

The Lakeside



Message in a bottle

Verse of the day for Monday February 5, 2024 - Matthew 11: 28

28 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.

Read Matthew 28 for meditation and inspiration.



LOVE CASTS OUT FEAR

Dear Lakesiders and friends,

In Biblical times, the word "leprosy" designated several kinds of mangy, scaly skin diseases, not the condition of leprosy we know today as "Hansen's Disease." It is extremely doubtful that today's leprosy ever occurred in Palestine in Biblical times. Therefore, the man whom Jesus confronts was not afflicted with the kind of leprosy that degenerates nerves, causes loss of sensation, loss of muscular movement, and, finally, loss of extremities such as fingers, toes, and nose. Nevertheless, the man was rightly troubled because he was afflicted with a skin disease that caused him to be ostracized from his people. Under Jewish Law, severe measures were taken to prevent the spread of skin diseases. The afflicted person was isolated from the community and was not allowed to enter settled areas. He was required to give a clear warning to other people of his condition so that they might

avoid getting close to him. However, the disease was curable, but the leper was able to resume his life in the community only after a priest had verified his cure and performed the purification rite required by Law.

In the stories of his life, 13th Century Francis of Assisi is depicted as a man for others -- a man who loved others -- a man who was always there to "give a cup of cold water" to Jesus' "lowly ones." But there were many lepers around in his time, and St. Francis had a terrible fear of them. Although he had a terrible fear of them, he knew, somewhere deep inside he could not resist caring for the poor misfortunate around him - even the lepers.

One day, he met a man afflicted with leprosy while riding his horse near Assisi. Though the sight of the leper filled him with horror and disgust, Francis got off his horse and kissed the leper. Then the leper put out his hand, hoping to receive something. Out of compassion, Francis gave money to the leper. But when Francis mounted his horse again and looked all around, he could not see the leper anywhere. It dawned on him that it was Jesus whom he had just kissed. Francis believed in divine synchronicity and saw it as essential in his spiritual life. Surely it was synchronous that Francis showed up at the church of San Damiano and then listened to the guidance he received. No doubt it was synchronous for Francis to notice a leper as he traveled the roads of Umbria. Mortified and disgusted by leprosy, Francis may have wished to pass by on the other side of the road, but God's still, small voice told him to stop, reach out, and embrace the man with leprosy.

Both the man with leprosy and Francis were transformed in that moment. As Jesus announced, "What you do to the least of these sisters and brothers you do to me".

In Jesus

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Roger".

Roger