

Sixth Sunday after Epiphany

A person with leprosy approached Jesus, knelt down and begged, "If you are willing, you can heal me."

Explore

—Mark 1:40 The Inclusive New Testament

Bible Turn Mourning into Dancing
Read Psalm 30:4–5, 11–12. Together with your class, read the passage with rhythm and action. Practice it until you can teach it to the rest of the congregation, and, if possible, lead it as the call to worship for today's worship service.

Extract

Bible A Commander and a Leper
Divide the class into two groups. If the class is small, do both stories, but be creative in how you tell them. Have one group read Mark 1:40–45 (1:36–40 IV) and the other group read II Kings 5:1–14. Have each group decide the best way to tell their story and its message to the other group—read it, tell it, or act it out—than have the class answer these questions:

1. After Jesus healed the leprosy man (in Mark) he instructed him to offer what Moses had commanded for a cleansing ritual. (Read about the ritual in Leviticus 14:1–32.) Jesus told the man to do this as a "testimony to them." What do you think this means?
2. How did the leper's behavior affect Jesus' ministry?
3. How does the story of Naaman (in II Kings) suggest that God is the God of all and not just of the Israelites?
4. After one is touched by the Spirit, why is it difficult to keep quiet?

Experience

Letting God

Naaman had a little problem. He wanted to be healed his way. Thanks to a wise servant, Naaman reconsidered the instructions given to him by Elisha and was healed. On the other hand, the leper who came to Jesus seeking healing did not give any criteria for the healing. He came expectantly and received. Does pride sometimes get in the way just as it did with Naaman? Do we dictate just how we want healing to occur? Discuss.

God is available when we ask for healing, but our scope of understanding is limited. We try to define the healing the way we expect it to be. However, healing is not always apparent. Faith is important and understanding that the healing is taking place in God's way, not ours, is important too. God's healing is for everyone who seeks it, and our observation of restored health of mind, body, or spirit is not an indication that God has preferences of one person over another. Discuss the following questions:

1. How do you know God's healing is available?
2. Do you try to dictate to God how you want things to be done?
3. How can you share your witness to others through God's healing experiences?

Lay Your Hands

Listen to “Lay Your Hands” from the *Sing a New Song* CD or sing/read the words from NS 27. Invite an elder to class, and ask them to share insights into the process involved in the sacrament of administration/laying on of hands. If not covered in the elder’s sharing, discuss the responsibilities of the elder and of the person requesting administration. Discuss how preparation for laying on of hands and the other sacraments of the church—baptism, confirmation, Communion, ordination, blessing of children, marriage, and evangelist’s blessing—allow for a greater degree of God’s presence.

Sing a New Song
book or CD, CD
player, an elder,
paper, pens or
pencils

At the conclusion of the visit and the discussion, challenge the class to write additional verses to “Lay Your Hands.” Divide the class into writing teams, and suggest they incorporate ideas unique to their community. Come together to sing or read the verses. Musicians in the group may want to do some variations on the musical theme, too.

Expand

From Me to We

In 1995 Craig Kielburger read the morning paper as he always did to enjoy the comics, but on this day his eyes fell on an article about a twelve-year-old boy from Pakistan. This boy was Craig’s age. As he read, he learned that the boy had been sold into slavery when he was four and chained to a carpet loom to work twelve hours a day tying knots. At the age of ten, the boy was able to escape, but was murdered later for speaking out about the exploitation of children. Craig knew he had to do something. He took the story to his classmates at school. Together, this compassionate group of friends went into action and founded an organization for children to help children. For Craig and his friends, *Free the Children* became the passion in their compassion.

Craig Kielburger and *Free the Children* were recipients of the Community of Christ International Peace Award in 2005 at the International Youth Forum (IYF). In Craig’s acknowledgment of the award, he quoted Archbishop Oscar Romero, an advocate for the poor.

“We who have a voice must be the voice for the voiceless.”¹

He also quoted anthropologist Margaret Mead.

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

Craig introduced the audience to the word *minga*, a Puruhae Indian word that has no direct English translation but means community coming together to work for the benefit of all. Today, Community of Christ emphasizes Stewardship Accounting Day. Ask: Do we do the best we can, accounting for our time, gifts, and possessions? Are they used wisely? Are we open to change, alternative ways, better ways that will allow a more positive, uplifting lifestyle for ourselves, those around us, and those far away? How can our hearts be opened? Design and carry out an “Open-Heart Project” of your own making.

paper, pens

Can you think of a term that is similar to “minga”? What is the word? Close with prayer focusing on healing and compassion for all.

¹ Craig and Marc Kielburger, *Me to We: Turning Self Help on Its Head* (John Wiley and Sons Canada, Ltd., 2004), 83–88.

Lectionary scriptures—II Kings 5:1–14; Psalm 30; I Corinthians 9:24–27;
Mark 1:36–40 IV/1:40–45