pain as a warning signal. Neglected injuries cause permanent damage and deformity, while facial paralysis can lead to blindness. With early treatment such tragedy can be prevented. Caused by a bacillus, leprosy is probably spread through droplet infection (e.g. sneezing, etc.) but in most cases it is not highly infectious. It is not hereditary, cannot be caught by a handshake, and most people have a natural immunity to the disease.

Have you ever had chickenpox? It feels horrid, doesn't it? But it soon goes away. In Jesus' day there were no doctors or hospitals like we have. Skin diseases were very serious. One of the worst was leprosy - nowadays it can be treated very easily, but if it's not treated it can cause a loss of feeling in the hands, feet and face, and if you can't feel any pain or heat, you can't tell if you've hurt yourself.

Sometimes people lose bits of their fingers, or a bit of their nose, or toes - everyone was very afraid of getting leprosy. If little white patches started to appear on your skin, you would have to go to live outside the village. Nobody was allowed to come near you. You had to tear your clothes, and shout out "UNCLEAN!" if anyone came by. You had no hope, no future. You had to sit in the dust all day and live in a cave or a shack at night, and hope someone would bring some food. If your family came, they would have to leave the food on a rock and run away, and call out from a distance "Mum! How are you? Are you any better?" "No dear, I'm worse if anything. How are you all managing?" "Mum, it's awful without you....." can you imagine if your mum or dad had to live like that? How do you think they would feel? Lonely..... Sad..... *(complete these words on the board).*

In this town here, there were ten people suffering from leprosy. Let's draw them in. *(Invite them to count them as you draw them).* They were lonely and sad. One day they heard that somebody special was coming to town. Who do you think it was? YES! It was **JESUS** *(Complete the name)* Jesus was coming! Why were they excited? How would they know about him? There wasn't any T.V. or radio - perhaps the villagers shouted the news. Here comes Jesus out of the town, with his friends *(paint them in)*. The ten sick people called out "HELP US! HELP US! PLEASE, HELP US!" Jesus didn't run away. He didn't say "Get away from me you filthy people!" The Bible tells us that Jesus has time for every one of us. Jesus **cares**. *(Complete the word)*. He talked to them.

He told them to do something. He said "Go and show yourselves to the priest". Who was the priest? He was the man in charge of the village, who taught the people about God. He would see sick people and decide when they were better, so they could go back home and be part of the family again, back to work, back to their friends - a normal life.....

They set off running. As they ran, they became well! Maybe one of them said "OUCH! I hit my toe on a stone!" "What did you say? Did you say OUCH?" "Yes, it HURT!" "Hey, that's wonderful - you haven't felt anything in your feet for ages..... let's have a look!" "HEY, LOOK! His foot is better! Hey LOOK - so are my hands!" "HEY, LOOK - he can smile - his nose is back to normal too! WOW! WE'RE BETTER! QUICK - LET'S GET TO THE PRIEST! THEN WE CAN GO HOME!!"

One of them turned round. He ran back to Jesus. (*Draw him kneeling at Jesus' feet*).

He knelt down and cried out "Oh, THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU, LORD!" Jesus smiled at him. But then he looked round. He said "How many people were healed?" How many - do you remember? That's right, TEN. Jesus said "Where are the other nine?" He was disappointed. Nine of them were his own people – the only one who said thank you was a foreigner. Only one came back to say "**Thank you**". Isn't that awful? (*complete the words*).

It's very important to say thank you, isn't it?

I know if I do something special for somebody I really look forward to them saying thank you, don't you? (*Brief testimony*). God likes us to say thank you, too.

What kind of things can we say thank you to God for today?....(*They will make suggestions*)...

Let's pray a thank-you prayer together.....