

## BIBLE TIMELINE ASSEMBLIES

### 60. THE TOUCH OF JESUS

Bible Base: Mark 1: 40-45

Key Christian Belief: Jesus is able to make us 'clean'.

Aim: To show that Jesus cares about everyone and to encourage the children to do the same.

#### Introduction

Ask for three volunteers to take part in a 'bush tucker trial'. Have three bowls hidden under a tea towel. Each volunteer puts his / her hand under the tea towel and into one of the bowls, in order to identify what is in the bowl by touch alone. The contents of the bowls are as follows: custard, raw egg, baked beans.

Point out that some things are not nice to touch - e.g. worms, dirty nappy, dead mouse.

There were people who lived in Jesus day that no one would touch. They had a terrible skin disease called leprosy and no one would go near them. Today we are going to hear what happened to one of these people with leprosy.

#### Bible Story

Use volunteers to act out the story. You will need one to represent the man himself, two or three to represent his family, one to represent the Jewish priest and two or three to represent others with leprosy. You will represent Jesus.

*Have the man standing at the front of the stage beside you, his family seated at one side of the stage (your right), the priest standing in the middle at the back (behind you), and the group of other leprosy victims seated at the other side (your left). Ask them all to act out the story as you tell it.*

In the days when Jesus lived, there was a man who lived with his family in a little village in Galilee. One day he noticed that a tiny white spot had appeared on each of his hands. Perhaps he shook his head nervously and stuck his hands in his pockets so that no one would see them. Then he started walking home towards his family. When he got there, he smiled at them as if everything was fine and sat down with his hands firmly in his pockets.

*(The man with leprosy looks down at his hands and shakes his head nervously. He puts his hands in his pockets and walks towards his family. He smiles at them and sits down.)*

However, the next day when he took his hands out of his pockets to eat his breakfast, his family saw the white spots, which were bigger now, and sent him off to see the priest. They all knew that the disease of leprosy often begins with little white spots on the skin and in those days it was the priest who could decide if you had leprosy or not.

*(The man takes his hands out of his pockets. His family notice the white spots and point him to the priest. The man walks towards the priest.)*

When the priest saw him, he shook his head sadly. 'I'm sorry' he said. 'You've got leprosy. You can't come in here.'

*(The priest shakes his head and puts up his hands to indicate that the man cannot come in to the temple.)*

The man walked home slowly and gave his family the news. When they heard it they too shook their heads sadly and said, 'You can't live with us any more. You've got leprosy.'

*(The man walks back towards his family. His family put up their hands to indicate that he cannot come in to the house.)*

In Jesus' day if you had leprosy you were not allowed to go near anyone else and were not allowed into the temple to worship God. Anyone with leprosy had to stay outside their village or town and rely on others to leave out food for them to pick up when no one else was around. So the man left home sadly and went right outside the village. There he found some others with leprosy and sat down around the campfire with them.

*(The man crosses the stage and sits down sadly with his fellow leprosy-sufferers as if around a campfire.)*

One day the man heard a rumour that Jesus was coming to the village. He had heard that Jesus had been able to heal others like him and he began to get very excited. 'Maybe Jesus could heal me too' he thought. 'Then I could go back home to my family and be allowed back into the temple again.'

So he began looking out for Jesus and when he saw Him coming into the village, even though he wasn't meant to go near anyone, he ran up to Him and knelt down at His feet.

*(The man puts his hand above his eyes, looking towards the centre of the stage as if watching for someone and then runs over to you and kneels down beside you.)*

'If you are willing' he said 'you can make me clean.'

Jesus reached out and touched the man. 'I am willing' he said. 'Be clean'.

*(You reach out and touch the man, as if you are Jesus.)*

'Go and show yourself to the priest.' said Jesus. In those days it was the priest who could decide whether you were well enough to go back home and live with your family again or not.

*(You point to the priest. The man walks over to him.)*

When the priest saw him, he smiled and said, 'The leprosy has gone. You have been completely healed. You can go back home and see your family again!'

*(The priest smiles, puts up both thumbs and points him back home.)*

When the man heard this, he ran back home as fast as he could and when his family saw him they welcomed him back home again with a great big hug!

*(The man runs over to his family and when they see him they give him a big hug.)*

## Exploring Christian Belief

The man with leprosy fell at Jesus' feet saying, 'If you are willing, you can make me clean.' This man was sure that Jesus *could* help him - but he wasn't sure whether he *would* or not. Perhaps Jesus would simply treat him like everyone else did.

Jesus only had to touch him - and he knew at once that **Jesus cared about him**. It doesn't take much, sometimes, to show someone that you care. (E.g. - a friendly smile, squeezing someone's hand, inviting someone into your game, asking how someone is...)

Notice also that **Jesus was able to make him 'clean'**. With other diseases, the Bible says that Jesus made people 'well' but with leprosy it says that He made them 'clean'. People with leprosy were thought to be 'unclean'. In other words, they had the kind of disease that meant they had to keep away from others and were not allowed into the temple to worship God. When Jesus made them clean, it meant that they could go back to their families and were allowed back into the temple again to worship God.

The Bible tells us that because of the wrong things we say, do and think we cannot be God's friends or live with Him in heaven. But the good news is that Jesus is able to make us 'clean'. Because of what He came to do for us, Christians believe that all the wrong things in our lives can be forgiven so that we can be friends of God and one day live with Him in heaven.

This story shows us that, no matter who we are, Jesus cares about us and is able to make us clean - so that we can be friends of God forever!

The story also reminds us of how Jesus wants us to treat others. There may not be anyone in your school who has leprosy, but there may well be those around you who are treated as if they had. If we are friends of Jesus, He wants us to watch out especially for people like that and to show them by the little things we do that we care about them and are ready to be their friends even if no one else is.

## Prayer

Finish with a prayer thanking God that no one is excluded from His love and asking Him to help the children ensure that no one feels excluded from the friendship of others in their school and community.