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Before Jesus healed he felt this

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When two blind men cried out to Jesus, the crowd saw them as intruders--irritants they brushed aside like pesky flies. Jesus viewed them differently. Matthew tells us: "Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes. Immediately they received their sight and followed him." (Matthew 20:34).

The Leper

On another occasion a leprous man approached Jesus, fell on his knees, and begged for healing (Mark 1:40-45). Leprosy destroys the nervous system wiping out the sense of touch and pain. Unaware of an injury a leper wouldn't protect a wound allowing infection to set in. In advanced stages, the disease covers a man with pus-filled wounds and white shiny spots sometimes resulting in the loss of a hand, arm, or leg.

Ceremonial law demanded a leper wear "torn clothes, let his hair be unkempt, cover the lower part of his face and cry out, 'Unclean! Unclean!'" (Leviticus 13:45). A leper's touch transferred defilement to the one touched. Because of this, lepers lived in isolation outside a city.

He Touched Him First

Instead of keeping his distance from Jesus, or warning that he was unclean, the leper fell on his knees before the Lord--a violation of cultural norms. At that moment Jesus did the unthinkable. He touched the leper *and then* healed him. Most people would have performed the miracle first and then touched the man. Upon reading that I wondered why Jesus touched him first? I suspect, moved by compassion, he realized the man hadn't felt the warmth of a human touch in decades. He knew the man needed acceptance more than healing.

More Compassion

I sometimes pray the Lord will give me more healing power. And yet, after reading this story maybe I should ask for more compassion. After all, the Lord's mercy and healing power flowed from compassion. While we may not encounter a leper, we are surrounded by wounded and hurting people who live in isolation. People who feel like outcasts.

Folks we resist touching. For them we need compassion. The kind of compassion that grows as we listen and seek to understand rather than be understood. A compassion that expands as we ask God to help us enter into their pain. This is the emotion that touched Jesus before he touched and then healed a blind man and leper.