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*"Christ caring for People
through People"*

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Luke 5: 12-16 (The Message)

12 One day in one of the villages there was a man covered with leprosy. When he saw Jesus he fell down before him in prayer and said, "If you want to, you can cleanse me."

13 Jesus put out his hand, touched him, and said, "I want to. Be clean." Then and there his skin was smooth, the leprosy gone.

14-16 Jesus instructed him, "Don't talk about this all over town. Just quietly present your healed self to the priest, along with the offering ordered by Moses. Your cleansed and obedient life, not your words, will bear witness to what I have done." But the man couldn't keep it to himself, and the word got out. Soon a large crowd of people had gathered to listen and be healed of their ailments. As often as possible Jesus withdrew to out-of-the-way places for prayer.

Dear Friends,

As Jesus began his earthly ministry he taught with authority, healed the sick, and cast out demons all with a sense of confidence and purpose. Yet he was fully human having set aside his divine attributes in order to be one with those among whom he walked. Sometimes we forget this reality as from a distance of 2000 years and a perspective of faith we see him as divine, as God in human flesh. Those who lived with him had no such problem. They saw him as fully human. He got hungry, he laughed and cried, he spoke their language, he got dirty on the roads they walked, he even sweat like they did. What amazed and puzzled them was, how could he heal with a word, how could he calm the waves and the wind, where did he get his confidence and authority?

Given time with him they began to notice an important habit. "As often as possible Jesus withdrew to out-of-the-way places for prayer." Luke, in his account, makes special notice of this. Before he chose his 12 apostles he spent a night in prayer. He was guided and empowered in everything he did by God the Father. Having received the Spirit at his baptism he maintained this connection through prayer. In his humanity he could do nothing. By the power of the Spirit within him he did the work God assigned. "I have to tell the Message of God's kingdom, that this is the work God sent me to do?" This is the pattern he established for us to follow.

Too often we set out to do what we think we have the strength, ability and wisdom to do for God without seeking as to whether that is what God has actually set out for us to do.

Something seems to need to be done, we think we can do it, so in we charge in our own limited strengths thinking this will somehow earn credits with God. Then we wonder why these efforts don't work out. Why we get 'burned out' in our effort to do good. The answer is clear. We need to follow Jesus' example. "As often as possible Jesus withdrew to out-of-the-way places for prayer." We need to do the same. And in those times of prayer we need to learn to allow more time to listening for God's speaking than we do for our own. Only when we are sure the assignment is truly from God should we roll up our sleeves to act.

Dear God, teach us to listen more, and only when your assignment is clear, then to act in your name. Amen.

(Rev.) John McGurrin