

JESUS TOUCHED

When Jesus came down from the mountain, large crowds followed Him. And a leper came to Him and bowed down before Him, and said, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean." Jesus stretched out His hand and touched him, saying, "I am willing; be cleansed." And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. Mathew 8 : 1-3

This passage has never failed to move me everytime I read.

Mathew is the first of Gospels. Normally when we give a person a New Testament, 90% chances are that they would start from the very beginning. This gospel has a very good structure. The first chapter is about the genealogy of Jesus from Abraham, His conception and birth

The second chapter is about the visit of Magi, fleeing to Egypt and Jesus growing up in Nazareth.

The third chapter introduces John the Baptist and the the baptism of Jesus.

The fourth chapter is about the forty day fast and the Temptation of Jesus.

Chapters 5-7 is the Commandment breaking sermon of Jesus.

Let me start from here. This sermon on the mount is so epochal in that Jesus breaks the century old traditions by speaking, "you have heard this, but I say to you. No one will dare speak against a commandment, but here is a strange young man with stranger notions.

The locale is stranger still. Who had ever preached in open air on a mountain top? I think this new wine newness is what fascinated people, long chained in traditions and the letter of the Law.

He simply spoke :

You have heard that it was said, ' YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR and hate your enemy.' ⁴⁴ **But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,** ⁴⁵ **so that you may ^[and] be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on *the* evil and *the* good, and sends rain on *the* righteous and *the* unrighteous.**

People there must have drunk in every word He said. There was hope in His words, love in His words, inclusion in His words (every person seemed important).

More than all this sermon, let's see what happens immediately. The last verse of the 7th chapter is this: When Jesus had finished these words, the crowds were amazed at His teaching; ²⁹ for He was teaching them as *one* having authority, and not as their scribes.

Contd : the next action after the sermon. Ch 8, v. 1 : When Jesus came down from the mountain, large crowds followed Him.

Action : An untouchable, an outcast from the respectable city, a leper comes face to face to Jesus.

The crowd froze. Had it not been for those words from Jesus that was still ringing in their ears, they would surely have stoned the leper to death. How did he dare to cross into their side?

But now they just had a new Teaching and a new Teacher and Mathew records this as the first miracle of the New Testament.

The leper speaks, "Lord if you are willing, you can make me clean." How did the leper know he was Lord, and how did he know Jesus could heal. Was he probably on the other side of the mountain, listening to the new Teacher teaching love and hope. May be he thought he would take a big gamble approaching this Man or let Him heal me at least let me die.

The whole crowd witnesses with bated breath and that happened. Jesus did not heal with a word. But ...

JESUS STRETCHED OUT HIS HAND AND TOUCHED HIM



The still silent crowd must have let a collective gasp. The New Teacher touched a Leper. A Jew, a Rabbi, touched a leper, an outcast, an untouchable. Jesus touched him and healed him, completely.

Truly a new era has come. World history has been partitioned into BC and AD.

What a moment of glory! Somehow I always remember at this point God touching clay with His own Sovereign hands to mould man according to His own Image. He created everything else with His word, but us He touched the clay.

God touched man. Jesus touched the leper. Though we are not lepers physically, how is our soul? Rotten, stinking, the thoughts we think, the things we see, the evil we ponder over.

Yet Jesus in His grace, mercy and love reaches and touches us, despicable we are. But we need His touch today in our body, soul and spirit.

Ask Jesus to touch you. He will come and touch you. This is His Promise. Ask and you will receive. Ask and be touched, blessed.