

## International Conversation Cafe

New Testament: Jesus is Compassionate, Matthew 15

In the first century there was little by way of health care. If someone had a disease that was possibly contagious, they were forced to live outside of villages and towns. Skin diseases as leprosy would be an example of a contagious disease that was common in that time. Living separately kept the disease from spreading. If someone had a disability such as blindness, there was no education and training for rehabilitation. Most blind were forced to beg. While we can understand why this situation existed, the disabled and diseased suffered in another way as well. They were isolated from their friends and family. Others looked at them as “unclean.”

Today, the idea of what is unclean can vary from culture to culture. Often it has to do with dirt and garbage. We don't throw our garbage in front of our neighbor's house. That would be disgusting. We do not sneeze in our hands and then shake hands with someone else. Smoking in the US has become unclean when done in the wrong place. While certain activities are seen as unclean, we tend to think that the people who do them are disgusting as well.

*What practices in your country are considered unclean?*

In Jesus' time, people who were diseased and disabled were thought of as unclean and therefore disgusting, even though their condition was of no fault of their own. Jesus did not look at these people as disgusting. He looked at them and felt compassion. Here are two examples.

### Luke 18- Jesus heals a blind man

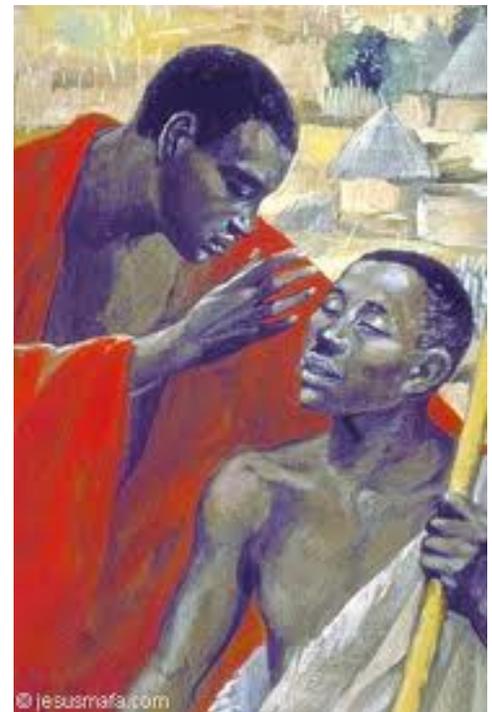
<sup>35</sup> As Jesus approached Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging. <sup>36</sup> When he heard the crowd going by, he asked what was happening. <sup>37</sup> They told him, “Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.”

<sup>38</sup> He called out, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”

<sup>39</sup> Those who led the way rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!”

<sup>40</sup> Jesus stopped and ordered the man to be brought to him. When he came near, Jesus asked him, <sup>41</sup> “What do you want me to do for you?”

“Lord, I want to see,” he replied.



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Many artists, who paint Jesus, paint him to look like themselves.

What do you notice about this painting?

How does it make you feel?

What do you think is the message of the artist?

<sup>42</sup> Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has healed you." <sup>43</sup> Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus, praising God. When all the people saw it, they also praised God.

*The beggar seems to know who Jesus was. How do you think he knew about Jesus?*

*Why did people try to quiet him?*

*How did the blind man demonstrate faith?*

*Why do you think faith is so important to Jesus?*

### **Matthew 8- Jesus heals a leper**

When Jesus came down from the mountainside, large crowds followed him. <sup>2</sup> A man with leprosy came and knelt before him and said, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean."

<sup>3</sup> Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" Immediately he was cleansed of his leprosy.

*Describe the mental condition of the man who approached Jesus for healing. Find the clues in verse*

*What did Jesus do that was socially unacceptable?*

*Based on these two stories, use your own words to describe what kind of person Jesus was.*

These two stories demonstrate Jesus' attitude toward those who are desperately needy. However, there are many more incidents of healings in the Bible performed by Jesus.

### **Matthew 15**

<sup>29</sup> Jesus left there and went along the Sea of Galilee. Then he went up on a mountainside and sat down. <sup>30</sup> Great crowds came to him, bringing the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute and many others, and laid them at his feet; and he healed them. <sup>31</sup> The people were amazed when they saw the mute speaking; the crippled made well, the lame walking and the blind seeing. And they praised the God of Israel.

*Describe the crowds that came to Jesus.*

*How and where do you think Jesus would demonstrate compassion if he were on earth today?*

*What responsibilities do we have toward people with needs?*

*Even though you may not have a disease or disability, how do you think Jesus feels about you?*