“Come, just as you are” – A Personal Invitation from Jesus

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Life has a way of allowing us or others to put us in desperate places. I often use this phrase to men who are part of my ministry (and it came to be part of the title of my last book),

“We are all desperate whether we admit it or not.”

Hopeless. Helpless. Discouraged. Lonely. Feel like a failure. The list could go on. Today’s message is for people who find themselves in these hard—even desperate places. We are going to look at just three (of many) examples of men and women who had heard of Jesus, personally heard His call, or had seen Him in action.

All who came to Him had at least one thing in common: **They came just as they were**.

While it was counterintuitive to religious leaders of Jesus’ day, who would not even be around such people, Jesus especially loved “***those***” people. They came broken, humbled (or humiliated), hopeless, and helpless—often with nowhere else to turn. Friends, at times in our lives, every (honest) one of us has been there. Some of you are right now.

Before we dig into the diamond mine that is the Bible, let me say three things to you.

- *God loves you no matter what! You cannot make Him stop loving you.*
- *Nothing you ever said or did surprised Him. (You cannot sneak up on God.)*

- *Jesus is waiting for you to come to Him and fall into His outstretched arms.*

With those words of truth and encouragement, let us begin our study.

♦ **A Man So "Unclean" No One Would Go Near Him**. (Mark 1: 40-45; Leviticus 13-14)

> *"And a leper came to Jesus, (begging) Him and falling on his knees before Him, saying, "If You are willing, You can make me clean." Moved with compassion, Jesus stretched out His hand and touched him, and said to him, "I am willing; be cleansed." Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed. And (Jesus) sternly warned him and immediately sent him away, And He said to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, as a testimony to them." But he went out and began to proclaim (his healing) freely and spread the news around, to such an extent that Jesus could no longer publicly enter a city…"*

Key Lessons. "*If You are willing*" The leper had faith—believed Jesus could heal him if He wanted to. Compassion. Jesus touched a man no one else would go near. This was a huge issue in Judaism. It made Him unclean as well. But Jesus said it was His will to heal the man of faith. Risking public opinion and criticism, He touched him and brought healing. Please note Jesus could have spoken this healing but to show the Jews and religious leaders He had power over everything and made all things clean, He touched the leper.

For You. You may feel as unclean or unwanted as this leper but know this: Jesus will reach out and touch you just like He did the leper to cleanse and make you whole again. No sin too great. No unclean acts or speech He will not heal. But you must come to Him in humility and faith, even if it is as small

as a mustard seed!

♦ **The "Miracle within the Miracle" – the Woman who had nothing to lose**.

Her story is told in all three synoptic gospels. Matthew 9: 18-38; Mark 5:21-43; Luke 8: 40-56) Because of the details about this story, we are going to consider Mark's account (given to him probably by Peter) although he could have been a follower of Jesus, but not a disciple.

> *One of the synagogue officials named Jairus came up, and on seeing Him, fell at His feet and implored Him earnestly, saying, "My little daughter is at the point of death; please come and lay Your hands on her, so that she will get well and live." And He went off with him; and a large crowd was following Him and pressing in on Him. A woman who had had a hemorrhage for twelve years, and had endured much at the hands of many physicians, and had spent all that she had and was not helped at all, but rather had grown worse—after hearing about Jesus, she came up in the crowd behind Him and touched His cloak. For she thought, "If I just touch His garments, I will get well."* Immediately *the flow of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her affliction.* Immediately *Jesus, perceiving in Himself that the power proceeding from Him had gone forth, turned around in the crowd and said, "Who touched My garments?" And His disciples said to Him, "You see the crowd pressing in on You, and You say, 'Who touched Me?'" And He looked around to see the woman who had done this. But the woman fearing and trembling, aware of what had happened to her, came and fell down before Him and told Him the whole truth. And He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace and be healed of your affliction."*

Key Lessons. She was desperate, broke, with nothing to lose. AND she believed Jesus had the power to heal her—just touching

His hem. She was healed but also very afraid when she got caught "stealing" some of His power. Humbly she fell before Him and explained what He already knew. He called her daughter and endearing term of a father and told her that her faith in Him/His power allowed her to be made well.

For You. What are you waiting on? What do you have to lose? You know Jesus has the power to heal every infirmity you have—physical, emotional, and, especially, spiritual. Go to Him, even if you have to crawl and are afraid to look up. Tell Him what you need. This very sick woman made her way to Him and reached out to Him. He never turns away anyone who reaches out to Him in faith—believing He is Who He says He is.

[God's sovereignty. It may not be lack of your faith that prevents every prayer you pray from coming to pass – even healing. It is that God will do whatever brings glory to Himself, honors His holy name, and is best for you and me—whether it feels like it or not.]

♦ **The Desperate Father**. Mark 9:17 – 29 (just after the Transfiguration)

> *And one of the crowd answered Him, "Teacher, I brought You my son, possessed with a spirit which makes him mute; and whenever it seizes him, it slams him to the ground and he foams at the mouth, and grinds his teeth and stiffens out. I told Your disciples to cast it out, and they could not do it." And He answered them and said, "O unbelieving generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring him to Me!" They brought the boy to Him. When he saw Him, immediately the spirit threw him into a convulsion, and falling to the ground, he began rolling around and foaming at the mouth. And He asked his father, "How long has this been happening to him?" And he said, "From childhood. "It has often thrown him both into the*

*fire and into the water to destroy him. **But if You can** do anything, take pity on us and help us!" And Jesus said to him, " 'If You can?' **All things are possible to him who believes**." Immediately the boy's **father cried out and said, "I do believe; help my unbelief.**" When Jesus saw that a crowd was rapidly gathering, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "You deaf and mute spirit, I command you, come out of him and do not enter him again." After crying out and throwing him into terrible convulsions, it came out; and the boy became so much like a corpse that most of them said, "He is dead!" But Jesus took him by the hand and raised him; and he got up…His disciples began questioning Him privately, "Why could we not drive it out?" And He said to them, "This kind cannot come out by anything but **prayer**."*

Key Lessons. This father was brave enough to find Jesus' disciples (because He was not around) and TELL them to cast out the demon. Perhaps he had seen them doing other miracles, we are not told. But they failed to set the boy free, so the father was even more desperate. When Jesus arrived, the father told him the boy's plight and asked Jesus in a way we too often do. It was his frame of mind.

IF YOU CAN… He had no faith in the One he was asking. This may have also been a last-ditch effort for his son's healing. But his lack of faith was every evident. When Jesus rebuked him with that famous verse (all things are possible to him who believes), the man now humbly uttered one of the greatest prayers (requests of God) in all of the Bible—one I have prayed many times.

"I do believe; help my unbelief."

For You. Unlike the woman in the last story, this one is a case of the desperate father's unbelief (lack of faith). Here is the good news. Jesus explained how prayer works and then healed the son—cast out the demon His disciples could not.

Whether your faith is strong or as weak as this father's, I am asking you right now to come to Jesus and ask. But ask believing – no matter how small – and trust God our Father Who loves us so will give you what you ask. Just remember two things: what I told you about His sovereignty and that the words of Jesus were "all things are ***possible***, not all things all the time."

Closing. The best-known words of Jesus that restore hope and comfort those who mourn or are downtrodden are found in Matthew 11: 28-30. I want to close by sharing them with you, and then I will pray.

> *"Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you* ***rest****. "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND* ***REST FOR YOUR SOULS****. "For My yoke is* ***easy*** *and My burden is* ***light****."*

For Christ's sake,

