

WORLD LEPROSY DAY 2012

JANUARY 29

Sermon Resources for your church service

Introduction

The following resource is designed to help you, as a pastor, teacher or church leader to prepare for World Leprosy Day.

We thank you for setting aside January 29, 2012 to remember the children, women and men who have leprosy. Few Americans consider leprosy a threat.

But in remote villages in regions of the world where poverty continues to oppress the people, leprosy is very real. For a child, who has grown up seeing the disabled beggar in the outskirts of town, leprosy is frightening. For a mother, leprosy is devastating.

This package contains four elements:

1. A series of Scriptures and prayers to augment your service.
2. The personal story of Gangamoni, a young girl who has leprosy.
3. Sermon notes based on Luke 17: 11-19.
4. Quick facts about leprosy today.

Please use these resources to help you plan your special service. For more information on World Leprosy Day, please visit www.leprosy.org, click on "Get Involved" and then select "World Leprosy Day".

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Scriptures and Prayers

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 19:13,14

Then people brought little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples rebuked them. Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."

PRAYER:

*Almighty Father
Creator and Provider
We thank You for all good things.
Our homes, our families,
Our food, our clothing.
Each good gift is from you.*

*On this day
We set aside this time
To remember the children
Their mothers and fathers
Their friends and their neighbors
Who are affected by leprosy.
We pray that you would heal them
Comfort them
And restore their faith.*

*Inspire each of us
To do a little
To love a lot
To use what you have given us wisely.
Today we pray for children and their families
who have leprosy.
We pray that you would strengthen them
And keep them in the shelter of your protection.*

Amen

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SCRIPTURE: Matthew 5:3-12

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.
Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.
Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.
Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.
Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.
Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.
Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

PRAYER:

*Our Father, who lives in heaven, Your name is holy
In your wisdom, you give comfort to those who suffer
You reward those who understand their value in you and honor their humility
For those who long to know you better
You feed them with spiritual food so they will be filled.
To those that are kind and compassionate,
You extend your hand of compassion.
I pray that we may live with hearts that are pure.
Focused on your Kingdom work, may we live in peace with our family and neighbors
So that they will know we are your children.
And I pray for the children, women and men
Who suffer each day because they have leprosy
I ask you to heal them
Not only their physical bodies, but their hearts as well.
May you restore their dignity
And destroy the stigma with which they live.
We rejoice, for you are our God
And because of your love, We are one.
In the name of our Lord Jesus,*

Amen

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SCRIPTURE: 1 Corinthians 13:8-12

Love never fails.

But where there are prophecies, they will cease;

where there are tongues, they will be stilled;

where there is knowledge, it will pass away.

For we know in part and we prophesy in part,

but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears.

When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child.

When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me.

For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror;

then we shall see face to face.

Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

PRAYER:

Our Father,

We come to you as children.

There are many things we don't understand.

When we read the stories of children with leprosy

Or see the images of a mother disabled by disease

We ask; "Why?"

But you know the answer.

Today, we only see the reflections of our own ideas.

We will not understand until we see you.

We pray that with faith we may overcome doubt

With hope we might fight despair

And with love we would defeat prejudice.

We pray specifically for children and their families

Who are affected by leprosy.

Be with them today, Give them courage and strength.

In Jesus' Name

Amen

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Sermon Notes

THE POWER OF FAITH

While Jesus was in one of the towns, a man came along who was covered with leprosy. When he saw Jesus, he fell with his face to the ground and begged him, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean." Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" And immediately the leprosy left him.

Then Jesus ordered him, "Don't tell anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them."

Yet the news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses. But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed. Luke 5:12-16

What is faith?

Hebrews 11:1 says that "Faith is the confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see."

A man came toward Jesus with sores all over his body. The reality of this encounter is far beyond our own imaginations. Leprosy was scorned by all people. This man would have experienced rejection of every kind. There is a great likelihood that he would have been put out of his own home.

There is very little chance that he would have found employment. At the best, people in his community would simply avoid him. A few may have compassion and drop a few coins his way.

Walking toward Jesus, a man who drew huge crowds of people, required immense faith. To ask Him to heal him, required considerable hope that this man could heal him.

He didn't doubt Jesus' power to heal him.

Nor did Jesus hesitate to reach out to this man. He put out his hand to touch his festering skin. Jesus was not afraid.

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Perhaps the most poignant moment in this story is the compassion that stretches out to touch the man. He didn't hesitate. Jesus walked a very different walk from most of our powerful leaders. He did not come to the rich and famous – He came for the poorest of the poor. He took time for this man who had been rejected by others.

When the man was healed, Jesus did not send him home. Instead, He told him to go to the temple to show the priests and to give a thanksgiving sacrifice. Jesus was sending a very strong message to the priests – He was the Messiah.

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HOPE BEYOND REASON

For an eight-year-old girl, leprosy is extremely frightening. It has the power to shatter the very core of her existence.

Gangamoni can't help but be afraid. She has often seen old men and women begging in the village. Their limbs are bandaged and sore. They are scorned and cast aside. When she discovered she had leprosy, those images haunted her.

Gangamoni's father is a simple man, with little skill. A carpenter, he struggles to find employment. Her mother works as a housekeeper. Her small income stretches so far, but cannot cover all of their needs. Occasionally her employer gives her bits of leftover food – a very special treat for these young children. The children go to school, but they don't get the full benefit, as they are too poor to purchase the necessary school books.



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Her brother was diagnosed with leprosy and treated immediately. He was cured before he had any of the physical signs of leprosy. The family is extremely grateful for the assistance of American Leprosy Missions in caring for and curing this young boy.

But then things got worse. Gangamoni's mother suddenly became very sick. Red nodules covered her body. She was terrified. She was very careful not to let any of the neighbors know. She secretly borrowed a bit of money to go to the hospital nearby. Her mother stayed in the hospital, terrified that if she returned she would be ostracized in her own community.

Then, while her mother was in the hospital Gangamoni noticed patches on her arms and face. She had leprosy.

Her family is devastated. There is no one to care for the younger children, as the father does not want to admit that his wife and daughter are at the hospital. He leaves them alone in the house while he goes out to work. The stigma is so great that, if the neighbors knew, they would surely be asked to leave the village.

Her mother stubbornly refuses to reveal the truth. She has told her husband not to visit and not to bring the children. She is desperate to protect them against leprosy. Little Gangamoni is alone and frightened. The hospital is doing everything they can, but she is afraid to leave.

Even though we know that leprosy can be completely cured, the stigma is strong. Our job is far from done. Americans are extremely influential in helping to provide the funds to educate and care for children, women and men who have leprosy. Each gift, each prayer is a step towards defeating the power of leprosy.

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QUICK FACTS ABOUT LEPROSY

In the next 2 minutes a child, woman or man will be told that he or she has leprosy. While we can fully cure leprosy today, it still impacts thousands of lives each year.

Leprosy does not eat away at the skin and bones, rather the bacillus attacks nerve endings and destroys the body's ability to feel pain and injury. Infections cause tissue loss and fingers and toes become shortened and deformed as the bone mass is absorbed into the body.

Leprosy can be fully cured with Multi-Drug Therapy, a combination of antibiotics which include: Rifampicin, Clofazimine and Dapsone.

Leprosy is transferred by coughing and sneezing, but it is not highly contagious. More than 95% of the population is naturally immune to leprosy.

On average, the cost to care for and cure one person affected by leprosy is \$300.

For more information, visit our web site (www.leprosy.org). The stories of individuals who have been transformed inspire us to continue our work. We are motivated by our love for Jesus to reach out in compassion, as He did.