

Beauty for Ashes—I Am Willing—March 8th, 2020

Luke 5.12-16

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¹² 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.”

¹³ Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. “I am willing,” he said. “Be clean!” And immediately the leprosy left him.

¹⁴ 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.”

¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.

Isaiah 61.1-4

The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me,

because the Lord has anointed me

to proclaim good news to the poor.

He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,

to proclaim freedom for the captives

and release from darkness for the prisoners,

² to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor

and the day of vengeance of our God,

to comfort all who mourn,

³ and provide for those who grieve in Zion—

to bestow on them a crown of beauty

instead of ashes,

the oil of joy

instead of mourning,

and a garment of praise

instead of a spirit of despair.

They will be called oaks of righteousness,

a planting of the Lord

for the display of his splendor.

⁴ They will rebuild the ancient ruins

and restore the places long devastated;

they will renew the ruined cities

that have been devastated for generations.

Read and Discuss

Introduction

Pastor Jacob continued his message series for the season of Lent. In this series, he is walking through the promise made in Jesus’ identification with Isaiah 61. Providence Church is located in the

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part of Middle Tennessee that was impacted by the March 3rd tornados. Many in our community are walking through the early phases of recovering from widespread devastation. We are wearing the ashes of the heaviness of that destruction. Recovery will take a long time but Jesus is willing to rescue

Engage the Scripture

- In Sunday's message, Jacob said, *"In the Old Testament, the people of God when they were hurting, mourning, grieving. When they knew they had walked far off from God, they put ashes on their heads. It was clearly a sign of grief, sadness, but also repentance. Meaning, ashes on the head was saying-life has messed me over, but also I have messed up in life. Both. They would put on sackcloth, a real course, scratchy material to cover their body with uncomfortable-ness and ashes on the head a visible sign that all is not right and we are sorry."*

Are there things you change about your appearance when you are grieving, sad, or sorry?

Then Jacob said, *"Some of us today have ashes on our heads. Some of us, if socially acceptable would have put on sackcloth to outwardly show and feel what is going on in our hearts."* This might represent sorrow or the need to repent. What are you grieving or sorry about today?

- Read Luke 5.12-16. What do you notice about the actions of the man with leprosy when he entered into Jesus' presence? His request of Jesus a question or a statement? Does it feel more like discouragement or faith? Discuss the difference.
- Jacob pointed out the pattern of Jesus' response.
 1. He touches the untouchable man.
 2. He says he is willing to cleanse the man.
 3. He cleanses him with the words, "Be clean!"
 4. He says, "Don't tell anyone."

What do you find amazing about the way Jesus responds to the man? Has Jesus ever had a similar impact in your life?

- Jacob said, *"God didn't make you to live in the body forever. Well, that was the plan in the garden, but sin messed it up. So we don't live in these bodies forever, they wear out. But that's not our purpose."* Our purpose is to dwell with God forever. And following Jesus is the way for us to do that. How does the big picture view of God's desire for us impact the way you see suffering today?

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Pray

God, some of us know very well what it's like to wear the ashes of grief, or sin, or simply a feeling of being disconnected from you. In some moments, it is like we are walking around in a cloud of dust. In this season of Lent, let us see the ashes for what they are— signs of our need for you. And let us not allow these ashes to become our new normal. You have sent the Messiah, our Rescuer who exchanges beauty for these ashes. Every day of this season, let us feel you place a crown of beauty on our heads. Amen.