

“IF YOU WANT TO, YOU CAN CURE ME.” HOW OFTEN HAS THAT HEARTFELT PRAYER BEEN ON OUR LIPS AND IN OUR HEARTS?

“IF YOU WANT TO, YOU CAN CURE ME.”

IS THAT A CONSTANT PRAYER IN MY LIFE?

IS IT NEVER A PART OF ME BECAUSE I AM NOT AWARE OF ANYTHING IN ME THAT NEEDS THE HEALING TOUCH OF JESUS?

IS IT NOT MY PRAYER BECAUSE, ALTHOUGH I AM AWARE OF SOMETHING IN MY LIFE IN NEED OF HEALING, I AM NOT PREPARED TO BE CHANGED BY THE TOUCH OF JESUS?

THIS PRAYER OF THE LEPER IS HIS CHANCE TO HAVE HIS WHOLE LIFE CHANGED. A LEPER SUFFERED ABSOLUTE REJECTION, COMPLETE ISOLATION, THE DEPTHS OF LONELINESS. THE PEOPLE NOT ONLY SHUNNED HIS ILLNESS, THEY SHUNNED AND DESPISED THE SUFFERER. HE HAD NO-ONE TO TURN TO, NOWHERE TO GO. IF HE APPROACHED A VILLAGE HE WAS DRIVEN AWAY BY STONES THROWN AT HIM. ONE DAY MAYBE HE THOUGHT TO HIMSELF: WHY DON'T I JUST STAND HERE AND HOPE THAT A STONE WILL HIT ME ON THE HEAD AND KILL ME. WITH WHAT DESPERATE HOPE, THEN, DOES HE COME TO JESUS?

HIS WORDS TO JESUS ARE VERY IMPORTANT. IF YOU WANT TO, YOU CAN CURE ME. HE DOESN'T QUESTION WHETHER JESUS CAN CURE HIM. HIS WORDS TO JESUS ARE : DO YOU CARE ENOUGH ABOUT ME, ARE YOU GOING TO LIVE UP TO WHAT YOU SAY? HIS QUESTION IS NOT ABOUT A CURE, BUT IF JESUS WANTS TO DO IT. IF YOU WANT TO, YOU CAN CURE ME.

AND JESUS SAYS: " OF COURSE I WANT TO."

THE GOSPEL TELLS US THAT JESUS FELT SORRY FOR HIM. THAT IS A VERY LAME TRANSLATION FOR JESUS' REACTION. IT MEANS THAT JESUS WAS MOVED BY A VERY DEEP FEELING, HE WAS ANGRY AT THE MAN'S SORRY CONDITION, HE WAS AGITATED AND UPSET AT THE SIGHT OF HIS PITIABLE STATE. IN THIS FRAME OF MIND JESUS SAYS: "OF COURSE I WANT TO."

IS THIS HOW I LOOK AT JESUS WHEN I PRAY FOR HELP? DO I SEE HIS DEEP COMPASSION, HIS CONCERN AND AGITATION, NOT ABOUT ME, BUT ABOUT MY CONDITION AS I COME TO HIM? DO I COME TO HIM, KNOWING HOW MUCH I NEED HIS HEALING TOUCH?

ALL OF THIS CAN SOUND LOVELY AND ROUSE FEELINGS OF HOPE AND CONFIDENCE IN US. BUT WE NEED TO REMEMBER, LIKE THE LEPER, WE TOO NEED TO DO SOMETHING.

THIS GOSPEL IS VERY DEAR TO ME. IT WAS A MAJOR PART OF MY LIFE FOR MANY YEARS. THE PRAYER OF THE LEPER WAS CONSTANTLY IN MY LIFE. I REMEMBER VERY CLEARLY, WHEN IN MY LOST TIME OF ALCOHOLISM, I WOULD SIT AFTER COMMUNION AND PRAY WITH ALL MY MIGHT: JESUS IF YOU WANT TO, YOU CAN CURE ME. I BELIEVED JESUS COULD, I KNEW HE WANTED TO. BUT NO ANSWER TO MY PRAYER EVER CAME. OVER TIME I SLOWLY CAME TO REALISE WHY NOTHING WAS HAPPENING. IT WAS BECAUSE AFTER THAT PRAYER, MY NEXT THOUGHT WAS: WHERE CAN I GO TODAY TO BUY A BOTTLE OF WHISKY? IF I WASN'T GOING TO DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT, WHY SHOULD I EXPECT JESUS TO? HE WORKS WITH US...HE DOESN'T TAKE OVER. AND WHEN I DID WHAT I HAD TO DO, THEN JESUS TRULY TOUCHED ME AND HEALED ME. MY PRAYER WAS ANSWERED WHEN I TOOK RESPONSIBILITY FOR MYSELF.

WHEN WE TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR OURSELVES AND OUR ACTIONS, THEN JESUS WORKS WITH US. IF WE PRAY, HOWEVER

**EARNESTLY, FOR SOMETHING AND ARE NOT PREPARED FOR
CHANGE IN OURSELVES, THEN WE IMPEDE THE WORK OF JESUS
IN US.**

**IN THE WORDS OF A GREAT SPIRITUAL MASTER: PRAY AS IF
EVERYTHING DEPENDS ON GOD. WORK AS THOUGH EVERYTHING
DEPENDS ON US. TOGETHER, GOD AND US, CAN DO ANYTHING.**