

REASON TOGETHER CHURCH

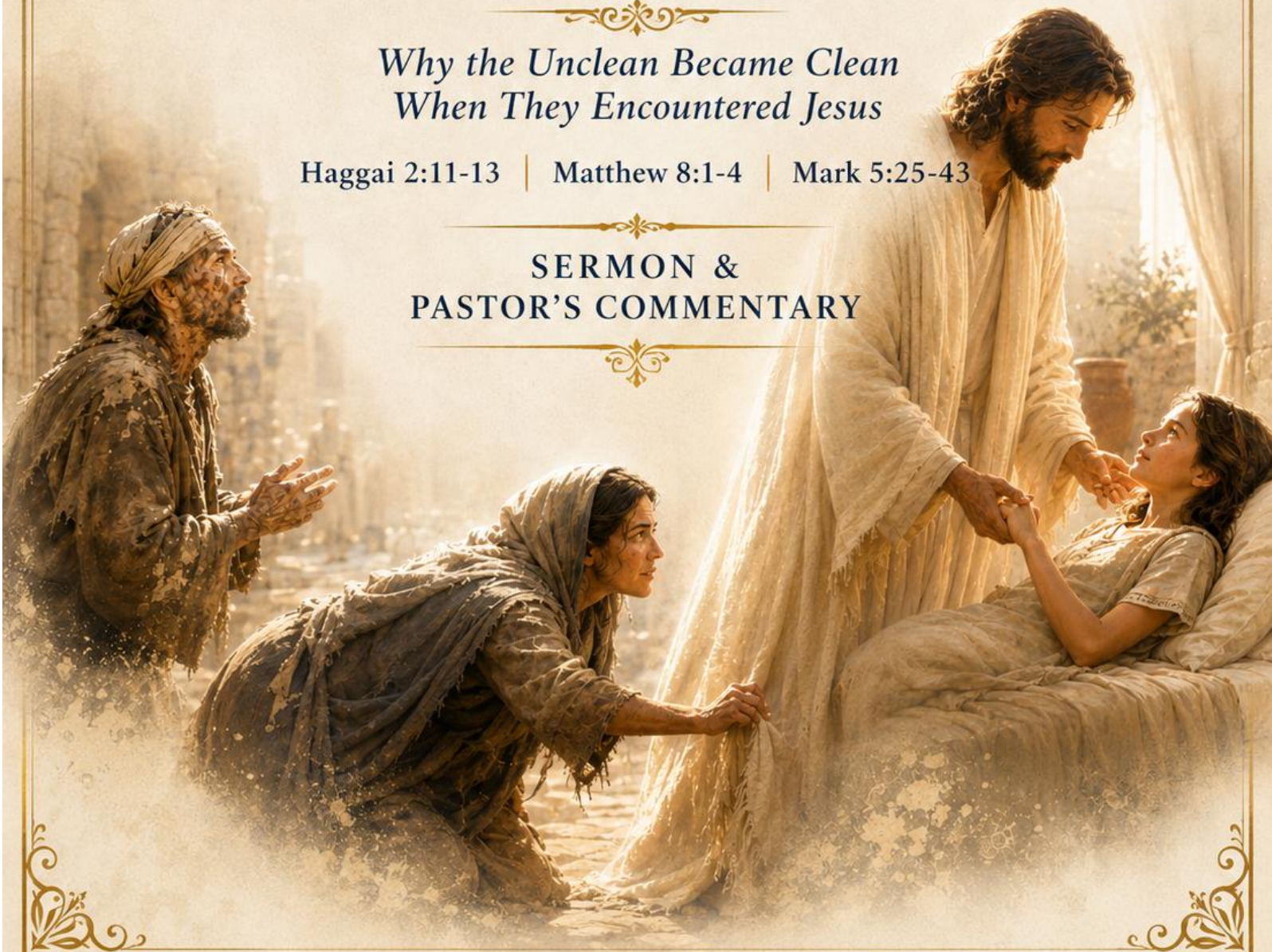


THE TOUCH THAT CLEANSED

*Why the Unclean Became Clean
When They Encountered Jesus*

Haggai 2:11-13 | Matthew 8:1-4 | Mark 5:25-43

SERMON &
PASTOR'S COMMENTARY



REASON TOGETHER CHURCH

THE TOUCH THAT CLEANSED

Sermon Transcript

Bring your questions. Open your Bible.
Let's Reason Together the Word of God.

www.ReasonTogether.Church

Aloha,

And welcome to Reason Together Church.

Bring your questions.

Open your Bible.

Let's Reason Together the Word of God.

I am glad that you are here today.

To each of our honored guests,

thank you for choosing to worship with us.

You could have been many other places,

and we do not take your presence for granted. We want you to know from the beginning that you are welcome here.

You are welcome to ask questions.

You are welcome to open the Bible with us. And you are welcome to take the time you need to understand what the Word of God actually says.

If this is your first time with us,

we have a simple guest card available.

We only ask for your first name and an email address. We are not asking for your home address, and we are not going to pressure you.

We simply want the opportunity to thank you for being here and to answer any questions you may have. Our Keiki Kids Center is also available for our younger children,

and after the service I hope you will join us at the Reason Together Café.

The coffee is free,

and so are the refills on the conversations.

Before we pray,

let me also say a brief word about giving. If you are our guest today, there is absolutely no expectation for you to give.

We are glad you are here. That is enough. If you are a member of another church, we encourage you to continue giving faithfully through your home church.

For those who call Reason Together Church their church home, there is a giving box in the back for anyone who feels led to give.

There is no pressure, and there is no compulsion.

Second Corinthians 9:7 says:

“Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly,

or of necessity:

for God loveth a cheerful giver.” We give because God has blessed us, because we are grateful and because we want to participate in the work He has placed before us.

Let us pray.

Father,

thank You for bringing us together today. Thank You for every person who is here, for every question represented in this room and for the Bible that You have given us.

Open our understanding as we open Your Word. Help us distinguish what the Scriptures actually teach from what we may merely assume. Help us see Jesus clearly.

Help us understand His holiness, His compassion, His authority and His power to cleanse. Remove distraction from our minds. Give comfort to anyone who is hurting.

Give conviction where conviction is needed. And give hope to anyone who believes he or she is too dirty, too broken or too far gone to come to Christ.

We ask these things in the name of Jesus.

Amen.

Our opening Scripture is found in Haggai chapter 2, beginning with verse 11.

The Bible says:

“Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Ask now the priests concerning the law, saying, If one bear holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, and with his skirt do touch bread, or pottage, or wine, or oil, or any meat, shall it be holy? And the priests answered and said, No. Then said Haggai, If one that is unclean by a dead body touch any of these, shall it be unclean? And the priests answered and said, It shall be unclean.” Today I want to begin with a question that someone sent to me.

When I first read it, I thought, that is a very interesting way of putting it.

The question was essentially this:

In Biblical times, when an unclean thing touched a clean thing, the clean thing could become unclean. But when Jesus, the clean One, touched the unclean, the unclean became clean.

Why?

That is our question today.

And I have given this study a simple title:

THE TOUCH THAT CLEANSED.

Before we go any farther, I want you to think about something very simple.

Dirt spreads.

Cleanliness usually does not.

If you put on a perfectly clean white shirt and then lean against something covered in mud, your clean shirt does not make the mud clean.

The mud makes your shirt dirty. If someone whose hands are covered in grease grabs your clean hand, your clean hand does not remove the grease from theirs.

The grease gets on you. If you walk across a clean floor with muddy shoes, the floor does not clean your shoes. Your shoes make the floor dirty.

We understand that.

Dirt transfers.

Cleanliness generally does not transfer simply because two things touch. And as I prepared this message, I found myself thinking about my time serving in the Philippines.

I spent quite a bit of time ministering in what we called the dump areas. Unless you have actually seen places like that, it is difficult to adequately describe them.

These were places where some of the poorest people I have ever encountered spent virtually their entire lives searching through mountains of garbage.

These were not people going to a dump to work a shift and then returning home to another life. For many of them, this was life.

Imagine mountains of trash, sometimes fifteen feet high. Rotting food. Soot. Smoke. Dirt. Waste. Whatever other people had thrown away. Men, women and children would climb through those heaps.

They were not doing it because they enjoyed it. They were trying to survive. They were searching for something they could eat. They were searching for something they might be able to use.

Maybe they could trade it. Maybe they could sell it. Maybe it would help them find enough food to make it through that day.

Their concern was not what they were going to eat next week. Their concern was whether they could find enough to eat today. Tomorrow they would get up and search again.

And the next day, they would do it again. That was life for some of the people to whom we were trying to bring the Gospel.

When I went into those areas, I had showered that morning. I had used soap. I had used shampoo. I had put on clean clothes.

I went in physically clean. But the people I was meeting had spent their lives in an environment where dirt, soot and the residue of those trash heaps became part of everyday existence.

Some had little opportunity to bathe. Some wore clothing that had absorbed that environment day after day. And sharing the Gospel with people means getting close to people.

You cannot effectively tell someone that Jesus loves them while constantly saying, “Stay over there. Do not get too close. Do not touch me.”

You shake a hand. A child leans against you. Someone puts a hand on your arm. Someone hugs you. And sometimes the smell was difficult.

Sometimes the physical dirt was difficult. Sometimes one touch left a mark on my clothing.

Sometimes the stain remained even after the clothing had been washed.

But here is what never happened. My cleanliness never rubbed off on them. I never walked into one of those dump areas, put my clean hand on someone covered in soot and watched the soot disappear. I never hugged someone whose clothing was stained with the residue of those trash heaps and watched my clean shirt make their shirt clean.

It always worked in the other direction. Their dirt transferred to me. My cleanliness did not transfer to them. Now I want to stop and make something absolutely clear.

Those people were not less valuable because they were dirty. Poverty did not make them sinful.

Living among trash heaps did not make them morally unclean.

We went into those places precisely because those people mattered to God. And because they mattered to God, they needed to matter to us.

I am using that experience only as a physical illustration.

Dirt spreads.

Cleanliness does not normally spread by contact. Keep that picture in your mind. Because now we are going to open the Bible

and discover that the question someone sent me points us toward something remarkable about Jesus Christ. Before we can understand what Jesus does,

we need to understand what the Bible means when it calls someone or something “unclean.” That word can confuse us. When we use the word unclean today,

we may simply mean that something is physically dirty. Or we may use it morally. We may mean wicked, impure or sinful. But when we read the Old Testament,

ceremonial uncleanness and moral sin are not always the same thing. A person could become ceremonially unclean without committing a moral offense against God.

That distinction matters.

Numbers 19:11 says:

“He that toucheth the dead body of any man shall be unclean seven days.” Suppose your father died. Someone had to care for his body.

Someone had to prepare it. Someone had to bury him. Contact with that dead body could bring ceremonial uncleanness. But loving your father enough to care for his body was not a moral sin.

A woman experienced a period of ceremonial uncleanness associated with childbirth. That did not mean having a baby was sinful. Leviticus describes bodily discharges that brought ceremonial uncleanness.

That did not automatically mean the person had committed a moral offense. Leviticus chapters 13 and 14 deal extensively with conditions our King James Bible calls leprosy.

Certain conditions required examination, separation and prescribed cleansing procedures. So when we encounter the word unclean, we need to ask:

What kind of uncleanness is the text discussing? Is it physical? Is it ceremonial? Is it moral? What does the Bible actually say? That is Reason Together.

We do not build a doctrine merely because a sentence sounds clever. We examine the Scriptures. Jesus lived a perfect, sinless life.

Hebrews 4:15 says:

“For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.”

First Peter 2:22 says:

“Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.” Jesus never sinned. Not once. But ceremonial uncleanness was not necessarily moral sin.

So our argument today does not need to be:

Jesus could never be associated with ritual uncleanness because that would mean He sinned. That is not the point these Gospel accounts emphasize.

The much more interesting question is this:

Why do the Gospel writers repeatedly show Jesus encountering people and conditions associated with uncleanness, and instead of uncleanness becoming the victorious force, Jesus becomes the source of cleansing, healing and life?

Return for a moment to Haggai chapter 2. Haggai is one of those short books in the Old Testament that many Christians rarely visit.

But today it gives us a fascinating piece of our puzzle. God tells Haggai to ask the priests a question concerning the Law. If someone carries holy flesh in the fold of his garment,

and that garment touches ordinary food, does the ordinary food automatically become holy?

The priests answer:

No. Then Haggai reverses the question. If someone who is unclean because of contact with a dead body touches the food, does the food become unclean?

The priests answer:

“It shall be unclean.”

Do you see the direction? Holiness was not ordinarily contagious by touch. But uncleanness could be transferred. That ought to remind you of the dump illustration.

I could walk into the dump clean. My cleanliness did not jump onto someone else. Their dirt could certainly get onto me. Haggai's larger point is also important.

The people could not make themselves holy merely by standing near holy things or performing religious activity. We still need that warning. Church attendance, Bible ownership and religious language do not cleanse a heart.

We need cleansing that God Himself provides. And the Old Testament occasionally gives us a glimpse that God can provide a cleansing touch. In Isaiah chapter 6,

Isaiah sees the Lord high and lifted up. He becomes painfully aware of his own uncleanness.

He says:

“Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.”

Then a seraph takes a live coal from the altar.

Isaiah 6:7 says:

“And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.”

That coal was not magic. It came from the altar in the presence of God. The cleansing came because God provided it. Isaiah could not cleanse his own lips.

God did for Isaiah what Isaiah could not do for himself. Keep that in mind as we turn to the Gospels. Because when Jesus comes,

we are not merely watching another clean person trying to avoid contamination. We are watching the One who has authority to cleanse. Turn with me to Matthew chapter 8.

Jesus has just finished what we call the Sermon on the Mount. Great multitudes are following Him.

Then Matthew 8:2 says:

“And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.” Listen carefully to the man's words.

He does not say:

Lord, make me more comfortable.

He does not say:

Lord, make me look better.

He says:

“thou canst make me clean.”

That language matters. Leprosy could carry physical suffering, social isolation, ceremonial consequences, fear and separation.

Leviticus 13:45 says:

“And the leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, Unclean, unclean.”

Imagine that becoming part of your identity in public. You see people coming. And instead of saying hello, you warn them.

Unclean.

Unclean.

Do not get too close. Imagine watching people instinctively step away from you. Imagine a mother pulling her child back. Imagine the absence of ordinary human touch.

No handshake. No hand on the shoulder. No embrace. No one sitting close enough to talk quietly. We do not know how long this particular man had suffered.

We do not know the last time someone had willingly reached out and touched him. But we know what happens when he comes to Jesus.

Matthew 8:3 says:

“And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.” Do not rush past those words.

“And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him.” Jesus could heal without touching. The Gospels make that abundantly clear.

Jesus did not need physical contact as though the miracle required Him to complete some kind of electrical circuit. He could speak. He could heal from a distance.

But here, He reaches. And He touches. Everyone else sees a reason to pull back. Jesus reaches forward. Everyone else sees “unclean.” Jesus sees a man standing before Him.

The man is not reduced to his disease. The man is not merely a problem to be managed. He is someone Jesus is willing to touch.

And the result is not that the leper's condition overcomes Jesus.

The result is:

“immediately his leprosy was cleansed.”

There it is. The touch that cleansed. There is another detail worth noticing.

The leper says:

“If thou wilt.”

He does not question Christ's ability.

He says:

“thou canst make me clean.”

His question concerns willingness.

Will You?

Jesus answers:

“I will.”

There may be someone listening today who believes Jesus has power in an abstract theological sense.

You believe He is the Son of God.

You believe He performed miracles. You believe He died and rose again. But when it comes to your life, your past, your sin and your failure,

you wonder:

Would He want me?

The leper's question is not:

Can You?

It is:

Will You?

And Jesus says:

“I will.”

That does not mean Jesus promises to remove every physical illness immediately whenever we ask.

This passage is not a formula that allows us to demand a miracle on our timetable.

But it does reveal the heart of Christ toward the person who knows he is unclean and comes to Him for cleansing. Jesus does not recoil from the man.

He reaches toward him. Then Jesus says something else.

Matthew 8:4 says:

“And Jesus saith unto him, See thou tell no man; but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.”

Jesus does not treat the Law of Moses with contempt. He tells the man to follow what Moses commanded. The priest did not cause the cleansing.

The priest examined the person and confirmed what had happened. The Law could identify the condition. The priest could inspect the evidence. The prescribed offering could be made.

But Jesus supplied the cleansing. And think about what that cleansing meant for this man. It meant more than healthier skin. It meant the possibility of returning to ordinary life.

It meant restored contact. Restored worship. Restored community. Restored dignity. The touch of Jesus reached beyond his body. It reached into every part of the isolation that condition had created. There is a difference between noticing an unclean person and touching an unclean person. Many people probably noticed him. Some may have stared. Some may have whispered.

Some may have hurried away. Jesus touched him. Church, we must be careful that our Christianity does not become a religion of noticing people from a safe distance.

It is possible to notice the homeless person and never learn his name. It is possible to notice the addict and never speak with compassion.

It is possible to notice the person carrying shame and only wonder what he did. Jesus did not merely observe this man's suffering. He moved toward him.

But our study is not finished. We now have one encounter in which Jesus initiates the touch. Jesus touches a man associated with uncleanness, and the man becomes clean.

Someone may say:

All right. But what happens if the person considered unclean initiates the contact? What happens if the unclean person touches Jesus? For that, turn to Mark chapter 5.

Mark gives us one of the most beautifully constructed accounts in the Gospels. A man named Jairus comes to Jesus. He is one of the rulers of the synagogue.

His little daughter is desperately sick.

Mark 5:23 records him pleading:

“My little daughter lieth at the point of death:

I pray thee, come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live.” Notice that word again.

Hands.

Touch.

Jairus believes that if Jesus will lay His hands on his daughter, she will live. Jesus goes with him. A great crowd follows. And in the middle of that urgent journey, another story interrupts the first one.

Verse 25 says:

“And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years...” Twelve years. Do not let that become merely a number. Think about twelve years.

Twelve years of waking up with the same problem. Twelve years of wondering whether today might be different. Twelve years of disappointment.

Twelve years of living with the ceremonial and social consequences of her condition.

Mark tells us she:

“had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse.” She had tried.

She had sought help. She had spent what she had. And instead of improving, she grew worse. Some of you know what it is like to live with a problem that refuses to leave.

You have prayed about it. You have sought help. You have tried what people recommended. You have watched time pass. And the problem is still there.

There is a special weariness that comes with the word chronic. A sudden problem can frighten us. A long problem can exhaust us. This woman is exhausted.

Under Leviticus chapter 15, her condition carried ceremonial implications. This is not simply a story about a medical difficulty. Her condition affected how she moved through the religious and social world around her.

Then she hears about Jesus.

Mark 5:27 says:

“When she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched his garment.” Now stop. Our first story involved Jesus reaching out to touch the person considered unclean.

This time, the person reaches out to touch Jesus. If uncleanness normally moves through contact, what should we expect? What happens when she touches Him?

Verse 28 says:

“For she said, If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole.” There is faith in that sentence. She believes that getting close enough to touch His garment is enough.

Verse 29 says:

“And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague.” What transferred?

Her condition did not overcome Christ. Healing came to her.

Then Mark says:

“And Jesus, immediately knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him, turned him about in the press, and said, Who touched my clothes?”

The word virtue in our King James Bible refers here to power. Power went out from Him. The disciples almost seem confused by the question.

There is a crowd pressing around Jesus. Everybody is bumping into everybody.

They essentially say:

Look at this crowd. What do You mean, Who touched Me? Many people were physically close to Jesus. One woman reached Him in faith.

There is another lesson there. It is possible to be in the crowd around Jesus and still miss who He is.

It is possible to be surrounded by Christian language, Christian music, Christian books and Christian people, and yet never personally trust Christ. The crowd touched Him casually. The woman touched Him believing. Her faith did not turn the fabric of His clothing into a magical object. The power was not in a thread. The power was in Christ. She reached for His garment because she believed in Him. Jesus knows that this touch was different.

The woman comes forward fearing and trembling. She tells Him all the truth.

And Jesus says in verse 34:

“Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague.”

I love that Jesus calls her:

“Daughter.”

This woman who had suffered for twelve years. This woman who had spent all she had. This woman who approached from behind, perhaps hoping to receive healing without being noticed.

Jesus does not call her:

Problem.

He does not call her:

Unclean woman.

He says:

“Daughter.”

The healing is public because Jesus restores more than her body. He lets the crowd hear that she is whole. He sends her away in peace.

First, Jesus touches the leper.

Clean.

Now, the woman touches Jesus.

Whole.

But Mark is not finished. Remember Jairus? While Jesus is dealing with this woman, Jairus is waiting. His daughter is dying. If you are Jairus, every second matters.

You came first. You asked first. Jesus was already on the way to your house. Then the journey stopped. Imagine Jairus standing there while Jesus speaks with this woman.

He may be grateful for her healing. But his little girl is at home struggling to breathe. Sometimes another person's testimony is difficult to hear while you are still waiting for your answer.

Someone else says,

“God came through for me.”

And you are trying to rejoice, but part of your heart is asking, “Lord, what about my house?” While Jesus is still speaking, someone comes from Jairus' home.

Verse 35 says:

“Thy daughter is dead:

why troublest thou the Master any further?” Those words change everything. Before, there was sickness. Now, there is death. Before, there was urgency. Now, the messengers believe there is no point.

It is too late. Jesus could have helped while she was sick. But now she is dead. Why trouble Him any further?

Have you ever noticed how often human beings draw a line where we believe God's ability must stop? We can imagine God helping with this, but not that.

We can imagine restoration if the damage has not gone too far. We can imagine forgiveness for certain sins, but surely not those sins.

We can imagine hope while there is still some pulse left in the situation.

Then we declare:

Too late.

Too far.

Too broken.

Too dead.

Jesus hears the message. And He keeps going.

Mark 5:36 says:

“As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, he saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe.” Jairus has just heard the worst words a father can hear.

Jesus gives him two commands. Do not be afraid. Only believe. That does not mean Jairus is asked to pretend his daughter is not dead.

Faith is not pretending the facts are different. Faith is recognizing that Jesus is greater than the facts we cannot change. The girl is dead.

That is real. Jesus is present. That is also real. They arrive at the house. There is mourning. There is weeping. There is the noise of grief.

Jesus enters the room where the child is lying.

Mark 5:41 says:

“And he took the damsel by the hand.”

There it is again.

Touch.

Numbers 19 told us what ordinarily happened when someone touched a dead body. The living person became ceremonially unclean. Jesus takes a dead child by the hand.

And what happens? “And said unto her, Talitha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise.”

Verse 42 says:

“And straightway the damsel arose, and walked.” Jesus touches death. And death does not win.

I want you to remember this sentence:

Jesus does not become contaminated by death. Death becomes contaminated with life. The dead girl gets up. There has never been another touch like the touch of Jesus Christ.

The leper. Touched by Jesus.

Clean.

The woman. Touches Jesus.

Whole.

The dead girl. Touched by Jesus.

Alive.

There is an additional detail in Mark's account that is easy to miss. The woman had suffered for twelve years. Verse 42 tells us the little girl was twelve years old.

For as long as that little girl had been alive, the woman had been suffering. One story concerns a woman whose life had been slowly drained for twelve years.

The other concerns a child whose entire life had lasted twelve years. One person is unnamed and nearly invisible in the crowd. The other is the daughter of a prominent synagogue ruler.

One problem is chronic and hidden. The other becomes sudden and public. One person reaches for Jesus. For the other, Jesus reaches down and takes her hand.

And He is sufficient for both. Jesus is not only the Savior of the prominent. He is not only the Savior of the forgotten.

He sees Jairus. He sees the unnamed woman. He sees the person in front of everyone. He sees the person trying to disappear into the crowd.

He is sufficient for the problem that has followed you for years. And He is sufficient when life changes in a single moment. This pattern appears again in Luke chapter 7.

Jesus touches the bier of a widow's dead son and commands him to arise. The young man sits up, and Jesus delivers him to his mother.

Again, His authority is joined to compassion. Death gives way to life. So now our original question has become a much bigger question. This is not merely a technical discussion about ceremonial law. The question beneath the question is:

Who is this Man? Who can touch what everyone else avoids? Who can encounter disease without being defeated by disease? Who can receive the touch of the unclean and send that person away whole?

Who can take death by the hand and make death surrender its victim? Who is Jesus? He is not simply another religious teacher.

He is not merely a good man trying to remain clean in an unclean world. He possesses authority over the things that make others unclean.

He has authority over disease. He has authority over ceremonial uncleanness. He has authority over death. And ultimately, He has authority over sin. These miracles are more than inspirational stories about kindness.

They reveal who Jesus is. The leper shows His authority to cleanse. The woman shows His power to make whole. The little girl shows the Lord of life confronting death.

His compassion matters, but His compassion is joined to divine authority. In John 11:25, Jesus says:

“I am the resurrection,
and the life:

he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.”

He does not merely say:

I know how resurrection works.

He says:

“I am the resurrection, and the life.” Life is not something Jesus borrows from a source outside Himself. He is the source. That is why death cannot ultimately overpower Him.

Now return with me once more to the dump areas in the Philippines. I could walk into those areas clean. I could hug someone.

I could shake someone's hand. I could sit beside someone. I could give someone food. I could give someone clean clothing. I could help someone wash.

But there was one thing I could never do. I could never make another person physically clean simply because I was clean. My cleanliness could not transfer to them.

Jesus could do what I could never do. The leper did not contaminate Jesus. Jesus cleansed the leper. The woman did not defeat Jesus with her uncleanness.

Power went from Jesus and healed her. The dead girl did not transfer death to Jesus. Jesus brought life to her. There has never been another touch like the touch of Jesus Christ.

And there is another lesson here for those of us who already know Christ. Jesus was not afraid to touch the unclean because His holiness was not fragile.

Think about that. His holiness was not fragile. Sometimes Christians can become so concerned about staying away from messy people that we forget Jesus went looking for them.

Jesus never compromised truth. Jesus never participated in sin. Jesus never lowered God's standard of holiness. But Jesus was willing to get close to hurting people.

He touched the leper. He allowed the bleeding woman to touch Him. He took the dead child by the hand. He touched the bier of the widow's son.

He sat with people religious leaders avoided. He ate with publicans and sinners. He did not approve of sin. He came to save sinners.

There is a difference. We must not confuse separation from sin with separation from sinners. We are called to be holy. We are not called to be unreachable.

We are called to refuse sin. We are not called to refuse compassion. We are called to speak truth.

We are not called to speak it from so great a distance that no hurting person can hear the love behind it.

I could not effectively preach Christ to people living among those trash heaps in the Philippines while standing somewhere clean and shouting at them from a distance. I had to go where they were.

Sometimes following Jesus means going where hurting people are. Not becoming like the world. Not participating in sin. Not compromising Scripture. But loving people enough to get close.

Ministry sometimes has a smell. Ministry sometimes leaves a mark on your clean shirt. Ministry sometimes interrupts your schedule. Ministry sometimes puts you beside someone whose life is not neat.

That does not make truth less important. It makes love more costly. Maybe the person everyone avoids is homeless. Maybe addiction, mental illness, poverty or a painful reputation has made conversation difficult.

Following Jesus does not mean pretending the mess is not real. It means refusing to believe the person in the mess no longer matters.

The Gospel was never intended only for people who already look clean. We should never celebrate sin or rename it to make it comfortable.

But neither should we communicate that Christ only receives people who have already repaired themselves. That would reverse the Gospel. Now we need to go deeper.

Our greatest problem is not physical dirt. It is not leprosy. It is not an issue of blood. It is not ceremonial uncleanness. Our greatest problem is sin.

Romans 3:23 says:

“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”

All.

That includes the person searching through a dump for food. And it includes the person sitting in a beautiful home with a full refrigerator.

It includes the person whose life looks completely broken. And it includes the person whose life looks perfectly organized. It includes the person wearing stained clothing.

And it includes the person dressed for church who knows exactly what to say. Sin does not always leave a visible stain. But every one of us has been stained by it.

The difference is that physical dirt can often be removed with water and soap. The guilt of sin cannot. You can take a shower.

You can change your clothes. You can improve your manners. You can adjust your habits. You can make promises. You can give money. You can join a church.

You can learn religious language. You can become better at hiding what is wrong. But none of those things can cleanse the guilt of sin.

Isaiah 64:6 says:

“But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.” Notice that Isaiah does not merely say our worst deeds are filthy.

He says even our righteousnesses cannot meet God's perfect standard. The best thing we offer cannot erase the wrong we have done.

One good deed cannot travel backward through time and undo a sinful deed. One act of generosity cannot cancel one act of rebellion against God.

We need more than improvement. We need cleansing. David understood that after his sin.

In Psalm 51:2 he prayed:

“Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.”

Then in verse 7:

“Purge me with hyssop,

and I shall be clean:

wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.”

David knew he could not simply tell himself:

I will try harder tomorrow. He needed God to cleanse him. And that brings us to the Cross. The One who touched the leper, the One whom the bleeding woman touched and the One who took the dead girl by the hand eventually allowed sinful men to take hold of Him. They arrested Him. They struck Him.

They mocked Him. They placed a crown of thorns upon His head. They drove nails through His hands and feet. And He went to the Cross carrying something far greater than ceremonial uncleanness.

He carried our sin.

Second Corinthians 5:21 says:

“For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

Jesus knew no sin. He did not become a sinner. Our corruption did not corrupt His character. He remained the spotless Son of God.

But He willingly bore our sin in our place.

Isaiah 53:5 says:

“But he was wounded for our transgressions,

he was bruised for our iniquities:

the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.”

Verse 6 says:

“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.”

First Peter 2:24 says:

“Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness:

by whose stripes ye were healed.” At the Cross, Jesus does not simply touch the consequences of a fallen world. He bears the penalty of sin.

He takes our place. He dies the death we deserved. Then they place His body in a tomb. And for a moment, it appears that death has finally touched Him and won.

But on the third day, the grave is empty. Death could not hold the Lord of life. The One who took the dead girl by the hand walked out of His own tomb.

The One who said, “I am the resurrection, and the life,” proved it. The resurrection is not an optional ending to the Gospel. It is the declaration that sin's payment was accepted, that Christ is who He claimed to be and that death does not have the final word. The leper became clean. The woman became whole.

The girl became alive. And through the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the sinner can be forgiven.

First John 1:7 says:

“the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.”

Not some sin. All sin.

Isaiah 1:18 says:

“Come now, and let us reason together,

saith the LORD:

though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”

That is not God telling us to pretend scarlet is white. That is God promising a cleansing only He can provide. And there is something very personal in all of this.

Maybe you are listening today and thinking:

Pastor, you do not know what I have done. You are right. I may not. But Jesus does. Maybe you think your life is too dirty.

Your past is too ugly. Your sin is too great. Your failures are too many. Maybe shame has taught you to hide.

Maybe religion has taught you that you must clean yourself before you approach God. Listen carefully. The leper did not clean himself and then approach Jesus.

He approached Jesus because he could not make himself clean. The woman did not heal herself and then touch Jesus. She touched Jesus because everything else had failed.

Jairus' daughter certainly did not raise herself from the dead and then take Jesus by the hand. She could do nothing for herself. Jesus did for her what she could never do for herself.

And that is the Gospel. You do not clean yourself so that you can come to Jesus. You come to Jesus because you need Him to make you clean.

Some people say:

I will come to church after I get my life together. I will trust Christ after I overcome this habit. I will talk to God after I fix what I have broken.

But if you could cleanse yourself, you would not need a Savior. The Gospel is not advice for people who need a little improvement.

It is good news for people who cannot save themselves.

Ephesians 2:8 and 9 says:

“For by grace are ye saved through faith;

and that not of yourselves:

it is the gift of God:

Not of works, lest any man should boast.” Salvation is not a reward for finally becoming clean enough. It is the gift of God received by faith in Jesus Christ.

You admit that you are a sinner. You believe that Jesus died for your sins, was buried and rose again.

You stop trusting your own goodness, your religion, your baptism, your church membership or anything else you have done. And you place your faith in Him.

Romans 10:9 says:

“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”

Verse 13 says:

“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

Whosoever.

The leper was not excluded. The woman was not overlooked. The grieving father was not turned away. And you are not beyond the reach of Christ.

There is no stain so deep that the blood of Jesus is insufficient. There is no past so complicated that Christ cannot forgive.

There is no spiritual death so complete that the Lord of life cannot save. That does not make sin small. It makes the Savior great.

And if you already know Christ, this message is not only about what Jesus did for you in the past. It asks what kind of church we will be in the present.

Will we be a church that reaches toward people others avoid? Will we speak truth without losing compassion? Will we protect holiness without turning holiness into pride?

Will we remember that the clean clothing we wear on Sunday does not make us spiritually superior to the person who arrives carrying visible scars?

Every believer in this room came to Jesus needing cleansing. Some stains were visible. Some were hidden. But every one of us needed the same blood.

That leaves no room for arrogance. The ground at the foot of the Cross is level. The person rescued from addiction is saved by grace.

The person raised in church is saved by grace. The person with a criminal record is saved by grace.

The person with a respected reputation is saved by grace.

No one arrives clean enough to boast. No one arrives so unclean that grace must surrender. There is also wisdom in the way Jesus ministered.

His compassion did not make Him careless. His nearness to sinners did not make Him join their sin.

His holiness was not fragile, but it was real.

So when we move toward hurting people, we do not abandon Biblical boundaries. We do not call evil good. We do not participate in what Christ came to save people from.

We go near without going along. We carry truth and compassion together. Truth without compassion can become a weapon. Compassion without truth can become permission to remain in bondage.

Jesus brings both. He says to the leper, "I will; be thou clean." He says to the woman, "Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole."

He says to the dead girl,

"Arise."

He does not leave people as He found them. His touch changes things.

So ask yourself:

Who is the person I instinctively avoid? Who have I reduced to a label rather than seeing as a person made in the image of God?

You may not be able to solve every problem. I could not end poverty in those dump areas or guarantee that everyone would have enough food the next day.

But I could go. I could listen. I could share what we had. I could tell someone about Jesus. You may not be able to repair someone's entire life,

but you can learn a name, listen without recoiling, offer practical help, pray and point to the One whose touch cleanses.

And remember the words of Hebrews 4:15:

"For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities." Jesus is not distant from human suffering.

The One who touches the unclean is also touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He knows pain. He knows rejection. He knows weariness.

He knows grief. He knows what it is to be surrounded by people who misunderstand Him. Yet He remains without sin.

That means we do not come to a Savior who is unable to understand weakness. We come boldly to a High Priest who knows, cares and is able to save.

I want to return one final time to the question that began this study. In Biblical times, when the unclean touched the clean, the clean could become unclean.

But when Jesus encountered the unclean, the direction seemed to reverse.

Why?

Because Jesus is not merely one more clean object in an unclean world. He is the Holy Son of God. He is the source of cleansing.

He is the source of healing. He is the source of life. The Law could identify uncleanness. The priest could examine it. The community could respond to it.

But Jesus could cleanse it. The physicians could describe the woman's condition. They could attempt to treat it. But Jesus made her whole. The mourners could confirm that the little girl was dead.

They could weep. They could prepare for burial. But Jesus took her by the hand and told her to arise. And religion may help you recognize that sin is real.

Your conscience may tell you that something is wrong. The consequences of your choices may remind you that sin destroys. But only Jesus can save you.

The question is not whether you are clean enough to touch Jesus. You are not. Neither am I. The question is whether you will come to the One who can cleanse you.

If you have never trusted Jesus Christ as your Savior, this is your opportunity. I am not asking you to become religious.

I am not asking you to promise that you will never fail again. I am not asking you to place faith in a church, a pastor or a prayer.

I am asking you to place your faith in Jesus Christ. He died for your sins. He was buried. He rose again. He offers forgiveness as a gift of grace.

You can call upon Him right where you are. A prayer does not become a magical formula. The words themselves do not save. Jesus saves.

But prayer can be the honest expression of a heart that is turning to Him in faith. If that is the desire of your heart,

you might pray something like this:

Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner. I know that I cannot cleanse myself from my sin. I believe that You died on the Cross for me, that You were buried

and that You rose again. I turn from trusting myself and place my faith in You. Please forgive me, save me and make me the person You want me to be.

Thank You for doing for me what I could never do for myself.

Amen.

If you prayed that prayer from a heart of faith, or if you have questions about salvation, please speak with me before you leave.

Do not walk away with the most important question of your life unanswered. We would be honored to open the Bible with you. We would be honored to pray with you.

And we would be honored to help you begin growing in your relationship with Christ. For those of us who already know Christ, I want to leave you with two responsibilities.

First, remember how you became clean. You did not earn it. You did not produce it. You did not impress God into forgiving you.

The blood of Jesus Christ cleansed you from sin. Live gratefully. Live humbly. Live holy because you have been saved, not in an attempt to save yourself.

Second, carry the message of cleansing to someone who believes he or she is untouchable. Look for the person everyone else overlooks. Look for the person whose life is messy.

Look for the person who assumes church is only for people who already have everything together.

You do not have to approve of someone's sin to love that person.

You do not have to compromise Scripture to sit beside someone who is hurting. Jesus never compromised holiness. But His holiness never prevented Him from reaching out His hand.

When you leave today, do not merely remember an interesting observation about clean and unclean things. Remember the leper who heard Jesus say,

“I will.”

Remember the woman who reached through the crowd and heard Jesus call her,

“Daughter.”

Remember the father who heard, “Be not afraid, only believe.” Remember the little girl who felt the hand of Jesus and heard the command,

“Arise.”

And remember the Cross, where the sinless One bore our sins so that the guilty could be forgiven.

There has never been another touch like the touch of Jesus Christ.

The touch that cleansed the leper. The touch that healed the woman. The touch that raised the dead.
And the grace that still cleanses sinners today.

Let us pray.

Father,

thank You for Your Word. Thank You for showing us that ceremonial uncleanness and moral sin are not the same thing. Thank You for the Law that helps us understand separation, cleansing and the seriousness of approaching a holy God. Most of all, thank You for Jesus. Thank You that He was not afraid to reach toward the people others avoided.

Thank You that His holiness was not fragile. Thank You that disease could not overcome Him, uncleanness could not defeat Him and death could not hold Him.

Thank You that He bore our sins in His own body on the tree. Thank You that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin.

For anyone who has trusted Christ today, give assurance through Your Word. Help that person take the next step of obedience. Surround that person with believers who will teach truth, show love and encourage growth. For those who already know You, forgive us for the times we have treated hurting people as problems rather than people.

Forgive us when pride has made us forget how much grace we needed. Give us wisdom to remain separate from sin while moving toward sinners with the Gospel.

Give us courage to enter difficult places. Give us compassion when ministry is inconvenient. Give us discernment so that truth and love remain together.

And help Reason Together Church always be a place where people can bring their questions, open the Bible and discover the cleansing that is found in Jesus Christ.

We ask these things in His name.

Amen.

Before we leave, let me give you one practical way to carry this message into the week. Tell someone the question.

Ask them:

“If touching the unclean could make the clean unclean, why did the opposite happen when Jesus touched the unclean?” Then open the Bible with them.

Show them the leper in Matthew 8. Show them the woman and Jairus' daughter in Mark 5. Show them the Cross in Second Corinthians 5:21.

And show them the promise in First John 1:7 that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin. You do not need to repeat every word of this sermon.

Simply share what Christ has shown you. And as you share it, remember that there may be someone in your life who already feels unclean.

Do not use the message to push that person farther away. Use it to point toward Jesus. After the service, please join us at the Reason Together Café.

COFFEE reminds us that Christ Offers Forgiveness For Everyone Everywhere. The coffee is free, and so are the refills on the conversations. I would be glad to answer questions, pray with you or simply spend a little time getting to know you.

Bring your questions.

Open your Bible.

Let's Reason Together the Word of God.

May the Lord bless thee,
and keep thee.

May the Lord make his face shine upon thee,
and be gracious unto thee.

May the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee,
and give thee peace.

Aloha Nui Loa.

REASON TOGETHER STUDIES

PASTOR'S COMMENTARY

THE TOUCH THAT CLEANSED

Haggai 2:11-13; Matthew 8:1-4; Mark 5:25-43

And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. Matthew 8:3

Dr. Thomas W. Hawksley

Pastor & Teacher

Commentary in Brief

CENTRAL CONCLUSION The Old Testament ceremonial system teaches that uncleanness could be transmitted through contact, while holiness was not ordinarily transferred in the same way. The Gospel accounts then present Jesus as the decisive exception in effect: the leper is cleansed when Jesus touches him, the woman with the issue of blood is healed when she touches Jesus and the dead child rises when Jesus takes her by the hand. The emphasis is not that ritual impurity itself was sinful or that every technical purity question is answered in the narratives. The emphasis is that uncleanness, sickness and death do not master Jesus. He masters them. These scenes therefore reveal the identity and authority of Christ and prepare the way for the greater Gospel truth that His blood cleanses from sin.

This Commentary explains the Biblical, theological and pastoral reasoning behind the sermon “The Touch That Cleansed.” The study begins with a simple observation about the direction in which physical dirt normally travels. A clean person who embraces someone covered in soot becomes dirty; the dirty person does not become clean merely because the other person was clean. The Old Testament purity system contains a comparable legal direction in Haggai 2:11-13, where the priests affirm that uncleanness can be communicated by contact but holiness is not transmitted merely by touching ordinary food.

The Gospel narratives make that background especially meaningful. Jesus reaches toward the leper rather than away from him. A woman whose condition made her ceremonially unclean reaches through the crowd and touches Jesus. Jesus later takes a dead girl by the hand even though corpse contact is a major source of ceremonial uncleanness in Numbers 19. In every scene the Gospel writer focuses on what happens to the afflicted person: cleansing, healing and life.

A careful presentation must preserve an important distinction. Ceremonial uncleanness is not identical with moral guilt. A person could become unclean through childbirth, a bodily condition or contact with the dead without having committed a moral sin. Therefore the sermon does not need to claim that Jesus could never have become ritually unclean because He was sinless. Scripture does not make that argument. The stronger argument stays with what the text emphasizes: Jesus possesses authority over the conditions associated with uncleanness.

The Gospel destination is larger than ceremonial purity. The listener is eventually brought from leprosy, bleeding and death to the universal problem of sin. The leper cannot cleanse himself. The woman cannot heal herself. The dead girl cannot restore her own life. In the same way, the sinner cannot wash away guilt through moral improvement or religion. The same Christ who touched the unclean went to Calvary, bore our sins and offers cleansing through His blood.

1. The Title and the Submitted Question

The title “The Touch That Cleansed” is intentionally shorter than the full RTS question. It works because it creates curiosity without giving away the argument. The title can refer immediately to Matthew 8, where Jesus touches the leper, but by the end of the sermon it also applies to the woman, Jairus’ daughter and ultimately to the cleansing offered through Christ.

The submitted question should be preserved near the beginning in recognizable form: if touching something unclean could make the clean thing unclean, why did the opposite seem to happen when Jesus touched the unclean? That wording is useful because it creates a genuine puzzle. The sermon should then test the premise instead of merely repeating a clever observation. This is an important Reason Together method: an interesting statement becomes the starting point for opening the Bible, defining terms and checking whether the conclusion can actually be sustained.

2. What “Unclean” Means in the Law

The English word unclean can mislead a modern listener because it often sounds morally condemnatory. In the Mosaic system, however, ritual or ceremonial uncleanness could arise from ordinary features of life in a mortal world. The Law includes bodily discharges, childbirth, certain skin diseases and contact with death among the conditions that could make someone unclean for a period of time.

This ceremonial status affected access to sacred space, worship participation and community life until the prescribed period or cleansing procedure was completed. That system taught Israel to distinguish holy from common and clean from unclean. It also surrounded worship with reminders that God is holy and that death, corruption and bodily disorder do not belong to the final perfection of His creation.

The Commentary should resist the temptation to flatten all Biblical uses of unclean into a single moral category. Context controls meaning. Sometimes Scripture uses uncleanness morally. In the passages governing ritual purity, however, the legal category itself is not proof of personal wickedness.

3. Ceremonial Uncleanness Is Not Automatically Sin

“He that toucheth the dead body of any man shall be unclean seven days.” **Numbers 19:11 KJV**

Numbers 19 provides the clearest illustration for the sermon. A person could become unclean by touching a corpse. That fact alone did not mean the person had sinned. Someone had to care for the dead. Someone had to prepare and bury a loved one. The Law acknowledged the uncleanness associated with death without teaching that every such contact was morally wrong.

This distinction protects the doctrine of Christ’s sinlessness from an unnecessary argument. Hebrews 4:15 says that Jesus was “yet without sin.” First Peter 2:22 says He “did no sin.” Those are absolute moral

statements. They do not require the preacher to turn every ritual-purity category into a sin category. The sermon can affirm Christ's perfect holiness without pretending that the Gospel writers answer every technical purity-law question generated by His healings.

A useful sentence for teaching is: ceremonial uncleanness could restrict worship without proving moral guilt. That simple distinction helps listeners avoid confusing ritual status with personal wickedness.

4. Haggai 2:11-13 and the Direction of Defilement

Haggai 2:11-13 is the key Old Testament hinge for the study. The prophet is told to ask the priests about the Law. First he asks whether holy meat carried in the fold of a garment makes bread, stew, wine, oil or other food holy simply because the garment touches it. The priests answer no. He then asks whether a person unclean through contact with a dead body makes those foods unclean by touching them. The priests answer yes.

The prophetic context concerns the uncleanness of the people and the work of their hands, but the legal principle used in the illustration is exactly what matters for the sermon. Holiness is not treated as something that casually spreads from object to object through ordinary contact. Uncleanness can be transmitted.

This is why the physical-dirt illustration works so well. The illustration is not offered as a technical explanation of Haggai; it simply gives the congregation an intuitive picture of direction. Dirt gets on clean clothing. Clean clothing does not ordinarily clean dirt by touching it. Haggai then shows that the ritual system contains a comparable asymmetry.

5. The Philippines Dump-Area Illustration

The personal account from the Philippines should remain vivid but carefully framed. The people in the dump areas spent their lives searching enormous trash heaps for food and for anything that could help them survive another day. This was not a normal work shift followed by a return to comfortable homes. For many, searching the refuse was the daily struggle to find enough to eat.

The physical contrast serves the sermon. The preacher entered after showering with soap and shampoo and wearing clean clothes. The people he met had been climbing through garbage, soot and residue. A handshake, embrace or child leaning against him could immediately transfer dirt to his clothing, sometimes leaving stains that ordinary washing could not fully remove. Yet his cleanliness never rubbed off on them.

The pastoral guardrail must be stated as clearly as the illustration itself. Poverty did not make those people spiritually inferior. Dirt did not make them less valuable to God. The ministry went into those communities because the people mattered to God. The illustration is about physical transfer, not moral worth. This clarification prevents the sermon from accidentally associating economic poverty with sinfulness.

6. Leprosy as Medical, Social and Ceremonial Burden

Leviticus 13 and 14 establish the legal background for the person described as a leper in Matthew 8. The Biblical category translated leprosy in the KJV is broader than the modern medical diagnosis known as Hansen's disease. The sermon therefore should not make unnecessary claims about the exact modern diagnosis. The central Biblical point is that the condition placed the sufferer within a regulated category of uncleanness and could involve separation from ordinary community life.

“And the leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, Unclean, unclean.” **Leviticus 13:45 KJV**

The command to cry “Unclean, unclean” supplies the emotional background for Matthew 8. The condition was not hidden. It could become a public identity. People approaching the sufferer were warned. The social cost of that reality makes Jesus' deliberate touch especially powerful.

7. Matthew 8:1-4: Jesus Reaches Toward the Leper

“Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.” **Matthew 8:2 KJV**

The leper approaches Jesus with confidence in His ability. His uncertainty concerns willingness. He does not say, “If You can.” He says, “If You will.” That distinction creates an important pastoral moment. Many people believe in the abstract power of God while wondering whether Christ would receive someone with their history, condition or shame.

“And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.” **Matthew 8:3 KJV**

The touch is not necessary as a mechanical part of the miracle. The Gospels repeatedly show Jesus healing through command and at a distance. Therefore Matthew's mention of the touch deserves attention. Jesus does not merely heal the man. He reaches toward a person whose condition had taught everyone else to keep away.

The result gives the sermon its title. The narrative does not dwell on contamination of Jesus. It dwells on the cleansing of the leper. The one called unclean is now clean. The direction of the story is from Christ to the sufferer.

8. “I Will”: Ability and Willingness

The words “I will” are easily overlooked because the miracle itself is dramatic. Yet they are pastorally rich. The leper already believes that Jesus possesses the ability to cleanse him. His question concerns whether Jesus is willing to extend that power toward him. Christ answers directly.

This does not create a promise that every physical illness will be healed immediately when someone asks. The passage is not a universal healing formula. It reveals Christ's compassion and authority in this particular encounter. The Gospel application must move from physical healing to the certain promise of salvation to those who come to Christ in faith.

9. Mark 5 Uses One Story Inside Another

Mark 5:21-43 places the woman with the issue of blood inside the story of Jairus and his daughter. Jesus begins moving toward one desperate need, appears to be interrupted by another and then arrives after the first situation has become humanly irreversible. This literary arrangement allows the Gospel to display Christ's authority at escalating levels.

Jairus asks Jesus to lay hands on his daughter. The woman reaches out to touch Jesus' clothing. Jesus finally takes the dead girl by the hand. Touch is therefore not a minor incidental feature of the chapter. The repeated physical contact reinforces the theme that makes this RTS question so compelling.

10. The Woman with the Issue of Blood

Mark describes twelve years of suffering. She has sought physicians, spent what she had and grown worse rather than better. The sermon should let the duration carry emotional weight. Twelve years is not an afternoon of discomfort. It is more than four thousand mornings of waking to the same unresolved problem.

Leviticus 15 supplies the ceremonial background. A prolonged flow of blood placed a woman in a state of uncleanness and affected objects and contact around her. The text therefore gives the listener another encounter in which the ordinary concern would be transmission from the unclean condition outward.

Yet she has heard of Jesus. Her conclusion is simple: "If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole." The narrative now reverses Matthew 8. Jesus is not the one initiating the touch. She reaches toward Him.

11. What Goes Out from Jesus

"And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague." Mark 5:29 KJV

The woman's condition does not become the dominant force in the encounter. She becomes whole. Mark then tells us that Jesus knew "virtue had gone out of him." The KJV use of virtue here carries the sense of power. The point is not that Jesus has been morally depleted. Healing power has gone from Him to her.

This gives the sermon another version of the central reversal. The expected direction of defilement is not the story Mark emphasizes. What moves from Jesus to the woman is healing.

12. “Daughter”: More Than a Medical Cure

“Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague.” **Mark 5:34**
KJV

Jesus’ address matters. He calls her “Daughter.” The woman who had been defined for years by a condition is addressed relationally. The scene therefore combines authority with tenderness. Jesus does not treat sufferers as case studies. He sees persons.

The sermon can use this moment to challenge the church. A Biblical ministry may speak accurately about sin, disease, impurity and consequences while still speaking to people with dignity. Truth and compassion are not competitors in the ministry of Christ.

13. The Twelve-Year Connection

Mark records that the woman had suffered twelve years and that Jairus’ daughter was twelve years old. The juxtaposition is striking. One life has been marked by suffering for the entire span of another child’s life. While one family watched a girl grow for twelve years, another woman endured twelve years of decline.

The number should not be turned into an elaborate hidden code. Mark does not instruct the reader to construct a numerological system. The simple narrative connection is enough. Jesus is sufficient for suffering that has lasted a long time and for a crisis that has suddenly reached death.

14. Jairus Learns That Delay Is Not Defeat

From Jairus’ perspective, the interruption must have been agonizing. His daughter is dying while Jesus stops to identify the woman who touched Him. Then the feared message arrives: “Thy daughter is dead: why troublest thou the Master any further?” Humanly, the situation has crossed a boundary.

This creates a powerful pastoral observation. People often draw lines beyond which they assume even God will not act: too damaged, too late, too guilty, too dead. The narrative does not promise that Christ will reverse every earthly tragedy in the present age, but it does reveal that death itself does not lie outside His authority.

15. Numbers 19 and Contact with Death

Numbers 19 treats corpse contact as a major source of ritual uncleanness. Death is therefore the strongest form of the study’s escalating imagery. Jesus is no longer touching a living sufferer with a skin condition or being touched by a living woman with a bodily discharge. He enters a room where a child has died and takes her hand.

“And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise.” **Mark 5:41 KJV**

The result is immediate. The girl rises and walks. The story does not portray Jesus as one more living person overcome by contact with death. It portrays death yielding to the command of Christ.

16. “Death Becomes Contaminated with Life”

The sermon line “Jesus does not become contaminated by death. Death becomes contaminated with life” is intentionally rhetorical. It should be understood as a preaching metaphor, not as a technical doctrinal statement that death is literally a substance capable of ritual contamination in reverse.

The line works because it captures the narrative reversal in memorable form. Normally the living person touching a corpse becomes unclean. Here the dead child becomes alive. The metaphor should serve the text rather than become a new theological category.

17. The Question Beneath the Question: Who Is Jesus?

At this point the sermon should deliberately broaden the question. The RTS began by asking how clean and unclean interact. The Gospel accounts force a larger question: who possesses authority like this? Ordinary people cannot cleanse leprosy by touch, end twelve years of bleeding by being touched or raise a dead child by taking her hand.

The miracles therefore function Christologically. They reveal that Jesus is not merely a ceremonially clean man navigating an unclean environment. He is the One in whom divine authority over sickness, impurity and death is displayed. The proper response is not merely fascination with ritual law. It is worship of Christ.

18. Did Jesus Technically Become Ritually Unclean?

This is the question most likely to arise from careful listeners, and the Commentary should answer it with restraint. The Gospel texts do not pause to give a technical purity ruling after each contact. They emphasize the healing and restoration of the afflicted person. Because ritual uncleanness itself was not necessarily sin, Christ’s moral perfection does not require the preacher to prove that He could never enter any ritual state of uncleanness.

Several observations keep the sermon secure. First, Jesus never sins. Second, He does not treat the Mosaic Law contemptuously; in Matthew 8:4 He tells the cleansed man to show himself to the priest and offer the gift Moses commanded. Third, the narrative emphasis is that the condition is removed. Fourth, the study’s central conclusion does not depend on settling the timing of every technical purity status.

Therefore the safest wording is not “Jesus could not possibly become ritually unclean.” The safer and stronger wording is: the Gospels do not present uncleanness as overcoming Jesus; they present Jesus as overcoming the condition that made the person unclean.

19. Matthew 8:4 Shows Respect for the Law

*“See thou tell no man; but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.” **Matthew 8:4 KJV***

This verse is important because it prevents the sermon from sounding as though Jesus simply ignores the ceremonial system. He sends the cleansed leper into the procedure prescribed by Moses. The miracle demonstrates Christ’s authority, but the instruction also acknowledges the Law’s public process for confirming cleansing and restoring the man to community life.

The study therefore should not frame Jesus as “breaking the clean and unclean rules.” The more accurate claim is that His presence changes the condition that required the rule.

20. His Holiness Was Not Fragile

“His holiness was not fragile” is one of the sermon’s strongest pastoral lines. It does not mean Christians should become careless about temptation or deliberately expose themselves to sin. Scripture repeatedly commands believers to flee temptation and pursue holiness. The line means that Jesus’ holiness did not require emotional distance from broken people.

Christ could move toward the person others avoided without compromising truth. He could touch a leper, receive a suffering woman and enter a house of mourning. Holiness in Jesus was not a thin coating that human misery could rub away. His holiness shaped the encounter.

21. Separation from Sin Is Not Separation from Sinners

Churches can sometimes confuse Biblical separation from sin with social avoidance of people whose lives are visibly messy. Jesus never participated in sin, excused sin or altered truth to make sin comfortable. Yet His ministry repeatedly placed Him near people whom respectable society could avoid.

This application must be balanced. Christians are not called to enter every dangerous environment indiscriminately or pretend that influence only travels one way. We are vulnerable people, not incarnate holiness. Nevertheless, the church cannot carry the Gospel to hurting people while making personal comfort the highest priority. The Philippines story makes this practical: it is difficult to tell people in a dump that Christ loves them while refusing to get close enough for them to touch you.

22. From Ritual Uncleaness to the Human Problem of Sin

The sermon must eventually distinguish its illustration from its Gospel conclusion. Leprosy is not sin. A bodily discharge is not automatically sin. Death itself is an enemy produced by the fallen condition of the world, but a dead child is not morally guilty because she is dead. The study does not equate each physical condition with personal wrongdoing.

Instead, these categories create a vocabulary of cleansing, separation, corruption and restoration that prepares the listener to understand a greater need. Romans 3:23 states the universal moral problem: “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” Isaiah 64:6 uses uncleanness imagery when it says, “we are all as an unclean thing.”

The Gospel bridge is therefore analogical rather than accusatory. The suffering people in the narratives are not examples of sinners being punished with uncleanness. They are examples of people unable to solve their condition who encounter the One who can.

23. The Cross Is the Ultimate Cleansing

“For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” 2 Corinthians 5:21 KJV

Second Corinthians 5:21 provides the strongest transition to Calvary. Jesus “knew no sin,” yet He stands in the place of sinners so that they might be made righteous in Him. The verse must not be explained as though Christ became personally sinful. The sinless One bears the judgment and consequence of our sin in His substitutionary work.

“Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness.” 1 Peter 2:24 KJV

“The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” 1 John 1:7 KJV

The progression of the sermon now becomes clear. The leper needs cleansing. The woman needs healing. The child needs life. The sinner needs forgiveness and reconciliation to God. Christ is sufficient in every scene, but the Cross addresses the deepest need.

24. You Do Not Clean Yourself Before Coming to Christ

This is the primary salvation application. Human religion often reverses the Gospel by telling people, explicitly or implicitly, to improve themselves enough to become acceptable to God. The Gospel says that sinners come because they cannot cleanse themselves.

The leper did not become clean and then approach Jesus. The woman did not solve her condition and then reach for His garment. The dead girl contributed nothing to her resurrection. Each scene demonstrates dependence on power outside the sufferer. The sinner likewise depends upon Christ.

The sermon line should remain direct: “You do not clean yourself so that you can come to Jesus. You come to Jesus because you need Him to make you clean.” This is not permission to remain in sin after conversion. It is a rejection of self-salvation as the price of approaching Christ.

25. Questions and Clarifications

Was every unclean person a sinner? No. Ceremonial uncleanness could result from ordinary bodily conditions or contact with death. Moral sin and ritual uncleanness overlap in some Biblical imagery, but they are not interchangeable categories.

Did Jesus violate the Law by touching the leper? Matthew does not present the act as sinful lawbreaking. After cleansing the man, Jesus specifically directs him to the priest and to the Mosaic offering in Matthew 8:4. The narrative emphasizes Christ’s authority and the man’s cleansing.

Does the sermon have to prove that Jesus never became ritually unclean? No. The study does not depend on that claim. Ritual uncleanness itself was not automatically sin, and the Gospel accounts emphasize that Jesus removes the condition afflicting the person.

Why use Haggai 2? Because Haggai explicitly contrasts the non-transfer of holiness by ordinary contact with the transfer of uncleanness. It supplies the cleanest Old Testament statement of the directional principle behind the submitted question.

Is the Philippines illustration comparing poor people to sinners? No. It must be explicitly identified as a physical illustration about dirt transferring to clean clothing. The people’s poverty or physical condition did not reduce their spiritual worth.

Is “death becomes contaminated with life” literal doctrine? No. It is a rhetorical preaching line that memorably expresses what happens in Mark 5: Jesus touches the dead child and she rises. The doctrinal point is Christ’s authority over death.

Does Jesus promise immediate physical healing to everyone who has faith? No. These narratives reveal His authority and compassion, but they do not establish a promise that every illness will be healed immediately in this life. The Gospel promise of forgiveness and eternal life through Christ is the certain salvation application.

26. Preaching Guardrails

- Do distinguish ceremonial uncleanness from moral guilt early in the message.

- Do not call the Philippines dump-area residents spiritually unclean because of poverty, smell or physical dirt.
- Do not claim that Biblical leprosy can always be identified with one modern medical diagnosis.
- Do not say that Jesus broke the Mosaic Law. Matthew 8:4 shows Him directing the healed man to the priest and the commanded offering.
- Do not make the sermon depend upon proving that Jesus could never technically enter a state of ritual uncleanness.
- Do emphasize the direction of each Gospel narrative: leper to clean, suffering woman to whole, dead child to alive.
- Do treat the “death contaminated with life” line as rhetoric, not as a new technical doctrine.
- Do preserve the distinction between compassion for sinners and participation in sin.
- Do move the message to the Cross. The sermon is incomplete if it remains only an interesting study of ritual purity.
- Do make the salvation invitation unmistakable: sinners do not cleanse themselves before coming to Christ.

27. Application Bank

- Ask whether you have allowed another person’s visible mess to become an excuse for avoiding Gospel ministry.
- Remember that a person’s suffering, poverty, illness or appearance does not determine his or her value before God.
- When discussing holiness, distinguish refusing sin from refusing sinners.
- Approach Christ with the confidence of the leper: He is able to cleanse.
- When a situation feels delayed beyond hope, remember Jairus. Christ’s authority is not limited by the boundary humans call too late.
- Share the study with someone who believes he or she must become morally presentable before coming to Jesus.
- Use the phrase “His holiness was not fragile” to explain why Biblical holiness can coexist with courageous compassion.

- Keep the final emphasis on Christ rather than on the ritual system. The Law provides the background; Jesus is the center.

28. Suggested Study Summary

The Old Testament teaches Israel to distinguish clean from unclean and shows that uncleanness can be transmitted through contact. Haggai 2 makes the contrast especially clear. The Gospels then place Jesus in direct contact with the very conditions that would normally cause separation: leprosy, prolonged bleeding and death. In each case, the narrative moves toward cleansing, wholeness or life. The stories reveal that Christ is not overcome by the brokenness He enters. He exercises authority over it.

That pattern reaches its deepest meaning at Calvary. Jesus, who knew no sin, bore our sins in His own body on the tree. The Gospel therefore does not tell sinners to become clean enough to approach Christ. It tells sinners to come to the One whose blood cleanses from all sin.

29. Final Pastoral Emphasis

The submitted question begins as a curiosity about clean and unclean, but it should end with a person standing before Christ. The leper had a condition he could not remove. The woman had exhausted her resources. The child had passed beyond any ability to help herself. Jesus was sufficient for each one.

The final pastoral question is therefore not, “Are you clean enough to touch Jesus?” The Gospel answer to that question is already no. The question is whether you will come to the One who can cleanse you. And for the believer, the accompanying question is whether the holiness of Christ in us will move us toward people who need the Gospel or become an excuse for keeping them at a comfortable distance.