

## **JESUS HEALS.**

### **THEME:**

Jesus is willing to touch those who feel that their lives are not worth living amongst other people.

### **Grace, peace, and mercy, from God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.**

This summer for bushfires was the worst on record for Australia, in particular with the record number of people killed in them: and just in the one state of Victoria. This tragedy tugged at the heartstrings of all Australians and when the appeal for aid went out across the nation, the Australian public responded in a generous manner and sent in many millions of dollars to help those who were unfortunate enough to be in the bushfire's path.

Some of the stories that came out of the aftermath of the bushfire were horrific by all accounts, and on the other

spectrum there were some heart-warming stories coming out of there as well. Some of the things we witnessed on the television will stick in our minds for a long time as well, mainly of what they experienced and of what they had said.

In fact, one particular bulletin news item that got my attention was an interview of a youngish type man, in his late twenties, perhaps early thirties; and he related how he escaped the bushfire tragedy and I'm not one hundred percent certain of the actual words he used but it went something like.

“**IF** there is a God, he was there keeping us safe. My tank was near empty and we had a long way to go. The petrol bowsers along the way were closed, and we had to keep on moving. But somehow the petrol we had in the tank kept us driving on towards safety, all the while, we feared that the car was going to conk out in the middle of the fire and we weren't going to make it out of there

alive. From my own experience; there was no way that the amount of petrol we had in the car was sufficient enough to take us to safety. I believe that someone was watching over us!”

All I thought was, you’d better believe it mate! That surely was the hand of God taking you out of that life threatening situation. Find it within yourself to give God the glory; for being there in your time of need. Perhaps he may have been counselled by someone and has made a commitment to include God in his life from here on in.

Now that a bit of time has passed and things have settled down somewhat: for these people and others, the rebuilding process will have begun. So here they are, at all levels of difficulties and needs; all in different situations of extreme need to not much need at all.

Can you imagine for a minute what that is like?

Let’s think of those in extreme need of those who lost the lot. A lot of them would be feeling lost and lonely and would feel like throwing their lot of life in. Yet there are others, who would be eager, enthusiastic and challenged enough to restart all over again, simply because they came out of this situation with their lives intact, and there is absolutely nothing that could stop them from rebuilding again. They *can* find it within themselves to rise to the occasion.

By the way, on a serious note: could some of those [181] deaths have been prevented? Now that there has been a bit of national soul-searching and with hindsight to guide us: why did some people deliberately stay to defend their houses when they could have evacuated their homes and properties and made it to safety? What is more valuable to the human being, property or human lives? It’s not for us to judge, but this bushfire should warn each and every one of us; to think about what we would do, if we were faced with the same situation.

I wonder how many people would be asking the question of 'how many are going to learn from this tragedy and do some security prevention' or will they let the passage of time make them forget this horrific event, and as sure as night follows day: there will be a repeat procedure of what we don't want to happen, resurfacing all over again?

A situation that many of these survivors of the bushfires may be facing *could* be one of ostracism: which is the act of being kept away from others in any particular society. Now that the major danger has passed [there are still some outbreaks of fire]: and when the goodwill of the Australian public stop rallying to these people's needs, and the food parcels, clothes and charity dries up, where will these people go; who will they turn to?

If their insurance or bank accounts can't take them out of strife; and they can't see a future for themselves or they

don't have a deep faith that God is in control of all of our souls and livelihood. And all they have left is their own patch of burnt dirt and crumbled buildings beneath their ashen soiled feet. What would be the answer to their situation? I won't even attempt to give you one, but...contrast this to the leper in our gospel story.

And we will find that the leper in our gospel story is similar in need to those who are feeling ostracised by their community. Some people are feeling anger, out for vengeance and even talk of vigilantes have been mentioned in the news lately. This leper fella has absolutely nothing solid to hang on to.

No home, no sure grounding to put his roots down, he may perhaps be dwelling in a cave with others who are suffering the same indignity; which gives them all a very uncertain future indeed. I guess that this leper, after some time of deliberation and deep thinking, and as the occasion turns out; confronts Jesus and reminds him that

if he was willing, then he could make this leprous man clean.

This leper is faceless and nameless, someone unknown; unlike the some of the people who died in the bushfires; where photographs were published of whom some of these people were that died in this bushfire. They put names to faces; and from those faces, one could assume what personalities they may have had.

Looking at some of these faces made me quite emotional, in particular the young blonde girl [aged 10?] who had the whole of her life before her to live, now gone, forever. I didn't know her, but I thought about the effect her death would have on her family, friends and school community. Perhaps we may meet her in heaven one day; and we may also meet this leper, whose faith is an inspiration for all who read his story in the Bible.

Jesus shows that he is willing to heal and cleanse this leprous man. This also shows that Jesus is willing to let the outcast and unclean person come into his presence. He turns no one away regardless of their personal situation. He ostracises no one, but is compassionate enough to allow this man to approach him even though it was forbidden for this man to do so. Regardless that Jesus would get infected and then would be classed as unclean!

Jesus doesn't want anyone to feel unworthy and to be alone and away from everyone, regardless of the circumstances they find themselves in. People are meant to live community with each other, we are meant to be together, no one is an island to do things on their own. God saw that in Adam, that is why he created Eve to be a perfect partner for him, the animals just couldn't do for him.

How does our society treat lepers these days? I mean leprosy is a disease that is practically unknown in our society, but it is still there and it is treatable; but it doesn't have all the suspicion and misgiving about it like it used to. Modern medicine can do a lot towards treatment of this disease.

But people do get treated like lepers in our societies these days, don't they? Who do you think are the social lepers and outcasts in our society? The obvious drug-pusher, the drug-user, the alcoholic, the wife-beater and abuser to his family, the pill-dependant housewife who swallows a cocktail of medication drugs just to survive through the day and the addiction is driving her crazy.

How do we as Christians, ostracise and treat our fellow members as lepers in our congregation? You may have some answers and experience in that area; but here are a few that I can think of: we may be making Christian lepers in a non-intentional way: perhaps a comment

taken in the wrong context from either party, i.e. hair, clothes, lifestyle? We give a wrong impression that we don't want to talk or communicate; all the while we have no skills in the area of making conversation. That's why people won't join in when some other form of service is offered, they are afraid that they have to speak and this may show them up.

Then those who are hurt and offended stay away and abstain from church and after a while no one misses these people at all. They go elsewhere where they believe they will find people who will care about them and treat them with some form of dignity and respect.

We all are deserving of dignity and respect, no one should ever be ignored or ostracised of what and who they are! God made us all individually different whereby we have our own personalities which are unique to the individual. We all didn't come out of the same mould.

Imagine what a boring place this world would be if sameness reigned supreme?

Our individuality makes us interesting, and that's what keeps us interesting and unpredictable; we don't know what going to happen next. But if people are treated with disdain and contempt then they shrink and retreat from society.

So like the leper; when all contact with others is gone who can they turn to? God would be the correct person to turn to, because he turns no one away. He loves the unloved, apart from those in the bushfires; how many people in this world would be feeling empty and unloved right now?

Who can make us whole again? Who can take away our sin? Who can wash away the stain of being unclean and unholy? Who can bring us into fellowship with all the

other saints and declare you clean and not guilty, and that you have every right to be in the presence of his elect?

Only God can do that; and when you are declared forgiven and clean, then believe it and live like the child of God you're meant to be. Amen.

**The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.**