

**An Exegesis of Luke 5:12-16 and its Relevance for Shaping Christian  
Attitude towards People Stigmatized by HIV and AIDS in Southern  
Africa.**

By

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## **Declaration**

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this mini-thesis is my own original work and has not previously in its entirety or in part been submitted to any academic institution for a degree.

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## Abstract

All three synoptic evangelists narrate a miracle performed by Jesus in the earliest phase of His public ministry in which He was accosted by a leper requesting cleansing, to which He duly responded (cf. Mk 1:40-45; Mt 8:1-4; Lk 5:12-16). A key feature of the socio-cultural and religious experiences of the biblical leper is stigmatization, ostracism and marginalization from full participation in the life of the community. Several scholars have examined the Synoptic Gospels' account of the healing of the leper seeking to identify their relevance and application in contemporary scenarios. Although these discussions have shed significant light on the modern relevance of the miracle, as far as I am aware, none have focused on the specific presentation of the miracle in Luke's Gospel in relation to people living with HIV and AIDS, who, like the biblical leper, are also often stigmatized and marginalized from full participation in their communities, including church life. This is a significant scholarly omission, given Luke's heightened interest in the poor, stigmatized and marginalized.

This mini-thesis exegetes the text of Luke 5:12-16 to determine its theological relevance for Luke's first readers and, by reflective comparison, maps out some of its implications for shaping contemporary Christian attitude towards people stigmatized by HIV and AIDS. To this end, a historical-grammatical method of exegesis, together with a literary-theological investigation, directed primarily towards historical and philological goals is employed. In order to paint a broad social and cultural background for a closer study of the Lucan text, the purity laws of first century Palestine and specifically how they resulted in the ostracism of those diagnosed with leprosy are examined.

The study found that in this narrative Jesus gives concrete expression to the inclusive character of the gospel, the kingdom of God, and the Christian community as He deliberately reaches out and touches an 'untouchable'. Instead of protecting Himself with the purity regulations, Jesus revealed a reformed idea of purity. Moreover, Jesus' involvement of the priest in the restoration of the leper offers a challenge to the contemporary Church in Southern Africa. His attitude towards this

social outcast has much to contribute to a greater understanding of the Christian attitude necessary in facilitating the eradication of HIV-related stigmatization.

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 Background

All three synoptic evangelists narrate a miracle performed by Jesus in the earliest phase of His public ministry in which He was accosted by a leper requesting 'healing' (cf. Mk 1:40-45; Mt 8:1-4; Lk 5:12-16). The narrative focuses on the miracle Jesus performs on behalf of a social outcast of a Palestinian town. Leprosy (תַּרְעִיט/λέπρα), which was used to describe a variety of scaly and flaky conditions that affected people, clothing and houses, was highly dreaded in the ancient world. It was a socially devalued condition, with resultant stigmatization, since those who were infected were physically and ceremonially regarded as unclean (cf. Lev 13:45-46, Num 5:2–3; Wright and Jones 1992:281). However, Jesus acknowledges this outcast and his request, providing the cleansing he needs.

Several biblical scholars have raised important redactional, socio-cultural and religious, literary, theological and pastoral questions regarding the story itself, and how each evangelist narrates it. Various studies, relating to the redactional aspects of the narrative of the healing of the leper in all three Synoptic Gospels, have been undertaken; for example, by Bovon (2002:173-174), Fitzmyer (1981:571-572), Bock (1994a:467, 472-478), Neiryneck (1974:207–208), and Ryu (2012:165-189). These studies have helped confirm each evangelist's particular thematic emphasis in narrating Jesus' miracles. For Matthew, for instance, this narrative emphasizes

Jesus' fulfilment of the Law as the purpose of His coming and also confirms Jesus as the healing Messiah (cf. 11:4; Ryu 2012:189). Mark's more complex account stresses some negative elements of the healing, such as Jesus' strong tone in warning the leper and his subsequent disobedience (Mk 1:44, 45). Luke, on the other hand, focuses more narrowly on Jesus' positive desire to heal the leper. This positive focus fits this entire chapter's picture of Jesus' ministry (5:8–9, 12–13, 20, 27–32; Bock 1994a:466).

Other aspects of the miracle have been examined by several scholars. Studying Matthew 8:1-4, for instance, Viljoen (2014:2-4) highlights the social and religious implications of leprosy in light of the Jewish purity laws and social values of first century Palestine. He concludes, along with others (cf. Pilch 2000:29; Borg 1994:59) that it was a socially devalued condition with serious social consequences. Using Mark 1:40-45 as his text, Mathew (2000:101-110) also examined Jesus' attitude to the purity system. He concluded that when Jesus came across a person who was 'doubly oppressed by the purity system and its custodians, his emotions, actions and words expressed strong protest against the injustice done to the underprivileged of the society' (Mathew 2000:107).

Literary studies of the accounts of the miracle include those by Wiarda (2010) and Ryu (2012). In his book *Interpreting Gospel narratives: scenes, people and theology*, Wiarda (2010) discusses methodological questions relating specifically to the narrative material in the Gospels; he explores questions around what the narratives signal about the feelings, attitudes, motives and responses and struggles of individual characters. Having examined the details of the narrative of the healing of the leper found in Luke 5:12-16, Wiarda (2010:10-15) concludes that Jesus' response to the leper's plea is one of compassion. He does acknowledge that although he is not alone in picking up on the theme of Jesus' compassionate readiness to heal (cf. Bock 1994a:473; Hendriksen 1978:290; Hughes 1998:170), there are other commentators who suggest that the focus of this narrative

is on Jesus' 'healing' power and the breaking in of the Messianic Age (cf. Fitzmyer 1981: 572; Nolland 1989:225-229; Stein 1992:171-174). These two points of view are, however, not mutually exclusive.

In seeking to understand the intention of Matthew 8-9 more clearly, Ryu (2012) undertook a literary analysis using the literary technique of Matthew's three stage progression. Part of his analysis included an examination of the narrative of the healing of the leper (Mt 8:1-4). He concludes that as part of the first cluster of miracles, the healing of the leper confirms Jesus as the merciful healing Messiah (Ryu 2012:166-190).

Various scholars have also deliberated upon the theological significance of the healing of the leper. The four major theological emphases reflected through this miracle are: Jesus' concern for the outcast (Ayeebo 2006:16; Bosch 1996:436; Morris 1983:106; Green 1995:77-84), the universalism of salvation (Ayeebo 2006:23, Rhoads 2004:172), the inauguration of the kingdom of God (Blackburn 1992:550; Twelftree 1999:30; Saucy 1996:296; Mott and Tilleman 2009:3; Schlatter 1997:174-191), and Jesus' reinterpretation of the purity laws (Saucy 1996:292-296; Harding and Nobbs 2010:122; Viljoen 2104:1; Neyrey1986:91-128). According to Williams (2002:100), the significance of the healing of the leper was not that Jesus altered the leper's physical condition, but that He restored him to purity and wholeness. This new status allowed him once again to function as a full member of society and to participate within the worshipping community.

Farren (2002:70-72) in his study on Mark 1:40-45 suggests that this narrative has pastoral implications for the church today in responding to the needs of those who are sick and/or affected by systems that exclude them from participation in community life. Likewise, in his intertexture analysis of Matthew 8:1-4, Vanderpyl (2014:1-8) proposes that just as Jesus backed up His words - 'I am willing' - with concrete actions, our words need to be supported with actions as we pastorally connect with those in need.

With regard to the presentation of the incident in Luke, there is no doubt that this story plays a pivotal role in the evangelist's account of Jesus' ministry, coming as it does shortly after Jesus' inaugural speech at Nazareth (Lk 4:18-21). Using the words of the prophet Isaiah, Jesus outlines His mission and ministry and confirms that He has come as the Saviour to redeem the marginalized (cf. Isa 61:1-2; 58:6). Moreover, Luke places the account of the healing of the leper with a complex of other narratives sharing similar themes of Jesus' acceptance of those on the fringes of 'acceptable' society and as such deemed unworthy due to disease, sin and social status (cf. Lk 5:12-32).

These individuals would have been marginalized by their community because of their physical ailments and the religious ramifications of their conditions or because of choices they have made that have determined their situations in society (such as the tax collectors and prostitutes). Therefore, it is possible that these characters represent stereotypical characters in first century Palestinian society. Luke wished to present his readers with a clear picture of how Jesus dealt with these groups of religiously shunned or excluded people. Jesus came to extend the invitation to be part of the Kingdom of God to all and He came as a liberator of the oppressed, poor and marginalized (Lk 4:14-30; 19:10). Thus the account in Luke 5 also raises important questions about Luke's wider theological concerns such as universal salvation and care of the poor and marginalized.

Of key relevance in this context is Luke's specific pastoral purposes in framing the account in the manner in which he has done, given his explicit statement of his agenda in his prologue: 'that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught' (1:4). Luke sought to create an accurate and comprehensive account of the unique life of Jesus the Christ to strengthen the faith of Gentile believers (Stein 1992:40). In that case, several scholars have examined how Luke's first century readers, acutely aware of the stigmatized socio-cultural and theological situation of lepers,

would have interpreted, understood and pastorally responded to this particular account and how it is framed (cf. Shellberg 2012:163-170; Bovon 2002:174; Cadenhead 2008:19-20). As Stein (1992:59) puts it: 'what Luke chose to include in his Gospel is clearly indicative of what he sought to teach'.

Bearing these socio-historical, literary and theological features of the passage in mind, other scholars have also posed the question regarding the contemporary relevance of the Synoptic Gospel's account of Jesus' healing of the leper for readers of the Christian Scriptures. These questions are pertinent for several reasons. In the first place, although the actual disease described as leprosy in the Bible is not the same as the modern Hansen's disease, the very fact that they both present with skin manifestations and are described by the same name has not deterred contemporary readers from comparing the two scenarios. So Gillen (2007) for example proposes, that while definitions of leprosy in modern times is different from those in biblical times, there is no doubt that the definitions overlap, and the modern form of the disease still illustrates important spiritual lessons today.

According to Olanisebe (2014:122), many of the cultures in which leprosy has been recorded have been greatly influenced by the biblical injunctions utilizing the biblical system of isolating the diseased person, thus reinforcing this comparison. This comparison has in turn fuelled the question of the contemporary relevance of the narratives.

Secondly, within the medical research literature there are on-going discussions and investigations with regard to the distinct associations between Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and leprosy. These investigations have resulted in varying and sometimes contradictory conclusions. Some studies suggest a clear connection between HIV and leprosy (Moses *et al* 2003:117-119; van den Broek *et al* 1997:203-210), while others assert that most of these studies are inconclusive (Blackwell

*et al* 2009:370-385). Even so, this continued debate has generated interesting associations between the two diseases, especially in their social effects on their sufferers. Although, as previously noted, modern leprosy associated with HIV and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is not the same as Biblical leprosy, the parallels between the two have raised the question among biblical scholars as to the relevance of the Gospels' narrative to the contemporary situation of people living with HIV and AIDS (cf. Haug 2009:215; Dube and Kanyoro 2004:11; Haddad 2005:29-37).

Thirdly, a key feature of the socio-cultural and religious experiences of the Biblical leper is stigmatization, ostracism and marginalization from full participation in the life of the community. This certainly resonates with the experiences of many sufferers of HIV and AIDS who also feel stigmatized and often marginalized from full participation in their communities, including church life (Olanisebe 2014:125-126).

Few diseases carry a social stigma of suspicion, which results in the terrible feeling of rejection on the part of the sufferer, as does HIV/AIDS. A medical diagnosis of AIDS has often been confused with a moral judgement, which affects the dignity of many. Those affected and/or infected are sometimes labelled 'disgraceful', 'unclean' and 'unacceptable' and experience discrimination, isolation and dehumanisation by those around them, including the church (Faiz 2006:20-23; Banda 2010:54-69). Consequently, people living with HIV and AIDS (PLWHA) have sometimes been compared to the lepers of biblical times (Saayman and Kriel 1992:70-79; Sainsbury 1992:68-77; Niyukuri 2012:75; Maqanda 2012:1-2; Hagens 2007:3-5; Chetty 2003:15).

It is for these and other reasons that several scholars have examined the Synoptic Gospels' account of the healing of the leper seeking to identify their relevance and application to the contemporary situation for PLWHA (cf. Farren 2002:70-72; Vanderpyl 2014:1-8; Manus and Bateye 2006:155-169). Manus and Bateye (2006:155-169) for example, undertook a

contextual re-reading of Jesus' healing of the leper, focusing particularly on Mark 1:40-45. They concluded that Jesus' actions behest us not to abandon the infected in their isolation but to support and stand alongside them in their suffering.

Although these scholarly discussions have shed significant light on the modern relevance and applicability of the healing of the leper, as far as I am aware, apart from Manus and Bateye (2006) who briefly mention Luke 5:12-16 in their study on Mark 1:40-45, no one has examined the specific presentation of the miracle in Luke's Gospel in relation to PLWHA. This is a surprisingly significant omission given Luke's heightened interest in the poor, stigmatized and outcasts.

While all the Gospels at some point present Jesus as the messenger of God's compassion who gives special attention to the poor and less fortunate in society, Luke not only has more to say about the neglected and outcast than any other Gospel writer, but in fact makes this mission the foundation of his Gospel. Some examples of this Lucan phenomenon include his account of the leper (5:12-16), a sinful woman (7:36-50), the Good Samaritan (10:29-37), Zacchaeus (19:1-10), and the penitent thief (23:39-43). Indeed, at the very start of His ministry in Luke 4:18-19 Jesus speaks the words of Isaiah (61:1, 2) with new contemporary meaning: 'The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour' (New International Version -NIV<sup>1</sup>).

Luke understands Jesus' earthly ministry as one in which people on the fringes of society receive compassion, and as a ministry to which the church is called to do likewise (Bosch 1993:16). In aiming to reveal the love of God to all people, Jesus did not pay heed to social taboos or the restrictions of society and religion of His time as He broke down barriers

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<sup>1</sup>Unless otherwise stated all English translations of the Bible are from the New International Version (NIV).

between God and sinners, tax collectors, lepers, Samaritans and women. Such an example is found in the grace Jesus gives to a man 'full of leprosy' as he is prepared to reach out and touch him, and at his request, to make him clean (Lk 5:12-16). It is, therefore, a significant omission that the contemporary relevance of Luke's account of the healing of the leper in Lk 5:12-16 to the experiences of PLWHA has not been highlighted in the scholarly literature. The current study seeks to contribute to reducing this gap in studies.

Similar to the AIDS sufferer, the leper of the ancient world was ostracized from society and largely forgotten. Accordingly, much can be learnt not only from Jesus' attitude and actions towards the leper, but also from the Biblical theological ideas the passage generates in relation to the Old Testament and the involvement of the priest to complete the leper's full return to society and the temple.

## **1.2 Main Research Problem**

The main research problem addressed in this mini-thesis is: In the light of Luke's overall pastoral purposes in fashioning his Gospel, and the parallels between the social experiences of lepers in Jesus' time and PLWHA in Southern Africa, how does the narrative found in Luke 5:12-16 contribute to shaping Christian attitude towards people stigmatized by HIV and AIDS in Southern Africa? Throughout this mini-thesis, the term 'attitude' is defined as the 'psychological response to a person, an object, situation, society and life itself that generally influences our behaviours and actions. Attitude is either positive or negative' (Mandau 2012:4).

To address the main problem, the study will seek to answer these key questions:

- What is the socio-historical, cultural and literary theological context of Luke 5:12-16?
- What did Luke 5:12-16 mean for its original readers, given Luke's pastoral purposes?

- What is the theological and contemporary practical relevance of Luke 5:12-16 for today's church, particularly with reference to the problem of stigmatization of PLWHA?

### **1.3 Hypothesis**

In breaking the purity and socio-cultural laws by touching the leper of Luke 5:12-16 and in sending him to the priest for verification of healing, Jesus sets the Church the example, and by extension the mandate, for shaping contemporary Christian attitudes to address the problem of stigmatization of PLWHA.

### **1.4 Value and Contribution**

God's Word is rich with teachings that express the fundamental dignity of every human being, teachings that call for compassion and healing for those who are sick, and that obligates believers to care for the most vulnerable in their society. As Balchin in Erkel (1999:8) has pointed out, 'Interpreting the Bible is one of the most important issues facing Christians today. It lies behind what we believe, how we live, how we get on together, and what we have to offer to the world.'

This study contributes to existing studies, which have sought to exegete scripture to glean understanding of how Christians should respond to PLWHA. Muneja (2011:106) has studied 2 Samuel 13:1-14:33; Kgalemang (2004:141-168) has studied John 9 and Mligo (2008:157-343), in addressing stigma attached to PLWHA, has reflected on the Gospel of John. Other scholars such as West (2007) and Dube (2004:115-140), have done extensive work in this direction, using the method of the contextual Bible study. In allowing the Bible to speak theologically about HIV and AIDS, their focus has been on the Gospels of Mark (3:1-8; 4:35-41; 5:21-43), and Matthew (14:22-33; 25:31-46) rather than on Luke 5:12-16. However, as mentioned above, I have yet to find any published research in the English language literature which have specifically studied Luke 5:12-16 in connection with PLWHA. The present work, therefore, contributes to filling a gap in existing studies.

## **1.5 Research Methodology**

An in-depth inductive examination of the text is applied, to discover the meaning and pastoral significance of Luke 5:12-16, first for Luke's original readers, and then by extension for members of the contemporary local church. Once a credible and coherent understanding of what the text says has been achieved, it is essential that one examines how the text, in its own context, may speak to us in our different-yet-similar context today (Gorman 2009:10). For the task of biblical studies is incomplete if the exegesis is not brought to bear on comparable contemporary applications.

This mini-thesis, therefore, exegetes the text of Luke 5:12-16 to determine its theological relevance for Luke's first readers and by reflective comparison map out some of its implications for shaping contemporary Christian attitude towards people stigmatized by HIV and AIDS. However, reading a first century document in the context of a twenty-first century societal challenge, poses some hermeneutical questions. Therefore, the basic exegetical process of this study is based on the principles discussed in Zuck (1991:76-142; 279-292): namely, bridging the cultural gap, bridging the grammatical gap, bridging the literary gap and applying God's word today.

When Luke wrote the Gospel, he did not specifically have PLWHA in Southern Africa in mind. He addressed his own socio-historical, cultural and theological and pastoral situation. An exegesis of the passage, therefore, must rightly first give attention to what lies behind and within the text to discover what Luke was communicating to his primary audience. However, for most Christians, the Bible functions not just as a historical book, recording what happened, nor just a literary work that conveys interesting narratives. Most Christians also approach the Bible as Scripture which has normative direct and indirect relevance, application and implications for the shaping of contemporary doctrine and practice. It is in the light of this that I have chosen the above method which enables

not just what lies behind and in the text to be discovered, but also what lies in front of it to be investigated.

Smith and Woodbridge's research model for Biblical Studies (2008:151-167) forms the basis for the organization of the thesis. In particular, the mini-thesis is developed as follows, using the following steps:

#### Step 1: Thesis Introduction

The first chapter provides a concise framework for the study and covers the following elements: key exegetical-theological questions in relation to the narrative of the healing of the leper; Luke's pastoral purposes in light of the narrative of the healing of the leper; scholarly perspectives that connect the stigmatization of the biblical leper to the stigmatization of PLWHA; the reasons for the study; the objectives of the exegesis; and the outline for the rest of the study.

#### Step 2: The Context of the Book of Luke

The second and third chapters are central to answering the principal research question, and seek to provide a working knowledge of the background of the chosen text. Chapter Two, deals with aspects relevant to the historical and literary contexts of the Gospel of Luke, in which the selected passage is located. In particular, it briefly discusses the general background of Luke-Acts, in terms of the author, date of writing, occasion and purpose. It also surveys the genre, literary structure, and key literary motifs and devices, as well as the major theological themes of Luke.

Chapter Three forms a theological backdrop to the study of Luke 5:12-16. A brief study of socio-cultural and religious background of first century Palestine is undertaken, the focus being on the purity laws and specifically how they resulted in the ostracism of those diagnosed with *τηρυ/λεπρυ* ('leprosy').

#### Step 3: Literary, Grammatical and Historical Analysis of Luke 5:12-

16

Chapter Four provides a brief literary analysis of Luke 5:12-16 and an exegetical analysis of Luke 5:12-16, in order to establish the author-intended meaning for its original readers. The exegesis includes a grammatical analysis and synthetic commentary of Luke 5:12-16, using the commentary style (Smith 2008:180).

#### Step 4: The Theological and Practical Relevance of Luke 5:12-16 for Shaping Christian Attitude towards People Stigmatized by HIV and AIDS in Southern Africa

Chapter Five addresses the contemporary significance of Luke 5:12-16, and explores both its theological and practical significance. In particular, it explores what the text teaches about the relevance of the passage in shaping Christian attitude towards people stigmatized by HIV and AIDS.

#### Step 5: Conclusion and Recommendations

Chapter Six summarises the findings, relates them to the stated objectives, and draws relevant conclusions. The ultimate goal of biblical studies is to serve the church through its findings and applications (Asumang 2014:55). Therefore, this study closes with a few recommendations on how we can shape the attitude of Christians towards PLWHA in Southern Africa based on the 'lessons' that the exegesis has highlighted.

### **1.6 Declaration of known presuppositions**

As a researcher I bring to this study my own personal presuppositions and prior experiences that could impact on the direction of the conclusions. Therefore, although I strive to be objective, I acknowledge that the possible influence of my background and presuppositions cannot be discounted in the following investigation. My background is that of a middle class, white South African who spent many years practising as a physiotherapist before moving into full-time ministry within the church. As a minister in the Presbyterian Church I combine a high regard for the authority of God's word, with the belief that we are called to study it with the full use of our minds under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. I believe the

Bible to be God's inspired revelation – owing its origin to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 1:20-21) – and that it is both authoritative and true. As a spiritual document, the Bible can change lives and has been entrusted to the church for the nurturing of faith and guidance of the Christian life (cf. Eph 4:11-13; McDill 2014:3; Klein *et al* 1993:143-150). Consequently, I believe that as Scripture, Luke 5:12-16 has potential to provide both knowledge and existential direction to inform HIV/AIDS destigmatization (Heymans 2008: ii).

## Chapter 2

### The Context of the Gospel of Luke

#### 2.1 Introduction

In the last two decades the importance of linking Luke with Acts has been increasingly emphasized (Morris 1983:13). Despite objections from scholars, such as Haenchen (1985:112-116), we may justly accept that both the Gospel of Luke and Acts, were written by the same person. Evidence of this includes the dedication of both books to Theophilus (Ac 1:1; Lk 1:3), the reference in Acts (1:1) to a 'first book,' which is usually taken as referring to the Gospel (du Plessis 1996:152), and similarities in concepts, vocabulary and style between the two books. As such, it is appropriate that Luke-Acts be treated as a unit.

This chapter investigates aspects relevant to the historical and literary contexts of Luke, in which the selected passage is located. In particular, it briefly discusses the general background of Luke, in terms of the author, date of writing and audience, and occasion and purpose. It also surveys the genre, literary structure, and key literary motifs and devices, as well as the major theological themes of Luke. Of significance to this investigation is the identification of Luke's pastoral purposes for his first readers.

## 2.2 The Authorship

Despite the book of Luke being anonymous, two lines of argument lead to the conclusion that Luke, the friend (2 Tim 4:11), fellow missionary (Phm 24), and physician of Paul (Col 4:14), wrote this book, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (Marshall 1978:33; du Plessis 1996:152; Constable 2014:1; Hendriksen 1978:4). The following discussion will examine these two lines of argument: namely the external and internal evidence supporting the authorship of Luke.

Firstly, the external evidence available for the authorship of Luke, gleaned from the writings of the Church Fathers in the first few centuries of the Christian Era (CE.) is unanimous that the author was Luke. The oldest extant list of New Testament writings, known as the Muratorian Fragment, which dates from the latter half of the second century, lists both the third Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles as the work of Luke. The anti-Marcionite Prologue to Luke (160–180 CE), the Muratorian Canon (170–200 CE), and the early Church Fathers, for instance Irenaeus (180 CE) and Clement of Alexandria (155–215 CE), all concur on Lucan authorship of the Gospel of Luke. So do nearly all who follow them in church history, including such authorities as Eusebius and Jerome (Constable 2014:1; Nolland 1989: xxxv).

Secondly, there are two pieces of internal evidence which corroborate with the external evidence, namely, the unity of authorship of Luke and Acts, and evidence that the author was a travelling companion of Paul. As mentioned above, there is sufficient evidence to conclude that both works were written by the same person. The 'we' passages in Acts (16:10–17; 20:5– 21:18; 27:1–28:16) – where the author transitions from describing events in the third person, to describing them in the first person plural – indicate that the author was a companion of Paul (du Plessis 1996:152). As Price (2014:80) advocates, the most natural explanation, is that the author himself was present during those phases of his story, which he records in the first person. In addition, a survey of the whereabouts of

Paul's close associates, suggests only one individual could have authored the passages which record these experiences. Timothy was with those awaiting Paul's arrival at Troas (Ac 20:4-6). Moreover, neither Titus nor Silas were with Paul on the journey to Rome, or in Rome. Thus, the only close associate who fits the self-reference in the 'we' passages of Acts, is Luke (Hindson and Kroll 1997).

There are principally three arguments proffered against Lucan authorship of the third Gospel. In an attempt to reject the 'we' passages as evidence of Lucan authorship, Robbins (1978:215-42) claimed that the first-person plural was a literary device used to narrate sea-voyages, and not evidence of the author's participation (Price 2014:80). There are two key weaknesses of Robbins' theory. Firstly, not all sea-voyage accounts employed this literary device (cf. Ac 13:4-5, 17:14–15; Hemer 1990:312-334) and secondly, the 'we' passages in Acts begin when Paul was on land in Philippi, not while at sea (Ac 16:10-17; Stein 1992:23).

In addition to the different interpretations of the 'we' passages, there are questions of apparent historical discrepancies such as the debate around Paul's visit to Jerusalem in Acts 15:1-32 versus Galatians 2:1-10. There are also apparent theological differences between Acts and Paul's letters – for instance, the absence in Acts of Paul's insistence on freedom from the law (du Plessis 1996:153-154). However, these objections fail to convince. As Wallace (2002) argues:

'it is precisely because there are theological and historical difficulties between Acts and Paul that the argument for Lucan authorship is the most plausible: what later writer (for those who deny Lucan authorship all put Luke-Acts late), who had access to Paul's letters, would *create* so many discrepancies in the portrait of his hero, the apostle Paul?'

Considering the strong, early Christian evidence for Luke as the author of the third Gospel and Acts, and the appropriateness of this tradition with reference to the internal data of the New Testament itself, there are good

reasons for concluding that the traditional solution is reliable and true (Peterson 2009: 60).

Having established Luke as the author of Luke-Acts, it is necessary to look at Luke the man, and the implications of who he was in relationship to this study. He is believed to have been a second-generation Christian from Antioch, who researched eye-witness accounts in order to write a history of the life and ministry of Jesus (Lk.1:1-4; Utley 1996:1). That he was a former inhabitant of Antioch is attested in both the Anti-Marcion Prologue to Luke (175 CE) and Eusibius of Caesarea in *Historia Ecclesiastica III 4*.

Scholars such as Kummel (1975:149) assume Luke was a Gentile, basing that assumption on the fact that he seems to have no knowledge of the geography of Palestine, and avoids Semitic expressions. Moreover, he writes the most grammatically correct *Koiné* Greek of all the New Testament writers, leading scholars to presume that Greek was his mother tongue (Utley 1996:1). This is consistent with the statement in Colossians 4:14, which, according to Black (1995), implies that he was a Gentile.

Furthermore, Luke omits all the controversies with the Pharisees regarding the Jewish oral law, leaving some to surmise that as a Gentile the Law was not important to him (du Plessis 1983:150) and that he would not have been familiar with the Old Testament laws. I find this objection problematic. In the first place, Luke constantly makes reference to the Old Testament and takes great care to show that his Jewish characters observed the Law of Moses and participated in the sacrificial system after becoming Christian (Ac 21). He is also the only Gospel writer who tells us of Jesus' circumcision on the eighth day (Lk 2:21), of Mary's purification on the fortieth day (Lk 2:22), of the disciples' observance of the Sabbath 'according to the commandment' after the death of Jesus (Lk 24:1; Black 1995).

As Nolland (1989: xxxii-xxxiii) suggests, Luke had perhaps for some time been a 'God-fearer', a Gentile who worshipped God, appreciated Judaism,

and attended the synagogue. The implications of this for the chosen text are that Luke was not only aware of the purity laws, but also the immense significance of Jesus' touching the leper. This will be studied in more depth in Chapter Four.

As mentioned above, Luke was thought to be a physician (Col 4:14) and certain passages in Luke's Gospel concur with this description. A comparative study of the healing narratives found in the Synoptic Gospels reveals 'medically tinted language' and terminology present in Luke that is not present in parallel accounts (Hendriksen 1978:4). For example, according to Luke, the man was 'full of leprosy' (Lk.5:12) whereas Mark 1:40 and Matthew 8:2 referred to him merely as a 'leper'. It is more likely that a physician would note the advanced state of the disease. Moreover, only Luke 22:44 referred to Jesus' sweat (ἰδρώς) – a much-used term in medical circles (cf. Mt 26:36-46; Mk 14:32-42). In addition, only Luke referred to Jesus' sweat as consisting of great drops of blood (θρόμβοι αἵματος), a medical condition alluded to by both Aristotle and Theophrastus (Hobart 1882: 80-84). Furthermore, the terminology Luke used in his healing accounts has close parallels with the ancient Greek medical writers such as Hippocrates, Galen, and Dioscorides (Stein 1992:21).

Despite Hobart's (1882) argument that the language used in Luke-Acts was that of a physician, Cadbury (1920:39–72.) refuted this, arguing that the language used merely proved that Luke was an educated man (Morris 1983:17). However, even though the language and style do not *per se*, prove that Luke was a physician, it can be used to confirm the statement by Paul in Colossians 4:14 and assertions made by the Church Fathers that Luke was a physician (Geldenhuis 1993:21).

Taking Luke 5:12-15 into consideration, as a physician Luke would have been aware of the socio-cultural conditions surrounding leprosy, and therefore would have understood the physical and psychological suffering endured by the leper in his isolation, and the importance of Jesus touching

the man as part of his healing, despite the social taboo against doing so. Thus, Luke's Jesus focuses not only on the physical healing, but also on the importance of putting steps into place to ensure the restoration of the leper to a 'valued state' and the re-socialisation into his community (Lk 5:14; Malina and Rohrbaugh 1992:315). This insight is important for elucidating the passage.

### **2.3 Date of Writing**

There is much debate concerning the date of the writing of the Gospel of Luke, with three dates being suggested – namely, around 63 CE; late first century, and early second – century (Morris 1983:22; Esler 1989:27). An early date has been favoured by many conservative and evangelical Christians (such as Carson *et al* (1992:16), Robinson (1976:86-117) and Geldenhuys (1993). These emphasize the eye-witness character of its contents and that Luke's abrupt ending of Acts with Paul awaiting trial in Rome presupposes that Luke and Acts were completed prior to Paul's trial (62 CE). Since Luke was written and delivered first, this would place the writing of the Gospel very early indeed.

Scholars such as Kummel (1975) and Maddox (1985:9) prefer a later date, between 75-85 CE, for the writing of the Gospel. Those who date Luke after 70 CE, do so mainly because, in their opinion, Luke, in chapter 21 verse 20, which parallels Mark 13:14, alters Mark to include Jerusalem in the phrase because he was aware of the fall of Jerusalem (Carson *et al* 1992:116-117). Du Plessis (1996:156) who regards Luke 21:20 as a *vaticinium ex eventu*, also places the writing of Luke after 70 CE. However, Geldenhuys (1993:31-32) refutes this, saying that since Luke was writing to a Gentile audience he omitted 'the abomination of desolation' as it would have been incomprehensible to these readers. In addition, Lucan use of Mark would suggest a date of 70–90 CE (Stein 1992:25).

A third group of scholars, namely O'Neal (1970) and Knox (1942), has argued for a second-century date. This date has been suggested on the grounds that Luke knew of and consulted Josephus' *Antiquities* (published about 94 CE), maintaining that Luke 3:1–2 shows dependence on Josephus. The argument assumes that when Luke referred to Lysanias as Tetrarch of Abilene, he obtained this information from Josephus. However, unless it can be established that Josephus implies only one Lysanias, and that Luke could not have obtained his information elsewhere, there is no ground for maintaining that Luke wrote subsequent to Josephus (Morris 1983:25; Guthrie 1990).

The arguments for a date in the eighties or early nineties outweigh the arguments for an early or later date. I, therefore, adopt the position, in this mini-thesis, that Luke was written around 85-90CE. This is confirmed by Bosch (1993:2).

## **2.4 Audience**

Both Luke and Acts are addressed to someone named Theophilus (Lk 1:3; Ac 1:1). It has been suggested that since Theophilus means 'friend of God', the name does not refer to an actual person, but to a metaphorical or fictional one (du Plessis 1996:154). It is far more likely, however, that Theophilus was a real person. He was probably a Gentile Christian of some means and social position as the description 'most excellent' is a polite form of address. Although Theophilus is the named recipient and was certainly an intended reader, Luke likely also wrote for a much larger audience, which is predominantly Gentile (Black 1995). Support for this view includes Luke's avoidance of Semitic expressions, such as 'rabbi' and 'hosanna' (du Plessis 1996:154); the substitution of the term 'lawyer', for the more Jewish 'scribe' (Lk 10:25; 11:52); and the explanation of Jewish customs (Lk 22:1, 7; Stein 1992:26).

However, none of these reasons by themselves is absolutely convincing for deciphering the ethnicity of the wider recipients. Matthew, for instance, also omitted Semitic expressions and had a similar concern for the Gentile

mission. Nonetheless, together these considerations suggest that Luke was writing to a primarily Gentile audience.

## **2.5 Occasion and Purpose**

Luke wrote at a time of increased challenges for the early church. There was a growing deterioration between the Christians and devotees of Judaism after the fall of the Jerusalem Temple, until the eighties, when that connection was finally broken (Bosch 1993:14). While many Gentiles responded positively to the Gospel message, many Jews rejected it, with Jews becoming more and more hostile towards what they regarded as Christian heresy (Strauss 2006:208). At the same time, the difference in lifestyle and values of Christians compared to the surrounding pagan Greco-Roman culture gave rise to resistance and conflict; at times even resulting in persecution (Gonzalez 2001:7). In addition, the Gentile Christians were experiencing a growing identity crisis.

Over the years, certain clusters of opinion as to the purpose(s) for which Luke was written, have emerged. However, I proceed on the assumption, based on Lk 1:1-4, that there was a primary kerygmatic purpose in the writing of Luke with secondary purposes reflected more specifically in Acts – such as apologetic, conciliatory, and evangelistic purposes.

The prologue of the Gospel of Luke (1:1-4), indicates that Luke intended to write an account that was historically accurate. However, the fact that Luke is selective in what he records, indicates that Luke desired his Christian readers to come to a greater assurance, of the certainty of their faith (cf. Lk 1:4; Stein 1992:40), the subject of his work being those ‘things which have been fulfilled among us’. Luke sought to create an accurate and comprehensive account of the unique life of Jesus the Christ to strengthen the faith of Gentile believers. The Greek used by Luke is not formal: he used *Koiné* Greek, so that as many people as possible could read and understand his book.

As Black (1995) and du Plessis (1996:158) concur, it is best to suggest that Luke-Acts was written primarily for Christian Gentiles who needed 'assurance' in a number of areas, both historical and theological. Thus he writes as a pastor and theologian, seeking to assure those under his care that they really were full members of God's household and to convince his readers of the spiritual significance of the salvation-bringing events he records (Maddox 1985:186-187). Furthermore, he shows them how they were to live out their Christian beliefs, which would sometimes clash with the customs of their society (Constable 2014:2; du Plessis 1996:159; Esler 1989:16).

Linked to the above primary purpose, Luke evidently had an apologetic purpose in writing; he wanted to present Christianity as distinct from Judaism but also as its fulfillment (Wenham 2005:101). In addition to the above purposes, Longenecker (1981:222) suggests that this account could also have been used within various churches for instructional purposes.

If indeed Luke wrote as a pastor and theologian, he would have intended that his presentation of Jesus' attitude towards the leper in Luke 5:12-16 would most certainly provide an indication of how his first readers, and thus members of the household of God, should also treat those who were stigmatized and ostracized by society.

## **2.6 Genre of Luke**

The question of genre is important, for it determines the lens through which one comes to understand that literature. Along with Matthew, Mark and John, Luke forms a unique literary genre. The Gospel genre was a unique creation of Christian writers, determined partly by the realities of Jesus' life and partly by the demands of the Christian mission (Peterson 2010). Some scholars highlight its biographical sub-nature while others its historical sub-designs. However, all scholars emphasize its theologically intended intentions.

Burridge (1992:247-251), having compared the Gospels' formal features with those of a diverse selection of Greco-Roman biographies, concludes that the focus on the person of Jesus as well as a number of biographical features places the Gospels within the biography genre. This is confirmed by van Unnik (1973:129-140) and Shellard (2002:19). Green (1995:17), on the other hand, advocates that Luke 1:1-4, and with it the whole Lucan project, belongs within the literary tradition of ancient historiography. However, although Luke might be a historian, he is at the same time a theologian, using history to express his theology (Maddox 1985:16). For Luke, narrative is proclamation. As Green (1995:17) says, 'Luke makes use of history to preach, setting forth a persuasive narrative interpretation of God's work in Jesus'. It is for this reason that the exegesis of Lk 5:12-16 will focus not only on the socio-historical and cultural background, but also on the theological and pastoral messages it projects.

## **2.7 Literary Structure and Key Literary Motifs and Devices of Luke**

For the purposes of this study, the focus of the following discussion will essentially be on Luke's Gospel. There can be little doubt that Luke's theological insights influence the structuring of his Gospel (Du Plessis 199:163). Moreover the literary structure of his narrative contributes to its overall message. The progression of Luke's narrative does not appear to be dictated by chronology but rather by geography, themes, literary balance and design (Kistemaker 1982:39).

The literary structure of Luke's Gospel can be divided into three main sections, with introductory and concluding chapters. The Gospel begins with the exordium (1:1-4), in which, in one sentence that uses some of the best classical Greek prose in the New Testament, Luke explains the goals of his work (Just 1992:276). Immediately following the prologue, Luke shifts to a more Semitic style, making it sound like the Old Testament Scripture, as he narrates the infancy narratives (1:3-2:52). Through this shift in literary style, Luke wants his audience to realise that this is no ordinary narrative, but is about Jesus Christ who is the continuation and

fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecies (Just 1992:276; Hendricksen 1978:34).

Luke then covers John's ministry and the preparation for Jesus' ministry (3:1-4:13). Chapters 22-24 constitute the conclusion in the form of the passion (22:1-23:56), and resurrection and ascension narratives (24:1-53). In between are three sections describing the ministry of Jesus: 3:1-9:50 – the Galilean ministry; 9:51-19:27 – His journey to Jerusalem and 19:28-21:38 – His ministry in Jerusalem (Kistemaker 1982:39).

Luke uses geography to structure his story and to advance his literary and theological goals (Leifield 1997). Luke framed his Gospel geographically, beginning and ending in Jerusalem (Puskas and Crump 2008:122). The text begins by describing a scene that takes place in the Temple in Jerusalem (Zechariah sees the birth of John the Baptist in a vision) and that is also where it ends (the disciples maintain their prayer).

Throughout the Gospel, there is a strong sense of movement towards Jerusalem, the city of destiny in God's plan, with interjections that keep reminding the reader that Jesus is Jerusalem-bound (cf. 9:51; 53; 13:22; 33; 17:11; 18:31; 19:11, 28; Leifield 1997).

Luke also uses chiasms as a major structural device, thus giving unity to a composition or section of text (Constable 2014:4). In addition to these larger patterns, Luke shows great skill in the use of contrasts or balance, through which similar stories are told in different contexts, to bind the narrative together and to demonstrate the coherence of the plan of God (Ashley 2000:15).

Another motif which is commonly employed by Luke is that of 'table-fellowship', where meals are scenes of intentional significance (cf. 5:29-39; 9:11-17, 58; 11:37-54; 15:1-2; 19:1-10; 24:28-35). Luke also uses repetition (cf. Lk1:80; 2:40; 2:52). For example, themes indicating concern for the poor and marginalized extends from Mary's song (cf. Lk 1:52, 53)

through Acts (cf. Lk 4:18; 5:27–32; 10:25–37; 21:1–4; Ac 1:14; 3:1–10; 4:34–35; 9:3).

## **2.8 Major Theological Themes**

Much has been written on the theology of Luke over the last three decades and continues to be the subject of debate. Key theological themes and motifs include: God (including God's plan and sovereignty); salvation; Christology; the kingdom of God; eschatology; prayer; pneumatology; discipleship; wealth and possessions; concern for the poor and marginalized (including 'the despised', women and children); promise and fulfillment; ecclesiology; and joy.

It is impossible to address all the above in this study, therefore, for the purposes of understanding the wider context of Luke 5:12-16, this section will focus primarily on themes relevant to this research such as salvation, God, Christology, the kingdom of God, Luke's universalism, concern for the poor and marginalized, and discipleship.

### **2.8.1 Salvation in Luke's Gospel**

According to de Villiers (1996:173) and Bock (1994b), God's plan of salvation, which is also His plan of action for saving sinners, is the central theme which offers the key to Luke's theological thinking. The terms σωτηρία ('salvation') and σωτήριος ('saving') occur frequently in Luke's writing, as does his preference for the title Saviour (Σωτήρ) for Jesus (Morris 1983:36; Carson et al 1992:128). The appearance of Jesus of Nazareth who came to seek and save the lost (Lk19:10), is the disclosure of God's plan to bring salvation to all people who acknowledge that plan and accept it (de Villiers 1996:173).

As the messenger of salvation, Jesus is the self-revelation of the God who saves, the One who proclaims the presence, and will of God, and the One in whom God's will and work are carried out (Scott 1996). Thus the fulfillment of God's plan starts with Jesus' ministry and continues through

His return (cf. Lk17:21–37; 21:5–38; 24:43–49; Ac 2:14–39; 3:14–26; Bock 1994b).

Luke's concept of salvation has social, physical, and spiritual dimensions (Witherington 1998:143). It includes the total transformation of human life, together with forgiveness of sin, healing from sickness and disease, and release from any kind of bondage. Indeed, when Jesus defines His own ministry, he describes it in holistic terms. Quoting from Isaiah 61:1-3, He says that He has been anointed 'to preach the Good News to the poor, to proclaim freedom for the prisoners, and recovery of sight for the blind, and to release the oppressed' (Lk 4:18-19 NIV; Scaer 2005:67). The relevance of this, in exegeting Luke 5:12-16 will be further discussed in Chapter Five.

### 2.8.2 God in Luke's Gospel

Luke emphasizes that salvation is God's plan. Both the Gospel and Acts speak of this plan or purpose (βουλή) of God, which began in the Old Testament and reached its fulfilment in Jesus Christ's life, death, resurrection and exaltation (cf. Lk 7:30; Ac 2:22–25; 5:38; 13:36; 20:27; Stein 1992:45). One of the ways in which Luke communicates God's sovereignty is in his use of the word δεῖ. This word, which is usually translated 'ought' or 'must', implies that there is no alternative action; what God wills to be done 'must' be done (cf. Lk 2:49; 4:43; 9:22; 13:16,33; 17:25; 19:5; 22:37; 24:7,26,44; de Villiers 1996:188; Morris 1983:13). This is carried over into Luke's theology of the cross. The cross is a must: it is not a tragic accident but a fulfilment of the Old Testament promise found in the Servant songs of Isaiah 53. There are no surprises to God in the events surrounding Jesus; they are a part of God's plan and Jesus' mission (Bock 1994b).

### 2.8.3 Christology of Luke's Gospel

Jesus Christ lies at the centre of Luke's Gospel. This is not only evident in the Gospel, where Jesus is the main theme from chapter 1 through to chapter 24, but also in the early sermons in Acts which are Christologically oriented (cf. Ac 2:22-36; 3:13-23; 4:10-12; 10:36-43; 13:23-20; Stein

1992:49). In stressing Jesus' humanity Luke builds his Christology 'from the earth up' (Bock 1994b), giving the most complete account of Christ's ancestry, birth, and development (cf. Lk 1-2).

As Saviour, Jesus did not come simply to 'save souls' but to rectify the wrongs of society, and the fallen-ness of humanity. The presence of various social boundaries in first century Palestine ostracized many, and in so doing undervalued those created in the image and likeness of God. Throughout His ministry we see Jesus healing broken relationships among people who have been separated from each other because of boundaries based on gender, race and religion (cf. Lk 7:36-50; 13:10-17; 9:52; 10:25-37; 17:11; 5:12-16; 8:43-48). Jesus' actions towards those whom He 'saved' revealed a compassion which Luke repeatedly stressed in his Gospel. Jesus' compassion is revealed in His reaching out to touch the 'untouchable' leper (Lk 5:12-16), and in His raising from the dead, the only son of a widow (Lk 7:11-15). Jesus' empathy for those in distress, regardless of race, is plainly portrayed in the parable of 'The Good Samaritan' (Hendriksen 1978: 43; cf. Lk 10:25-37).

With the other Synoptic writers, Luke records the phrase 'Son of man' as Jesus' favourite self-designation (cf. Lk 5:24; 6:5, 22; 7:34; 9:22, 26; 12:40; 17:26, 30; 18:8). It appears that Jesus used the phrase to clarify His mission as a spiritual one, to counter the political-nationalistic overtones of the contemporary use of 'Messiah.' (Scott 1996). As Saviour and Redeemer, Jesus claimed and manifested a unique authority (Lk 20:1-8; 6:1-5) over nature (Lk 8:25; 9:10-16), over disease (Lk 4:38-40; 7:22), and over Satan (Lk 4:36, 41; 10:17-20; Stein 1992:49).

#### 2.8.4 The Kingdom of God in Luke's Gospel

For Jesus, the message of His work was synonymous with the Good News of the 'kingdom of God' (Lk 4:43; Scott 1996). According to Luke, the kingdom of God has come through Christ's incarnation and earthly ministry. Not only have Old Testament prophecies been fulfilled in His coming (cf. Lk4:16-21, 43; 8:1; Ac 28:31) but salvation has come upon

God's people (Lk1:68–71, 77; 2:30; 3:6; 19:9–10). This theme also plays an important role in Acts (cf. Ac1:3; 8:12; 14:22; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 31). One of the signs that the kingdom had come was that God was now visiting the outcasts. For example, when Jesus was asked by John the Baptist whether He was the One the people expected (Lk7:20), He answered that the blind, the lame, the lepers, the deaf, the dead, and the poor were receiving the divine salvation (Lk 7:22; Stein 1992:50).

However, other aspects of kingdom promise have not yet come, and await fulfillment in the future (cf. Lk 17:22–39; 21:5–38; Ac 3:20–21). While Luke sees a period of faithful service prior to the Lord's return (cf. Lk 19:11-27), he also retains strong eschatological teachings (cf. Lk 12:35-40) and a sense of immanency of the *parousia* (e.g. Lk 18:8). It is against this background that Luke's unique emphasis on the word, 'today' (cf. Lk 19:9-10; 23:43) is to be seen.

#### 2.8.5 Luke's Universalism

Because of who Jesus was and because of the in-breaking of the 'new order', past expectations needed to be re-evaluated (Scott 1996). The salvation Jesus offered was not limited to a particular culture, nor could it be earned by observing ethno-cultural religious rites and laws, even Jewish ones. For God's will to save was not restricted to Israel, but extended to all people (cf. 1Tim 2:4; de Villiers 1996: 184). Restrictions of place, ritual cleanness, race, and commandments such as circumcision are not required by God for salvation (Scott 1996). Thus Jesus repeatedly calls into question those barriers that divide ethnic groups, men and women, adults and children, rich and poor, righteous and sinner and others (Green 1995:47-48). As Ashley (2000:iii) proposes 'in contrast to the temple system of purity and exclusivity, Jesus, now sets the boundaries of the new community – those of inclusivity, faith and forgiveness'. The universal destination of the Good News continues in Acts as the story of salvation spreads to all peoples (de Villiers 1996:172).

### 2.8.6 Ministry to the Outcasts in Luke's Gospel

Of all the Gospel writers, Luke shows a particular interest in the marginal groups in the Palestinian society of his day, showing a special interest in 'social concerns', and responses to human need by Jesus and the church (Scott 1996). Luke understands Jesus' earthly ministry as one in which people on the fringes of society received compassion. His ministry was, opines Bosch (1993:19), characterized by, amongst other things, 'a deep concern for those banished to the peripheries of humanity' – those who were ostracized for being on the wrong side of the economic and societal and religious norms. These included the poor, outsiders such as the Gentiles and Samaritans, women, children, tax collectors, and others deemed 'unclean' such as sinners and lepers who were regarded as outcasts in Israel.

In the Gospel's opening thematic sermon (Lk 4:16–30) Jesus announced that the Spirit had anointed Him to bring the Gospel to the poor, freedom for prisoners, sight to the blind, and release for the oppressed (Lk 4:18). Thus, Jesus' ministry to the hated tax collectors or the lepers was not simply an accident but intentional. This was confirmed by the 'I must' phrase of Luke 19:5 and the explanations in Luke 5:32 and 19:10. Furthermore, Jesus' association with outcasts was understood by His opponents as intentional (cf. Lk 5:32; 19:7).

### 2.8.7 Discipleship in Luke's Gospel

At the same time, Luke teaches that the 'law-free' Gospel carries responsibilities. The conduct of believers must be pleasing to God and in harmony with the nature of the God, with whom they are in relationship (Scott 1996). The nature of new community life is seen in various emphases, including the call to love (Lk 6:20–48), prayer (Lk 11:1–13; 18:1–14), the call to be persistent (Lk 8:13–15; 9:23; 18:8; 21:19), the need to forgive (Lk 6:37; 11:4) and the need to avoid obstacles to discipleship, such as excessive attachment to wealth (Lk 8:14; 12:13–21; 16:1–15, 19–31; 18:18–25; Bock 1994b).

## **2.9 Conclusion**

This chapter has addressed the context of Luke-Acts by considering the following aspects: its background in terms of author, date, audience, occasion and purpose, genre, literary structure and devices and its major theological themes. The Gospel of Luke presents Jesus as the Son of God who came to earth as the Saviour of the world. He extends the Good News of God's salvation to everyone, regardless of ethnicity, wealth or status. From start to finish, Luke articulates Jesus' story as accessible to those previously thought to be outside the boundaries of divine graciousness (such as lepers): the unknowns, the outcasts, the lost, and the hopeless. God's saving action in history has not passed them by, but through Jesus is present and active within their community lives.

In order to place Luke 5:12-16 into the context in which it was set, the next chapter seeks to examine certain aspects of the socio-cultural and religious world present within the narrative.

## **Chapter 3**

### **The Socio-Cultural and Religious Context behind Luke 5:12-16**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

As Esler (1989:24) correctly argues, the socio-cultural and political issues facing Luke's community, have shaped his theology and have provided the context in which the Gospel narrative was written. In order to accurately interpret the meaning of Luke 5:12-16 to its first readers, it is essential to understand the socio-cultural and religious background in which Luke's narrative was set. With the purpose of forming a foundation upon which to interpret the meaning of Luke 5:12-16, this chapter will include a brief study of the socio-cultural background of first century Palestine, focusing on the purity laws and specifically how they led to the ostracism of those diagnosed with  $\tau\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\pi\tau\alpha$ /λέπρα ('leprosy').

#### **3.2 Socio-Cultural and Religious Background of Luke 5:12-16**

All the canonical Gospels testify that during His ministry Jesus came into contact with people who were adversely affected by the purity regulations of Judaism. The man 'full' of leprosy (Lk 5:12) was one such person. Since the significance of Jesus' words and actions towards this man cannot be fully grasped without an understanding of the purity system of Judaism, this will now be discussed.

### 3.2.1 Purity System of First Century Palestine

One of the core values of first-century Judaism was God's holiness. The purity laws and holiness code ritualized an exhortation from Yahweh: 'Be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy' (Lev 19:2; Kim 2008:92). Thus purity as an integral part of Israel's religious system can be described as the condition that God required of His people: only those who were pure could come into contact with Him (Neusner 1975:21).

The concept of holiness, which was understood as purity or separation from everything unclean, was centred and based on the temple and a particular interpretation of the Torah (Borg 1994:109). In the Hebrew Bible, purity is linked with the requirement of righteousness (Chilton 2000:877). The Psalms explicitly state this association (Neyrey 1986:105). Only the one who has clean hands and a pure heart may ascend the mountain of the Lord and stand in His holy place (Ps 24:3–4; cf. Ps 18:21; 26:4–7; 51:4, 8, 9, 12; 119:9). It is this requirement of holiness that is the context within which the laws of purity had their place (Westerholm 1992 126).

Purity is best understood in terms of its binary opposite, dirt/pollution. When something is out of place or when it violates the classification system in which it is set, it is dirt/pollution (Douglas 1966:35). Persons who belonged to the sphere of pollution, impurity, or uncleanness were displaced from society because they were perceived as dangerous to the 'holy' community and the temple. They were labelled as outsiders and as persons who were beyond the salvation map, and as such were lost, cut off from the 'holy' community, the temple, and ultimately from God (Kim 2008:97). The reason for this was that uncleanness was not just a lack of cleanness, but it was a power that actively defiled (Kittel 1967:416).

It is in this light that Draper has argued that the purity laws may also be viewed as 'human constructs designed to control' others within a society, shaping society in terms of pure and impure, clean and unclean (Draper 1997:224). This 'control' has both positive and negative connotations. Sometimes the motivation for categorizing clean from unclean has

important implications for the very survival of the community – as is usually the case for infectious diseases. Some of Israel's purity laws were, in that sense, medically sensible. However, in its practical operation, some of these laws led to discrimination and unnecessary separation as the following discussion will reveal.

The purity system in first century Palestine established and controlled the social identity, social classifications and social boundaries of the Jewish people, separating the insiders from the outsiders (Malina 1993:153). The priestly writings of the Hebrew Bible, especially the holiness code (Lev 17–26), present a systematic legislation on the topic of purity and impurity (Wright 1992:729). These purity laws regulated nearly every aspect of being human — diet, childbirth, sickness, hygiene, sexuality, personal relationships and behaviour. As such, they provided a map or series of maps which coordinated and classified things according to their appropriate place (Neyrey1986: 93).

In the Judaism of Jesus' time, there were many such maps: for persons (designating whom one could marry, touch, or eat with; who could enter the various spaces in the temple and temple courtyards); for times (which specified rules for the Sabbath, when to say the Shema); for places (spelling out what could be done in the various precincts of the temple) and for objects (clarifying what was considered clean or unclean, could be offered in sacrifice, or could be allowed contact with the body). These social maps set out boundaries that fitted over individuals, groups, over the environment, over time, and over space. These boundaries were known to all members of society, ensuring that all were aware of when their behaviour was 'out of bounds' (Malina and Rohrbaugh 1992:72).

The purity system in first century Palestine must be understood as a programme for survival (Borg 1984:2). As the Israelites sought to separate themselves from the Gentile nations after their return from exile, the purity laws became a matter of covenant loyalty and national identity (Freeman 2014). They needed to know what was ceremonially 'clean' and what was

‘unclean’ in order to remain submissive to God’s rule and to be fit for His presence. When the Israelites were incorporated into the Roman Empire after the unsuccessful Maccabean war, the need for separation to ensure holiness became more significant. In response, two pro-holiness movements who extended the laws of ritual purity emerged, namely, the Essenes and the Pharisees (Borg 1984:2).

The resultant profusion of the purity laws along with difficulties in complying with them, marginalized some of the masses and stratified the society economically and socially (Mathew 2000:102), dividing society into the righteous and sinners, the clean and unclean. For ordinary people, the major hindrances to religious conformity to the demands of the purity system were largely economic. The daily living conditions of the poor continually exposed them to contagion, and most of them could not afford the necessary offering to the temple, which was to be made for the removal of impurity and forgiveness as part of the ritual cleansing processes (Borg 1984:15). Consequently, the poor were often excluded from full participation in the ‘covenant life’, as a result of religionist interpretations of the law.

The Pharisees placed themselves on a tier between the common people and the priests and sometimes did so for social gain. Some used bodily purity and boundary laws to obtain and maintain public influence and religious status (Wenell 2009). In the hands of the religious elite, the purity system became instrumental in oppressing the poor and marginalizing the people (Mathew 2000:102). Moreover, these exaggerated purity laws neglected key aspects of justice. For instance, according to these exaggerated purity laws, washing hands or not eating with the sinners or excluding of the sick were more relevant than meeting human needs (Helder 2013). The problem here was not the law *per se*, but its perversion at the hands of religionists.

The interaction between the human body and the social body is emphasized by Douglas (1966:113) who in *Purity and Danger* suggests

that the physical human body is a symbol of the social body. She further argues, that purity rules pertaining to the 'human body reflect the society's larger concern for its social borders'. Skin diseases were treated as abnormal and those who presented with them were shunned because they did not fit with the acceptable whole, healthy skin.

Thus it stands to reason that the diseased (or impure) body threatened the integrity and purity of the social body, and the imperfect body was void of holiness. This is confirmed in various parts of the purity code. To be in the 'holy' presence, descendants of Aaron were to have no bodily defects (Lev 21:17). Those who were blind; the lame; the disfigured or deformed; the one with a crippled hand or foot; the hunchbacked or dwarfed; one who had an eye defect; those with festering sores; men with damaged testicles were all prohibited from approaching the altar (Lev 21:23; Pillay 2008:57).

Since the function of the boundaries (the rules of purity) was to separate, to purify, and to punish transgressions, it was important for a person to preserve his/her body in 'wholeness' in order to keep his/her place in that society (Kim 2008:95). How this was reflected in people plagued with leprosy will now be discussed.

### 3.2.2 Leprosy and Impurity

In the New Testament, the Greek term λέπρα ('leprosy') was used to translate the Hebrew word צַרְעַת which refers to a variety of skin diseases of varying severity. Few, if any, of the cases mentioned are the same as our modern understanding of leprosy (Hansen's disease) which is caused by acid-fast bacillus of the genus *Mycobacterium leprae* (Barry 2012). צַרְעַת in the Old Testament describes lesions or defects which are found on human skin, in fabrics (cloth and leather), and on walls of houses if they contain patches of mildew or other fungal growths. Λέπρα in the New Testament is used of human skin diseases, following the Old Testament tradition (Wright and Jones 1992:277).

Biblical symptoms include swelling, crusty or scabby rash, flaking or exfoliation of the skin and bright inflamed areas, often lacking the distinctive symptoms of Hansen's disease, such as numbness, depressed nose, and problems with extremities (Wright and Jones 1992:277; Sainsbury 1992:69). Having said this, there is some evidence which suggests that although the New Testament term λέπρα generally followed the Old Testament tradition concerning צָרַעַת, Hansen's disease could have been included under this term. The indication that the disease appeared in the Near East in about 300 BCE allows the possibility that the disease existed in Palestine just before the time of Jesus (cf. Dols 1979:314-318).

The Old Testament often (although not always; cf. Exod 4:6) considers צָרַעַת as God's punishment for sinful actions. Examples include Miriam in Numbers 12:10-15, Gehazi in 2 Kings 5 and King Uzziah in 2 Chronicles 26: 16-21. Although the Bible does not specifically identify leprosy as a consequence for sin, opines Sainsbury (1992:73), there are instances where biblical scribes seem to link the two. The case of Miriam's punishment for slandering her brother Moses (Num 12:5) became the core of various rabbinic lists warning of ominous consequences for moral and ritual sins (cf. Midrash *Leviticus Rabbath* 17:2; 18:4). Ancient writers regularly refer to lepers as 'defiled,' a description which 'syntactically connects leprosy with sin' (Sainsbury 1992:73). This is further supported by the statutory requirement that lepers identify themselves to the public as 'unclean'. Although the Old Testament may explain צָרַעַת as arising from sin, having the disease itself with its associated impurity is not a sin. Moreover, as Wright and Jones (1992:280) suggest, having this type of impurity is not a sinful state, only mishandling it is.

צָרַעַת was associated with death and people perceived it as living death (Nm 12:12; Job 18:13). The Mosaic Law prescribed that the person be cut off from society, including his/her family. Compelled to put on the marks of mourning as if they were dead, male lepers were obliged to rend their

clothing, and spiritual law required lepers of both sexes to cover their upper lips and wherever they went to shout 'unclean' in order to warn others away (Lev. 13:45; Num. 12:12). Moreover, as Viljoen (2014:2) and Marshall (1978:208) argue, it was so difficult to heal leprosy that some rabbis compared such healing with raising a person from the dead.

Λέπρα was regarded as a defiling disease, as those who were infected were physically and ceremonially regarded as unclean (Morris 1983:189; Wright and Jones 1992:281). Furthermore, the ceremonial as well as the physical uncleanness was regarded as contagious, and thus those 'diagnosed' with the disease had to be segregated from any social contact (Gooding 2013:104; Lawrence 2013:80). Thus, to protect the 'wholeness' of the community, specific rules were given in Leviticus 13-14 to control the condition of צָרַעַת.

Leviticus 13 describes the process by which a priest would distinguish what is in fact צָרַעַת, and thus declare a person unclean. But seclusion was not enough. If a leper merely entered a home, he or she rendered the dwelling unclean. By lying under a tree, the leper defiled anyone passing beneath its shade. Moreover, as Sainsbury (1992:72) proposes, to contract leprosy not only meant a life of isolation from family, but also made one the target of scorn and ridicule.

Leviticus 14 describes the rituals to be performed by a priest and the person who has been healed of the leprosy in order to be declared clean once again. The cleansed leper must present himself to the priest for inspection. If he/she passes the inspection and is considered cured by the priest, he/she must bring the required offering (Lev 14:1–7). That offering consisted of two clean, living birds. One had to be killed. The other bird had to be dipped in its blood and then released. The blood of the slain bird was also sprinkled over the healed person seven times. He/she was then pronounced cured and could be restored to full social and religious fellowship with his/her people (Hendriksen 1978:291). Since this entire

ritual portrayed the cleansing and removal of sin (Bock 1994a:476) it further encouraged the assumption that leprosy was the result of sin.

Because λέπρα was associated with uncleanness, a great social stigma was attached to it (Pilch 1981:108-113; Evans 1990:87), making it a socially devalued condition with serious social consequences. Moreover, the purity system of Judaism not only socially ostracized those persons who were labelled as lepers, leading to their impoverishment, but also required them to pay the Temple and the priesthood in order to come back into normal social life. Religiously they led a miserable life, because their disease was often considered as punishment of their sin. Psychologically their condition was totally hopeless because leprosy was treated as living death and healing was almost impossible. Thus, those persons who were considered lepers were oppressed socially, religiously, economically and psychologically (Mathew 2000:103). The intensification of purity laws left many people outside the 'pure' community since holiness advocated a separation from everything unclean.

It was within this socio-religious milieu that Jesus ministered, offering an alternative community, which was based on a more inclusive kind of holiness (Helder 2013). Luke's narrative of the cleansing of the leper provides a graphic picture not only of Jesus' power to cleanse, heal and restore those deemed untouchable because of their uncleanness, but of a new community based on love which ultimately represents true faithfulness to God's law.

### **3.3 Conclusion**

First century Palestine was characterized by a society that was organized with purity as the core value. Although designed as a means for survival in a hostile context in which the Israelites lived after the Babylonian exile, the intensification of purity laws by the Pharisees and Essenes generated a class of 'untouchables' and outcasts. Since physical wholeness was associated with purity, and lack of wholeness with impurity, lepers were seen as 'untouchables' and outcasts.

What has been gleaned from this chapter regarding the purity system and its relationship to those suffering from leprosy will have a direct bearing on the chapter to follow, especially in terms of providing a context on which to evaluate Jesus' response to the plea for cleansing from the leper. The following chapter focuses on both a literary analysis and a detailed grammatical and theological study of the central text of this thesis, Luke 5:12-16.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Literary, Grammatical and Historical Analysis of Luke 5:12-16**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter provides a literary and exegetical analysis of Luke 5:12-16 in order to establish the author-intended meaning for its original readers. While the Bible is part of God's revelation and self-disclosure to humanity, it is a revelation expressed in human language. It is, therefore, important to acknowledge the text as a literary construct (Tate 2002:67). To this end, a brief literary analysis of Luke 5:12-16 is undertaken. This is followed by a grammatical analysis and synthetic commentary of Luke 5:12-16.

#### **4.2 Literary Analysis of Luke 5:12-16**

The gospel of Luke is filled with accounts of Jesus engaging with unlikely and excluded individuals. The healing of the leper found in Luke 5:12-16, is one such incident where we see Jesus the 'Physician' at work as He heals one who has been ostracized and marginalized as a result of his disease. Luke 5:12–16 describes Jesus' second encounter with a socially-ostracized outcast, the first being the demoniac in Luke 4:33–37 (Danker 1988: 118).

This pericope falls within one of the two major movements of Luke's narrative about Jesus' ministry prior to His entry into Jerusalem: Jesus' ministry in Galilee (4:14-9:50); the other being the extensive account of the journey to Jerusalem (9:51-19:28). In this section of his Gospel, Luke reports many examples of the expression of Jesus' miraculous power and preaching of the gospel in order to prove that He was the Spirit-anointed Saviour promised by the Old Testament (cf. Isa 61:1-2).

The healing of the leper is the last miracle before a series of events in which Jesus finds himself in direct controversy with the Pharisees (5:17–6:11; Bock 1994a:465). In chapters 5:12-6:11 Luke relates five incidents in which (apart from the first) various actions by Jesus and His disciples led to criticism from the Pharisees. Through these incidents Luke shows how the new way of the kingdom of God is contrasted with the Pharisaic emphasis on the strict keeping of the Law (Carson *et al* 1994:989).

In Luke 5:12-26 two stories of people in need of healing (a leper and a paralytic) are narrated back-to-back. To these stories Luke has provided a literary boundary through the recording of his story about Simon's decommissioning and calling (5:1-11), and its counterpart in the calling of Levi the tax collector (5:27-31). Thus the two narratives of healing are embraced by accounts concerning two 'professionals' whose lives undergo a complete turn-around, with the common thread of restoration or forgiveness binding them all (Danker 1988: 120).

These individuals would have been marginalized by their community because of their physical ailments and their religious ramifications, or because of the choices they have made that have determined their situations in society. Therefore, it is possible that these characters represent stereotypical characters in first century Palestinian society, and Luke wished to present his readers with a clear picture of how Jesus deals with these groups of religiously shunned or excluded people.

Differently framed from the way it is in Mark, the narrative can be recognized as an independent unit. According to Bovon (2002:174) the miracle (vv. 12b–14) follows a short exposition (v. 12a) and ends with the reaction of the crowds (v. 15), and a counter-reaction by Jesus (v. 16).

The narrator of Luke's Gospel has various ways of increasing the sympathy of his readers for the afflicted person, thereby heightening the interest in his/her fate. The description of the leper arouses the reader's compassion. The term 'full of leprosy' implied a great deal of physical suffering, social exclusion, religious impurity and a scant hope for any change (Wiarda 2010:11). It also suggests that the sufferer is a victim, thus inviting the reader's sympathy. The reader is left hoping that Jesus' response to the leper's petition 'if you are willing,' which offers Jesus the choice whether or not to grant the cleansing, is a positive one. It is thus evident that the first readers of this passage would most likely have taken serious note of Jesus' action and regarded it as an exemplar of how they also must respond to people in similarly stigmatized situations.

As mentioned in the previous chapter Luke uses chiasms as a major structural device throughout his Gospel and thus gives unity to a composition or section of text (Constable 2014:4). In this regard, as an independent unit, Luke 5:12-16 can also be viewed as a chiasm (Goulder 1964:138):

- A (5:12) – Wish and prayer
  - B (5:13) – Healing of Disease
    - C (5:14) – The Command of Jesus
  - B' (5:15) – Confirmation of the Healing
- A' (5:16) – Jesus withdraws for prayer

Through this literary device the reader is drawn to the central point of this narrative – that in healing this man Jesus was interested not only in restoring him physically but also socially and religiously. Consequently the healing of this leper can only be completed once he has shown himself to

the priest, and has made an offering in obedience to the purity laws established by Moses.

After the insertion of Luke 5:1–11, Luke again resumes the Marcan sequence of events he had been following in 4:31–44 (Mk 1:21–39). Beginning with the healing of the leper in Luke 5:12, he continues this sequence until Luke 6:19 (Mk 1:40–3:12; Stein 1992:171). The cleansing of the leper is part of the Synoptic Triple Tradition; the Lucan form depends on Mark 1:40-45 and parallels Matthew 8:1-4. Many words and phrases are repeated verbatim such as the verbal exchange between Jesus and the leper, which constitutes the core of the account (cf. Mk 1:41b-42/Lk 5:13 and Mk 1: 44b/Lk 5:14b; Nolland 1989:225).

#### **4.3 A Grammatical Analysis and Synthetic Commentary of Luke 5:12-16**

This exegetical study is written up using the commentary style in which verse by verse exegetical observations will be made as they relate to the text (Smith 2008:180).

##### **4.3.1 While...leprosy' (Lk 5:12a)**

While in 'one of the towns', Jesus is approached by 'a man full of leprosy'. The opening words - ἐν μιᾷ τῶν πόλεων 'in one of the towns'- are Luke's redactional introduction, which gives a smooth transition from the preceding narrative, although the time and place of the incident are vague (Marshall 1978:208). This imprecision is of no consequence since, as Butler (2000:77) asserts, the focus of this narrative is not on the place but on the person. Bovon (2002:175), taking note of the plural form of towns, suggests that this is in line with Jesus' announcement in Luke 4:43 and emphasizes His extended sphere of activity.

Luke is the only evangelist who describes this man as πλήρης λέπρας ('full of leprosy') and not simply a man with leprosy (cf. Mk 1:40; Mt8:2). This is consistent with the thought that Luke being a physician, would have taken note of the physical condition of the man, rather than, as has been

otherwise suggested, an attempt to heighten the miracle (Marshall 1978:209). Since biblical leprosy covered a range of conditions that affected the skin (see Leviticus 13:1–59), it is not possible to say precisely what disease is meant in this passage. While some cases may have indeed involved considerable deformity and sickness, every instance of λέπρα had significant ritual, and hence social, implications. The sufferer was excluded from religious life and often even the company of others, resulting in isolation, loneliness and marginalization.

Whatever this condition was, in common with many other physical ‘malfunctions’ mentioned in Leviticus 15, it rendered a person not only physically unclean but also ceremonially unclean. Since both were regarded as contagious the sufferer was segregated from the presence of God in the temple and from social contact. Although the outcomes of this segregation were severe and led to ostracism and isolation, it is important to put this purity law into perspective. Its primary aim was the protection of the health of the nation and not necessarily the disenfranchisement of the sufferer (Gooding 2013:104). Having said this, however, because of the strictness of the Pharisees in expecting complete obedience to these purity laws, many suffered unnecessary isolation.

#### 4.3.2 ‘When he saw Jesus...clean’ (Lk 5:12b)

Luke says four things about the man in 5:12b, namely: he saw Jesus, he fell prostrate, he pleaded, and his words are reported. In the following discussion each will be deliberated upon individually.

##### 4.3.2.1 ‘He saw Jesus’

The leper ἰδὼν τὸν Ἰησοῦν (‘having seen Jesus’), does not keep his distance as is required by the Law (cf. Lv 13:45, 46) but approaches close enough to Jesus for Him to be able to reach out and touch him. The word ἰδὼν is probably used in this narrative as Strong (2009: 556) suggests, in the sense of seeing with a discerning mind. Here we see an outcast, someone to be avoided at all costs, taking matters into his own hands as he breaks through the religious and social boundaries that have been

created within the society of his day. This leads one to ask: what did he 'see' in Jesus that caused him to take this bold step? Perhaps, as Marshall (1978:208) suggests, Jesus already had a reputation as a healer and this would have emboldened the man to break through the confines of his isolation to seek cleansing. Craddock (1990:71) concurs with this, suggesting that this violation of the law of isolation is evidence not only of the leper's desperation but of his belief that Jesus could help him.

#### 4.3.2.2 'He fell prostrate'

By some means or other he had heard of Jesus' healing miracles (Lk 4:37) and believed that He was able to 'heal' his 'leprosy'. Just as Simon (Lk 5:8) fell at Jesus' feet out of shame for his sinfulness, this man prostrates himself before Jesus out of shame for his uncleanness (Liefeld 1984:878). Moreover, the posture of the leper is an expression of reverence or respect (cf. Lk 8:41; 17:16; Ac 5:10; 9:4; 10:25; Stein 1992:172). Unlike Simon, however, who wanted to separate himself from Jesus, this man sought interaction with Him.

#### 4.3.2.3 'He begged him'

The leper had nothing to offer Jesus but his faith and in faith he begs Jesus to cleanse him. Luke and Mark both add ἐδέηθη, 'begged,' indicating that the words of the leper following this verb, are a request and not simply a confession, despite being in the form of a declaration (Nolland 1989:227). In using the word 'begged' Luke emphasizes that it is out of a deep personal need that the leper makes an earnest, and specific request.

#### 4.3.2.4 'Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean'

Luke and Matthew both add Κύριε, 'Lord,' in reporting the leper's words; a term of address which matches his prostrate position. 'Lord' is a term of respect that recognizes the higher status of the person addressed (Craddock 1990:71). Although Κύριε is in the vocative mood (which makes it equivalent to the title 'Sir'; Lewis 1999:23), the connection with Peter's use in Luke 5:8 of the same address suggests that more is involved than a polite 'Sir'. According to Marshall (1978:209), here it is one of respect

acknowledging Jesus' divine ability. While Ryu (2012:171) agrees that the title of Lord is an expression of respect, he queries its inference to Jesus' divinity. In agreement with Ryu, Hagner (1995:198) proposes that the term 'Lord' seems to be used as 'a confession of faith in Jesus as God's messianic agent but not necessarily a belief in Jesus' deity.

The word θέλης 'if you are willing' implies volition and purpose on the part of Jesus (Unger and White 1996:162). The confident request: 'If you are willing, you can make me clean' is not conditional upon the ability of Jesus to heal but rather upon His willingness to do so. The statement in Greek is put in a third-class condition form (indicated by ἔάν, 'if') indicating that the leper is not sure what Jesus might do (Bock 1994a:473). If this is correct, why did the leper doubt Jesus' willingness? Perhaps as Craddock (1990:71) suggests 'his problem is not one that evokes compassion, such as blindness or a withered limb; his disease is social, evoking repulsion'. Consequently, understanding the revulsion his disease evoked, the condition, 'if you are willing,' expresses a sense of unworthiness rather than doubt in Jesus' ability or kindness (Liefeld 1984:878).

Or are these words, as Geldenhuys (1993:185) suggests, an expression of humility as he submits himself to the Jesus' sovereign nature? Farren (2002:72) does not agree with this perspective, but instead suggests that the leper was actually challenging Jesus to act and putting Him on the spot. However, the leper's prostrate posture and his recognition that Jesus was Lord favours the former suggestion that this was indeed an act of humility and faith, as the leper leaves the initiative and choice to Jesus. A person can ask God to do something, but the ultimate decision to act is up to God.

Custom and law suggest that the leper should be isolated, maybe even that he is guilty of severe sin, but the isolated man believes that Jesus can reverse his condition and cleanse him (Bock 1994a:473). Therefore, in faith he tells Jesus 'you can make me clean.' That this was an act of faith is confirmed in the man's boldness in approaching Jesus. As Tannehill

(1986:95) asserts, the boldness of the leper suggests that through faith he was able to throw off his helpless resignation once he recognized a power outside of himself capable of meeting human need. The Greek word δύνασαί translated 'can' in the NIV, may also be translated as 'power' or 'ability' (Arndt and Gingrich 1979: 207). This word used of Jesus is thus indicative of the leper's belief in Jesus' power or ability to be able to cleanse him.

He asks for cleansing, a request that goes beyond a mere cure. The choice of the verb καθαρίσαι, 'to cleanse' focuses attention on the sense of defilement that is attached to the condition (Nolland 1989:227). As Bock (1994a:473) advocates, it 'is an abnormal and polluted condition with which Jesus is asked to deal'. He was asking Jesus not simply to cure his disease, but to heal and restore his position in society and his spirituality. He wanted a holistic healing – not just for the physical ailment to be cured, but also for his psychological, social and spiritual status to be restored which had been destroyed as a result of the diagnosis of 'leprosy.'

In the Septuagint (LXX), καθαρίσαι 'to cleanse', is applied both to the healing of the leper (e.g. Lev 14:4: perfect participle) and (more often) to the ritual cleansing declared by the priest (e.g. Lev 14:11; Nolland 1989:227). According to Bock (1994a:473) any suggestion that the man is simply asking for recognition of an already accomplished natural healing is wrong. Had that been the case, the leper would have only been required to see a priest and would not have needed to involve Jesus. Moreover, Luke 5:13–14 leaves no doubt that the leper had the disease before coming to Jesus and that he left without the disease (Bock 1994a:474).

#### 4.3.3 'And Jesus...clean!' (Lk 5:13a)

As in the request, Luke describes both the nonverbal and verbal aspects of Jesus' response in answering the leper's entreaty in 5.13a - namely: He reached out His hand, He touched the man, and He spoke affirming His will and commanded a cleansing. In verse 13a Luke, as does Matthew, does not mention Mark's reference to Jesus' emotion – 'filled with

compassion' (Mk 1:41). This corresponds well with Luke's tendency to remove references to Jesus' emotions (cf. Lk 6:10; 9:11, 48; 18:16–17, 22; 22:40; 23:46). He also eliminated Mark's 'strong warning' in Luke 5:14 (cf. Mk 1:43). In so doing Luke focused the reader's attention more on the power and will of Jesus than on His emotions (Stein 1992:172; Fitzmyer 1981:572). This is confirmed by Bovon (2002:176) who proposes that the aim of this narrative is to show how the will of Jesus decides and how, behind this willingness, there is a corresponding ability. Having said this, however, it does not mean that Jesus was not moved with compassion: the very act of touching an outcast, was an expression of Jesus' compassion. This is confirmed by both Ryu (2012:174) and Wiarda (2010:14).

#### 4.3.3.1 'Jesus reached out His hand'

As 'the Holy One of God' (Danker 1988: 119), those around Him and particularly the Pharisees would have expected Jesus to uphold the commandments of Moses and warn the man to keep his distance. However, rather than being repelled by the leper's approach and pleading, Jesus reaches out His hand to establish contact between them.

The phrase ἐκτείνας τὴνχεῖρα ('reached out His hand') helps the reader to focus on the action of Jesus, who in effect, moves in exactly the opposite direction from which society would have (Cotter 2010:39). Jesus does not ignore the leper but meets him at his point of need through this initial response to him. Moreover, this was no accidental touch – Jesus reaches out to him. At the same time, the first readers would not miss the fact that Jesus could extend his hand and touch the man; they would have been shocked by the proximity of the leper to Jesus (Lev 14:45-46; Ryu 2012:174).

Marshall (1978:209) notes that this phrase ἐκτείνας τὴνχεῖρα, is reminiscent of the way in which God stretches out His hand to accomplish mighty acts (Ex 6:6; 14:16; 15:12; Je. 17:5; Ac 4:30), and also of the action of Moses (Ex 4:4). Will Jesus accomplish a mighty act through

reaching out His hand? Luke answers this question affirmatively as the narrative unfolds.

#### 4.3.3.2 'Touched the man'

In response to the man's faith Jesus reaches out to touch him, a man whom, according to society, no respectable person would touch. That Jesus is willing to touch this man shows not only His authority over the disease (even one that defiles; Lev 14:46), but also His great compassion and love. As Bruner (2004:301) says, it was through Jesus' touch that the leper, who had probably not been touched intentionally since he contracted leprosy, experienced God's identifying love.

It is important to note that Jesus does not always lay hands on those whom He is healing. He could have cured the leper through a word of healing, such as when He heals the paralytic in the next periscope (Lk 5:18-26). In light of this, Cotter (2010:39) proposes that Jesus' touch was not connected to the healing as it was in the cure of Peter's mother-in-law (cf. Lk 4:38-39). Rather, through the deliberate action of touching the leper, Jesus goes beyond healing the man as He breaks down the purity barrier between Him and the unclean leper. That His touch was not out of necessity, but out of mercy (Kingsbury 1977:346-347), would have helped Luke's community to note that mercy 'takes the primary place in Jesus' messianic mission' (Ryu 2012:167).

Although the purity laws in Leviticus 13 and 14 indicate that, aside from touching a dead body, this was the single most unclean action Jesus could have done as a Jew, He is not deterred. Jesus wanted the leper to feel His willingness and sympathy (Hughes 1998:170), as His actions expressed His readiness to help the leper 'unconditionally back into the community' (Cave 1979:245-250). Through showing acceptance of this man, despite his affliction, Jesus restores his dignity and self-worth, as He affirms him as a person and empowers him. Jesus is pictured here as One whose concern for people and their sense of dignity outweighs legal prescriptions

(Viljoen 2014:6).The significance of this will be more fully discussed in the next chapter.

As with the above elements within this narrative, not all scholars agree upon their purposes. While Warrington (2000:35) does not dispute Jesus' touching of the leper as an expression of compassion, he believes that it is more probable that Jesus touched the leper on purpose in order to 'establish his authority' Although leprosy contaminates everyone who makes contact with it, as the Son of God, Jesus appears not to be contaminated. Acknowledging the Judaic understanding that 'God alone can heal a leper or raise the dead', Guelich (1989:74) agrees with this point of view.

While aspects of this view may be conceded, it nevertheless does not obviate the point that the touch of Jesus also indicated His acceptance. There is little evidence in this Lucan narrative to suggest that Jesus' authority was under challenge. Although His authority was certainly conveyed by His verbal expression that followed His touch – 'I am willing', in touching the leper, Jesus was indicating much more than His authority over the disease. Rather, His focus in touching the ostracized man was to express His acceptance of him.

#### 4.3.3.3 "I am willing," he said "Be clean"

Using the leper's own words 'θέλης...καθαρίσαι', Jesus replies in His two-word reassuring riposte 'Θέλω, καθάρισθητι.' Jesus' response: 'I am willing' again emphasizes Jesus' solidarity with the man, His attention to him and His desire to communicate His sincere caring. Moreover, as Ryu (2012:179) suggests, this repetition of the leper's request shows Jesus' strong will to fulfil the leper's hope. The NIV translation of 'Θέλω', 'I am willing,' leaves out the frankness of the verb expressing Jesus' deep desire to help him. Perhaps the Phillips translation (1995) best captures Jesus' reply – 'Certainly I want to.' The man is addressed with a compassionate and concerned directness both physically and verbally. This is established before Jesus pronounces the word of command and

'healing' (Cotter 2010:39). Had Jesus healed the leper before touching him, the significance of His being prepared to stand in solidarity with this man, in his uncleanness, would have been less stark.

The socio-religious status of the leper, forming the obstacle in this narrative, which needs to be conquered, would be clearly understood by Luke's community and would have consequently aroused their sympathy. Jesus refuses to recognize the socio-religious barrier and affirms the dignity of this 'untouchable' man by touching him in his isolation and shame. Through this action Jesus shows that not only is He willing to cleanse him but that He is also not intimidated by his 'uncleanness'.

#### **4.3.4 'And immediately...him' (Lk 5:13b)**

All three parallel Gospel accounts describe the cleansing as being accomplished 'εὐθέως' ('immediately'), thus calling attention to the instantaneous effect of Jesus' words and deed (cf. Lk 4:39). Since Jesus' word is one of power, the leper is cured in that instant (Stein 1992:172; Nolland 1989:227; Danker 1988:119). The cure is immediate, as is the case in all of Luke's miracle stories (Black 1995).

#### **4.3.5 'And he...them' (Lk 5:14)**

To the leper, now healed, Jesus gives three instructions: to remain silent about the miracle, to show himself to the priest and to offer sacrifices. Although in verse 14 Luke reproduces the Marcan form of Jesus' words, he makes certain changes to suit his purposes. Luke replaces the conventional λέγει ('he says') with παρήγγειλεν ('he ordered'). This word (from παρά – 'from close-beside') and ἀγγέλω ('inform') implies the giving of a command that is fully authorised, because it has gone through all the proper necessary channels (Strong 2009:54). Thus Luke's choice of words once again confirms Jesus' authority. Furthermore, Luke recasts the less important first request – the command to silence – from Mark's direct command into indirect speech – αὐτῷ μηδενίειπείν (tell no one).

Although scholars continue to debate the particular reason why Jesus ordered the leper to be silent, there is no consensus to this inquiry. Various suggestions that have been made include the following: the silence would prevent excessive public excitement over Jesus' miraculous work (Bock 1994a:476), the silence would provide evidence of Jesus' compliance with the Old Testament law (Nolland 1989:228), and that it was appropriate until the leper went to the priest (Marshall 1978: 209).

Throughout the Synoptics, Jesus is shown as trying to restrict the spreading of a message about His miracles (cf. Lk 4:35, 41; 8:56; Mt 9:30; 12:16; Mk 1:34; 3:12; 5:43; 7:36; 8:26), to lessen the possibility of their proclaiming Him as their earthly Messiah. In line with this, Liefeld (1984:878) proposes that Jesus wanted first to 'do the works of the Messiah and to fulfill His basic mission of sacrificial suffering before being publicly proclaimed as Messiah'.

However, in contrast to the Marcan context (where the 'messianic secret' motif – commands to remain silent about Jesus' identity – is more prominent), Nolland (1989:228) and Geldenhuys (1993:186) suggest that the command to silence serves to highlight Jesus' attention to Mosaic stipulations. The Old Testament prescribed that lepers who were healed had to be re-examined by the priest and declared 'clean', and that a sacrifice was to be offered on their behalf (Lev 14:1–32). Priests alone could legally re-admit into the community those who had been 'cured' of leprosy and Jesus does not usurp this role.

That Jesus does not encourage infidelity to the law is attested to in the Gospels (cf. Mt 17:24-27; Lk 8:44). In fact, throughout the Gospels Jesus is depicted as an observant Jew who conformed to the accepted religious practices of His tradition (cf. Mt 26:17; Lk 4:15-16; 22:7-22; Jn 5:1; 10:22; 13:1, 29; Freeman 2014). Thus, through ordering the leper to follow this procedure, Jesus demonstrates faithfulness to the requirements of the law (Straus 2002:370). It is also a theme in keeping with Luke's interest in

displaying the continuity of the Christian proclamation with Israel's tradition (Esler 1989: 128-129).

Moreover, according to the Law, the leper was not to approach anyone until he was proclaimed clean by the priest (Ryu 2012 184). Therefore, he needed to keep silent about his healing until the priest had declared him 'clean'.

Having said this, however, I agree with Marshall who does not see any theological significance in Jesus' command to remain silent. Rather, he argues that it needs to be understood psychologically; the man, in his excitement, would want to share what had happened immediately, but instead he first needs to go to the priest to obtain his 'health clearance' and to offer thanksgiving to God (Marshall 1978:209). Moreover, public claim to cleansing from leprosy would have been inappropriate prior to priestly investigation.

For Luke the second request, presented in direct speech, is the important one (Nolland 1989:228). Understanding that the man's recovery would have no effect as long as the society did not recognize it as a purification, Jesus insists that the man present himself to the priest for formal approval and re-admission into society (cf. Lev 13:49). Only after he had been restored to full social and religious fellowship with his people would his healing be complete.

Luke wants his audience to understand that healing which comes from Jesus involves wholeness and the removal of barriers that prevents it. The narration of the healing of the leper confirms Tannehill's (1986:89) opinion that Jesus' healings in Luke are 'signs that a comprehensive saving purpose, which embraces the physical as well as other dimensions of life, is being realized in the world'.

The third instruction Jesus gave the leper was for him to offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for his cleansing. The Old Testament

prescribed that lepers who were declared 'clean' by the priest, were required to bring an offering (Lev 14:1–32). The whole question of 'Levitical' cleanness is a cultic one. The purpose of being in a state of cleanness was to enable one to participate in the temple sacrifices (Gaston 1970:91).

Since the leper had not only been healed but also cleansed, Jesus' instruction to offer sacrifices was not to assure the leper of cleanness but rather as a confirmation of the miracle (Bovon 2002:176). In addition, it confirmed that the leper had undeniably been readmitted into the community, and could participate once more in worship. In Leviticus 14:14-20 the cereal offerings made on behalf of the leper could be understood as representing an expression of gratitude for healing on the part of the cleansed leper (Harrison 1980:152). As Butler (2000:77) confirms, the sacrifice did not cause cleansing but rather testified to the cleansing and expressed gratitude to God. Furthermore, as the rest of the sentence indicates, it was an opportunity to bear witness.

Although εἰς μαρτύριον αὐτοῖς ('for a testimony to them') can be understood in several ways – the 'to them' can refer to the 'priest(s)' or to the 'people' – here it refers to the priest. Danker (1988: 119) endorses this view, believing that since the words preceding this phrase emphasize legal performance, Luke evidently understood the plural form 'them' in Luke 5:14 to refer to the religious authorities. Moreover, although no plural antecedent is expressed, it is implied in 'the priest,' for the latter represents the entire priesthood (Hendriksen 1978:292).

The expression can also be understood positively as a testimony 'for' them or negatively as 'against' them. This follows from the fact that the dative αὐτοῖς can be translated either 'for' or 'against'. We have an example of the latter in Luke 9:5, but the Greek wording there is different. 'For' them is therefore, best understood positively in this narrative (Stein 1992:173). The fact that the testimony is for the priest is not surprising, given their need to understand what Jesus represents (Bock 1996:157).

Through the word μαρτύριον ('testimony'), which is used in the sense that persons may receive knowledge or proof that would be for their benefit (Kittel 1967:475; Thayer 2000:392), Jesus is making an important point. He was inviting them to observe that through Him the divine powers of God were at work, which were infinitely greater than the priests or their rituals possessed – they could not heal a leper but He could (Gooding 2013:106).

It has been suggested that the command to go to the priest was evidence of Jesus' obedience to the law (Danker 1988: 119; Craddock 1990:72) and that He had no intention of challenging the religious system (France 1986:153). However, at this stage in Luke's narrative the priests were not yet enemies of Jesus. As Ryu (2012:185) confirms it was too early to read conflict into the story.

I believe, however, that this type of cleansing would no doubt testify to the induction of messianic times. Thus, it was to be a testimony to the breaking in of the Messianic Age (cf. Fitzmyer 1981: 572; Nolland 1989:225-229; Stein 1992:171-174; Kingsbury 1997:347-348). After all, the healing of lepers was one of the messianic signs that John the Baptist was reminded of when he was in prison – '...the blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured....' (cf. 7:22, NIV). This is confirmed by Warrington (2000: 140) who also disputes France's suggestion that Jesus' action will prove to the priests that He respects the Old Testament law.

#### **4.3.6 But so...sickness' (Lk 5:15)**

Did the leper remain silent, as Jesus had ordered? The answer is given in verses 15 and 16. Such news was too good to keep quiet. However, in contrast to Mark's Gospel which mentions the leper's transgression in not keeping silent (1:45a) and Jesus' being hampered by the spread of His reputation (1:45b), Luke reformulates the conclusion of the narrative, retaining from Mark only the concept of increasing crowds and Jesus' withdrawal into the wilderness (Marshall 1978:210). Luke notes instead

the consequences of Jesus' request being ignored: great crowds came together to seek Jesus.

Through verse 15 Luke summarizes the expanding influence and response to Jesus' work (other summaries are 4:14–15, 40; 6:18; 7:21). The crowds had two purposes as they came, namely, to hear the authoritative teacher and to be healed of their sicknesses; the revelation of power brought people to hear Jesus (Butler 2000:78). That this was not a once-off occurrence can be seen in Luke's use of the imperfect tense for both διήρχετο 'was spreading' and συνήρχοντο 'were coming'. According to Nolland (1989:228), verse 15 functions to generalize the single healing reported in the episode.

Moreover, Luke corrects the one-sided attention to healing with his ἀκούειν καὶ θεραπεύεσθαι, 'to hear and to be healed'. This is in line with Jesus' mission that involves both preaching and healing (Tannehill 1998:102). In this narrative Luke is possibly using ἀκούειν in the figurative sense of hearing God's voice with an understanding of what has been said (Thayer 2000:22). Θεραπεύεσθαι, as in most uses within the New Testament, does not refer to a healing as a result of medical treatment, which might fail, but to 'real' healing as a result of Jesus' power and ability to heal (Kittel 1967:129).

#### **4.3.7 But he withdrew...prayed' (Lk 5:16)**

In the closing scene of this narrative found in verse 16, where Mark suggests that Jesus went away simply to avoid the crowds (cf. 1:45), Luke suggests that His purpose in seeking to be alone was in order to pray. Moreover, his use of the imperfect tense of both verbs ὑποχωρῶν (withdrawing) and προσευχόμενος (praying) and with the plural ἐρήμους, (wildernesses) suggests repeated action. This is confirmed by Stein (1992:173), Craddock (1990:72) and Liefeld (1984:879) who propose that Luke is not referring to a single instance but to a pattern of repeated behavior. As so often in his Gospel, Luke (cf. Lk. 3:21; 6:12; 9:18, 28–29; 11:1; 23:46) again calls attention to the fact that Jesus repeatedly

withdrew to a quiet place to enjoy communion with God in prayer. This is an important aspect for Luke's community if they are to be effective in their Christian service and mission.

The importance of prayer in the life and ministry of Jesus cannot be disputed. However, rather than being an integral part of the narrative of the healing of the leper, Luke signals a fresh phase in the ministry of Jesus with his final sentence concerning Jesus at prayer in the wilderness. Just as before facing Satan's temptations, He had fasted, Jesus once again spends time with His father, before encountering repeated opposition from the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law. In this case the time of prayer serves as an unspoken warning that Jesus will be using that time apart to prepare himself for the series of conflicts that are about to begin (Ringe 1995:79).

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

This pericope forms part of Luke's narrative about Jesus' ministry prior to His entry into Jerusalem: Jesus' ministry in Galilee (4:14-9:50). That the author is a skilled literary artist, who makes use of various literary styles and patterns and motifs to enhance his narrative and to ensure that his purposes in writing his Gospel would be clearly articulated, is evident from the above discussion.

Various themes that have arisen from Jesus' healing of the leper, have been highlighted: Jesus' 'healing' power and the establishment of His authority, Jesus' obedience to the law, the breaking in of the Messianic Age and Jesus' compassionate treatment of an outcast. Some of the narrative's details taken singly could suggest more than one meaning or serve more than one purpose. However, when seen in combination, the various physical gestures and other details within this narrative of the healing of the leper taken together convey Jesus' compassionate response to meet a need (Wiarda 2010:14-15). Through the healing of the leper Jesus continues His mission to the outcast and the oppressed as He intentionally reaches out and touches the 'untouchable'. Human care and

compassion, not cultural values of honour and shame, direct Jesus' action (Samuel 2012:19).

For Luke the salvation offered by Jesus involves the 'whole' person and this 'healing' is no different. Having demonstrated His compassion in reaching out and touching the leper, Jesus healed him physically from the leprosy with a simple command: 'be clean'. However, Jesus goes beyond just physical 'cure', as He includes healing in spiritual and social terms. Jesus sends the leper to be declared clean by the priest and then to offer the required sacrifices. Having been cleared by the priest the leper would then be able to re-join the community and to participate again in both the joys and demands of the common life and be able to worship once more in the temple (Ringe 1995:79).

Having established the meaning of this narrative found in Luke 5:12-16 for its original readers, I will in the next chapter explore its theological and contemporary pastoral and practical significance in shaping Christian attitude towards people stigmatized by HIV and AIDS in Southern Africa.

## **Chapter 5**

# **The Theological and Practical Relevance of Luke 5:12-16 for Shaping Christian Attitude towards People Stigmatized by HIV and AIDS in Southern Africa**

### **5.1 Introduction**

Through the narrative of the healing of the leper in Luke 5:12-16, Jesus' ministry to the outcast and marginalized is visibly revealed. Here we see Jesus' compassionate acceptance of someone ignored and ostracized by society. This chapter addresses the contemporary significance of Luke 5:12-16; exploring both its theological and practical relevance. In particular, it will examine the relevance of the passage in shaping Christian attitude towards people stigmatized by HIV and AIDS.

### **5.2 Theological Significance of Luke 5:12-16**

Although there have been questions about whether or not the miracles recorded in the Gospels actually happened (cf. Dibelius (1971); Bultmann (1998); Theissen 1983:54; Schreiner 2008:65; Meier 1994:630) this

debate is not the focus of this mini-thesis. Taking the historicity of the miracles as a given, the emphasis of the following discussion is on the theology and purpose behind the miracle of Jesus found particularly in Luke 5:12-16.

Each evangelist had his own thematic emphases concerning Jesus' miracles. Luke highlights Jesus' compassion for the outcasts of society, which emphasizes the universalism of salvation, and the dawning of the kingdom of God, as evidenced through the preaching and healing 'works' of Jesus (Blomberg 1996). It is not surprising, therefore, that the four major emphases reflected through this miracle are: Jesus' concern for the outcast; the universalism of salvation, the inauguration of the kingdom of God, and Jesus' reinterpretation of the purity laws, as He healed one who was considered unclean and therefore beyond salvation. The above emphases make this passage theologically important indeed. Each of these aspects will now be examined, which will in turn provide a foundation for contemporary practical application.

### 5.2.1 Good News to the Poor and the Outcast and the Healing of the Leper

A dominant theological concern of Luke's Gospel is Good News to the poor and the outcast. According to Ayeebo (2006:16) Luke uses the word 'poor' to include those who are economically poor and those who are of lowly social status (cf. Lk 7:11-15). Secondly, the term includes those who are suffering and experiencing misery as a result of political and civil injustice (cf. 10:30-37), marginalization (cf. Lk 5:12-16; 8:43-48) and physical ill health (cf. Lk 4: 38-39; 14:1-4). Nicholls and Wood (1996: 58-59) suggest that 'the poor' represent the socially oppressed – 'those who suffer from the power of injustice and are harassed by those who consider only their own advantage and influence'. Yet they are: 'at the same time those who remain faithful to God and expect their salvation from His kingdom alone'. Being undervalued and unprotected, these social groups

suffered from a loss of dignity and had very few rights. As victims of society they were both 'voiceless and helpless' (Bosch 1996:436).

It is with compassion that Jesus responds to the desperate needs of the poor and the outcast. In His first recorded sermon in the Nazareth synagogue (Lk 4:18-21), Jesus outlines His mission and ministry. In what has become known as His inaugural speech, Jesus uses the words of the prophet Isaiah, through which He confirms that He has come as the Saviour to the marginalized (cf. Isa 61:1-2; 58:6). Jesus identifies Himself as the One who is the fulfilment of the Messiah's ministry, to a people in distress – the poor, the captives, the blind, and the oppressed (Morris 1983:106).

Moreover, Jesus announces that through His presence and ministry, the kingdom of God had arrived: the Good News is for now. This is confirmed by the words 'today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing' (Lk 4:21). The above is fulfilled succinctly in the narrative of the healing of the leper in Luke 5:12-16. Not only did the leper experience a healing touch from the Saviour but he also received a cleansing from his leprosy that day – 'immediately the leprosy left him' (Lk 5:13d).

The Isaianic citation (61:1-2) is not word for word, but has been re-interpreted for the Lucan context where it underlines the theme of release. Luke has omitted the phrase 'the day of vengeance of our God' (Isa 61:2b) and replaced it with the following phrase from Isaiah 58:6 'to release the oppressed'. Through recasting this passage, Luke shifts the focus from the original theme of judgement and retribution to one of release (Green 1995:77). This is confirmed through the phrase 'to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour' (Lk 4:19). Here the allusion is to the jubilee, the year of cancellation of debts (Lev 25:8-17). The reference to the year of Jubilee, is a reminder that God is sovereign, and His reign entailed freedom from bondage, and indicated a time of release (cf. Lev 25:8). The importance of the release effected by Jesus' ministry is evidenced in Luke's portrayal of healing, as being the removal of the barrier (sickness, uncleanness) that

kept sufferers from actively participating in their community. 'Release' for Luke signifies wholeness, freedom from social chains and acceptance (Green 1995:79).

The narrative of the healing of the leper is a vivid example of how Jesus' mission of preaching the Good News to the poor and outcast was fulfilled. Once an outcast separated from all forms of community life, the leper has now been made whole and reconciled to God and society. Having been released from that which was oppressing him, the leper was restored to fullness, physically, socially and religiously. This was initiated through Jesus' touch which revealed His acceptance of him and willingness to cleanse him. The example set by Jesus is important for us today as His disciples. As Jesus crossed boundaries to offer wholeness and freedom from oppression, our attitude towards those who are marginalized should reflect His acceptance of those considered as 'outsiders'. When this happens, we will be enabled to minister effectively to their needs and play a role in bringing about their release from all that oppresses them.

#### 5.2.2 Universalism of Salvation in Luke and the Healing of the Leper

The universal nature of Jesus' mission is another important theme that is emphasized in the Gospel of Luke. The Nazareth manifesto (Luke 4:16-32) gives expression to God's all-embracing concern for all people, especially those on the margins of society: the afflicted, the oppressed and the excluded (Lk 4:18; Ayeebo 2006:23). Throughout his Gospel, Luke underlines the fact that the love of God is open to all, irrespective of nationality, race, creed, wealth, or social class (cf. Lk 10:25-37; 14:12-14).

This universal dimension of mission led Jesus to challenge those social structures and practices that wittingly or unwittingly excluded others from being active members of the community (Senior and Stuhlmüller 1983:154). In His healing of the leper, Jesus, with a simple but profound touch, broke down the purity barriers that disaffected the outcasts (Lk 5:13). Instead of avoiding contact with people outside the accepted group, Jesus gives all people a chance to experience the Good News of the

kingdom of God (cf. Lk 3:6; Rhoads 2004:172). What is more, He enables such individuals to experience liberation by being close to them: eating in their homes (Lk 5:30; 15:2), treating them as equals and friends (Lk 7:34), and allowing them to feel God's love; thus revealing His tender care for the needy (Lk 5:1-16; Ayeebo 2006: 31).

Jesus' presence among 'sinners' and outcasts is an affirmation of God's acceptance of them. As Remus (1997:33) suggests 'it is a beginning of a healing of the rifts and tears in the social body; another manifestation of the dawning of the reign of God'. Through Jesus' healing of the leper we see Jesus purposefully touching the leper, indicating His acceptance of him despite his 'uncleanness'. Thus He healed the rift between the 'excluded' and the 'included'.

In the case of the leper who suffered bodily, Pilch (2000:29) rightly argues: 'Jesus reduces and removes the experiential oppressiveness associated with such afflictions' and as such positions the leper to be socially and religiously restored. This is achieved through 'cleansing'; being the means by which God extends this salvation (Shellberg 2012: i). As disciples of Christ we need to imitate His compassionate attitude of acceptance towards those who are marginalized rather than imitating the tendency to recoil from those outside our accepted norms.

### 5.2.3 Inauguration of the Kingdom of God and the Healing of the Leper.

Jesus' miracles are often traditionally understood as proofs of His deity. However, not all are necessarily displays of power or even proofs of His divinity, as they are expressions of the presence of God's kingdom in the person of Jesus (Twelftree 1999:30; Harrington 2006). This is confirmed by Saucy (1996:296) and Mott and Tilleman (2009:3), who propose that the miracles are more like samples of the reign of God, which is breaking in with Jesus' ministry, but which also is to come.

Furthermore, these miracles demonstrate that Jesus is the One who will fulfil all of God's Scriptures. Luke refers to Jesus' ministry as both fulfilling the prophetic proclamations of Isaiah (35:5; 61:1-2) concerning the preaching of liberation and demonstrating release through His miracles (Saucy 1996:283). Jesus accepts and heals those who were considered 'unclean' by the purity system and restores people with disabilities to wholeness of life (cf. Lk 13:11-13; 5:12-16; 8:43-48; Harding and Nobbs 2010:122). Luke thus presents Jesus' opening address as an announcement of the new era of salvation, the breaking in of God's kingdom (Green 1995:78).

Schlatter (1997:174-191) has shown that Jesus' miraculous demonstrations of the kingdom of God cannot be separated from His proclamation of the kingdom. The healings of Jesus were signs that lent truth and reality to His words, an extension of His concern and compassion for people (Dale 1989:21). Furthermore, like the parables and the other verbal means of communicating the kingdom, miracles have a revelatory function in the ministry of Jesus. Their significance in Jesus' life and ministry is captured succinctly in His own words: 'If it is by the finger of God that I cast out the demons, then the kingdom of God has come to you' (Lk 11:20; Saucy 1996:285).

Fuller (1963:41) goes on to suggest that the use of the passive ('lepers are cleansed', rather than 'I am cleansing lepers') in Jesus' reply to John's enquiry as to whether He was the expected Messiah (Lk 7:18-22) indicates that the things which are happening are not the works of Jesus Himself as a human wonder-worker, but 'works' that God Himself is doing through Him. Luke treats the miracles of Jesus as evidence that Jesus is the One anointed by God's Spirit (dramatized by His baptism; Lk 3:21-22) to carry out the divine mission in fulfilment of God's promises found in the Old Testament (Woodward 2000:126-127).

Jesus' mission was to bring the healing power of God's love to bear upon the moral, mental and spiritual sickness of His time. It was a question of rescuing people like the leper from a situation in which they seemed powerless to help themselves. The methods used by Jesus varied but whatever method He used there was always a strong sacramental element. Both word and touch were used as bearers and signs of God's healing love and power to all who sought Him (Dale 1989:22-23).

The healing of the leper was one such example. Through this miracle Luke stresses Jesus' ability to heal a disease that was thought to be incurable, thus validating Jesus' divine power. Moreover, it demonstrated the leper's liberation from social stigma and isolation. As disciples of Christ and members of the kingdom of God, we need to seek to facilitate the release of PLWHA from the stigma and marginalization to which they are subjected. To bring this about, our attitude towards PLWHA needs to demonstrate compassion rather than judgement.

#### 5.2.4 Miracles, Purity and the Healing of the Leper

Luke did not write from an interest in theologising for its own sake, but from the belief that the gospel must be correctly interpreted and presented across the whole range of troubles his readers may experience. Luke, therefore, did not radically differentiate between the theological realm and the social or the political, but saw them as closely inter-related (Ayeebo 2006:19). This is confirmed by Esler (1989:164-169) who stresses that a proper account of Luke's theology must take into consideration political and social influences. It follows, therefore, that in the context of a society that was preoccupied with ritual impurities contracted through physical contact, the mention of Jesus 'touching' the unclean as He ministered healing to them, becomes a subject of great importance (Pang 2009:13). Examples included lepers (Lk 5:12-16; 17:11-17), a corpse (Lk 8:54), a sinful woman (Lk 7:36-38) and an unclean woman (Lk 8:42-48).

The notion of what determined actual purity wrought conflict between Jesus and His contemporaries as outlined throughout the Gospels (Evans and Zacharias 2012: 183). Since, in the view of the Sadducees and the Pharisees, Jesus disregarded the purity laws when performing some of His miracles, their prominence and also their antagonism in the miracles stories is understandable (Saucy 1996:295).

Purity for the Pharisees was a matter of defense. However, as the 'gate-keepers' of religious and social purity, they largely lacked concern for inward ethical dispositions, having instead a predisposition for singling out persons with visible ailments (Evans and Zacharias 2012:184). Thus instead of expressing the holiness of God, ritual purity became a means of excluding people considered dirty, polluted, or contaminated (Clendenin 2009).

Luke 5:12-16 is different from Leviticus 13:40-46 in the sense that here, people who are diseased are free to come to Jesus and to ask Him for healing. In His response, Jesus neither declares the man unclean nor isolates him, but is willing not only to reach out and touch him but also to make him clean with immediate effect (Niyukuri 2012:78). This incident has been used to argue for Jesus' intentional violation of ritual purity by scholars such as Borg (1984:85). The difficulty with this argument is that Jesus commanded the leper to show himself to the priest after the healing. Not only that, Jesus also commands him to offer the sacrifices required by the Mosaic Law. Through this, Jesus indirectly affirms the Leviticus regulations (Lev 14:1-32) demanded of a cured leper (Pang 2009:20).

What Jesus did do, however, was jettison the traditional purity maps 'charting instead a different set of social relations through the marginalized experiencing His messianic grace' (Harding and Nobbs 2010:122). In so doing, Jesus enacts the true intention of the Law, 'which is to establish a holy community of believers within the kingdom of God' (Viljoen 2104:1). Rather than 'catching' uncleanness, Jesus spread His own wholeness, making others pure (Rhoads 2004:160). In light of this, one can conclude

that in touching the leper, Jesus does not actually undermine the Law of Moses, but fulfils its purpose by providing cleansing (Mt 5:17-48; compare Lev 13:3, 8, 10, 13, 17; Keener 1997). That Jesus does not abrogate the general purity system but rather redefines it, is confirmed by various scholars (cf. Neyrey 1986:91-128; 1991:271-304; Loader 2011; Ogunbanwo 2011:119).

According to Jewish religion and culture, Jesus would be expected to be a defensive person and avoid all contact with uncleanness. He would have certainly been expected to distance himself from the 'unclean' leper. However, instead of using the purity regulations to guard and protect Himself, Jesus is seen as revealing a reformed idea of purity, in which lines are being redrawn. Instead of avoiding contact with people outside the accepted group, Jesus spreads holiness making contact and in so doing gives the leper a chance to experience the Good News of the kingdom of God (Rhoads 2004:169, 72). In Borg's (1984:85) view, Jesus turned the purity system with its 'sharp social boundaries' on its head. In its place, He substituted a fundamentally alternate social vision. The core value of the Jewish purity system was God's 'holiness' (Lev 11:44) but Jesus points to God's 'mercy' (Neyrey 1986:91-128; Deut 4:31) or as Borg (1994:46-51) opines, 'compassion' as the core value (Exod 34:6-7; Lk 6:36).

The new community that Jesus announced was characterized by compassion, inclusivity and inward transformation as opposed to a focus on the law, exclusivity and outward ritual. Physical wholeness was not a criterion for being acceptable to God; rather it is what comes out of the heart that makes one acceptable (cf. Mt 15:1-3, 25-28; Mk 7:15). As Elliott (1991:390) proposes, Jesus' actions supported:

'a new social code, a code consonant with a new vision of an inclusive salvation and an inclusive community of the redeemed. No holy place or hierarchy set standards for social differentiation or discrimination because in the brotherhood of the faithful all was holy

(Lk 11:4-41; Ac 10:1-11:18; 5:9), and all persons were equally servants (Lk 17:7-10; 22:24-27). Humility (Lk 14:7-11; 18:14) rather than elitism, inclusivity (Lk 14:12-24; Ac 10:1-11:18) rather than exclusivity, consensus (Ac 2:42; 4:32) rather than constraint, personal commitment (Ac 3:11-16; 4:8-12; 5:23-31) rather than abstract Temple and Torah allegiance was the rule'.

For Jesus, human need overrides purity regulations (Ogunbanwo 2011:117). This is clearly demonstrated in His act of touching the 'untouchable' leper. Although the Pharisees, in rigidly enforcing the purity laws, did what they thought was best, they missed the heart of the law. Conversely, being opposed to the unyielding enforcement of the purity laws which neglected compassion and relationships, Jesus reaches out and touches the leper.

#### 5.2.5 Summary of the Theological Significance of Luke 5:12-16

Luke's thematic emphasis concerning Jesus' miracles highlights Jesus' compassion for the outcasts of society. His narrative of the healing of the leper brings the universalism of salvation and the dawning of the kingdom of God to the fore as well as highlighting the inclusive characteristic of divine compassion. Moreover, it is a clear illustration of Jesus' reinterpretation of the purity laws.

The above emphases have provided a foundation for a contemporary practical application, which will now be deliberated.

### **5.3 The Contemporary Practical Relevance of Luke 5:12-16 for Shaping Christian Attitude towards PLWHA**

The HIV and AIDS pandemic is one of the most disruptive social experiences on the present-day sub-Saharan Africa continent. It causes bodily, social and spiritual suffering of millions of people, and it brings sickness and death (van Klinken 2010:446). In 1991 the World Health Organization predicted that 9 million people would be infected and 5

million would die as a result of HIV and AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa by the end of that decade. However, this turned out to be a threefold underestimation (Pisani *et al* 2000:7). Now, however, we are past the stage of speculation. As Dawson (2004:5) says 'we know from experience that AIDS can devastate whole regions, knock decades off of national development, widen the gulf between rich and poor nations, and push already stigmatized groups closer to the margins of society'.

A key aspect of the problem is the social consequences of the disease. HIV and AIDS is a disease that not only ravages human bodies but also invades the attitude and behaviour of societies, generating a kind of social pathology as those infected and/or affected by HIV and AIDS are ostracized and isolated. HIV-related stigma refers to all unfavourable attitudes and beliefs, and includes patterns of prejudice, discounting, and discrimination, which are directed at people perceived to have HIV/AIDS, their significant others and close associates (Cogan and Herek 1998). The afflicted person is cast out of the social circles of the community, and is sometimes made to feel of little worth. On a personal level, stigma may mean loneliness, abandonment, ostracism, violence, starvation and death.

This is confirmed by Goffman (1963:12), who defines stigma as 'an attribute that is deeply discrediting', and that reduces the bearer 'from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one'. As a result, people who are stigmatized experience guilt, shame and rejection: feelings they may accept with a fatalism that stops them from seeking help, or trying to change things (Haug 2009:217). HIV-related stigma is regarded as one of the key drivers of the pandemic in sub-Saharan Africa, primarily through the role it plays in undermining the quality of life, the ability of individuals, families and societies to protect themselves from HIV, to provide assistance to those affected, and to access services and adhere to treatment if they become infected (Deacon 2005: viii; Campbell *et al* 2011).

Along with scientific and medical research, the church has played an important role in responding to HIV and AIDS in most parts of Southern Africa. The church in Africa, with its extensive reach and its influence that filters through most communities, is in a unique position to address most aspects of the HIV pandemic (Garland and Blyth 2005:277; Richardson 2006:38). By its very nature and calling, the church, is mandated not only to demonstrate and provide care, but also to inspire care-giving (Ferreira 2012: iii). However, although the church, views itself as an instrument of reconciliation, it has frequently been an instrument of exclusion and stigma (van Breda 2012:181).

That HIV-related stigmatization is not only present in society but also within the church in Southern Africa is well documented and has been the topic of various conferences and academic papers. Examples include the 5<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Stigma 2014, International AIDS Conference 2012, Anglican Bishops of Southern Africa Conference, A global ecumenical consultation in Nairobi 2001 and the following academic papers: Van Breda (2012), Faiz (2006), Mligo (2008), Niyukuri (2012), Senzanje (2011), Mills (2006), Ferreira (2012), and Harvey (2009).

The purity system which the Pharisees guarded and strictly upheld, divided society into the righteous and sinners; clean and unclean, 'insiders and outsiders'. Just as 'insiders and outsiders' were a prominent feature of first century Palestine, so too are they prevalent today in our HIV-infected world. To examine fully the contemporary practical relevance of Luke 5:12-16 for shaping Christian attitude towards PLWHA, the ensuing discussion will explore the following: some scholarly critics of Christian attitude towards PLWHA; the possible genesis of a negative Christian attitude towards PLWHA and the significance of the healing of the leper for shaping Christian Attitude to PLWHA.

### 5.3.1 Some Scholarly Critics of Christian Attitude towards PLWHA.

In parts of the Church, where holiness and purity are emphasized as the Christian way of life, there is a tendency to draw lines between the righteous and sinners; between 'insiders and outsiders' (Borg (1994:59). This is confirmed by Schellenberg and Geddert (2005:170-180) who suggest that certain parts of the church build boundaries between themselves and those who think and act differently from them. Furthermore, Messer (2004:192) proposes that the above focus weakens the Church's opportunity 'to apply healing insights from the rich Christian legacy of compassion, liberation, and hope'. The distinction between 'insider' and 'outsider', inevitably leads to value judgements (van Breda 2012:181). 'Insiders' are viewed as good and virtuous, while those 'outsiders' – the others – are bad and evil.

Leprosy and AIDS are among the few diseases in which society holds the afflicted personally and derogatively liable for their suffering. Just as those with leprosy were stigmatized and marginalized from the community, so too are some PLWHA (Hagens 2007:3-5; Niyukuri 2012:75, 79; Sainsbury 1992:68-77). AIDS is sometimes perceived as a disease of 'others' – of people living on the margins of society, whose lifestyles go against normal social practices and are often considered wrong or sinful (van Breda 2012:181). Consequently, sufferers are sometimes looked upon as those who are outside the circle of God's chosen people.

This perception has been reinforced by the view that HIV/AIDS is a punishment from God; that God stands in judgement on PLWHA. The implication of this was that sufferers have called down judgement upon themselves. Foster (2006:157-163) and Muneja (2011:7-8) suggest that studies show that early faith-based readings of the Bible in relation to PLWHA, were judgmental, moralistic and stigmatizing. Evidence of this is seen in a disengagement, or withdrawal of interest of some Christians, from PLWHA (Faiz 2006:20-23; Banda 2010:54-69). This discourse linking HIV/AIDS with specific biblical passages had a massive impact in

stigmatizing its sufferers so much so that to this day, some PLWHA refuse to be actively involved in the life of the church (Faiz 2006:20-23; Banda 2010:54-69), the only place where fear, ignorance, death and judgement can truly be replaced by love, life, hope and salvation. Rather than being a place of healing and hope, the church has sometimes contributed to the isolation and rejection that those living with AIDS experience.

According to van Breda (2012:188) some Christians feel that 'in a sense, PLWHA have been handed over to God'. Consequently, these Christians feel they are no longer obligated to become involved in the plight of those who are HIV positive, especially if sufferers have brought this condemnation on themselves through immoral behaviour. Louw (1998:71) rightly proposes that such labelling and scapegoating strip people with HIV/AIDS of their humanity. There are some who no longer see the infected sufferers as persons in their own right; they see only the act that is perceived to have led to the infection. As a result, they would rather have nothing to do with them. These harsh judgments betray 'a certain smugness, a 'they got what they deserve' attitude that defies common sense and Christian charity' (Sainsbury 1992:76). But what are the origins of these negative Christian attitudes?

### 5.3.2 The Possible Genesis of Negative Christian Attitude towards PLWHA

In order to understand these negative Christian attitudes, it is important to have a grasp of their context, and understanding of their origins is a good place to start. It is my view that the genesis of this 'negative Christian attitude' to PLWHA has come from three fronts. Each of these will be briefly discussed.

Firstly, from an historical perspective, HIV and AIDS, was first reported in the West among the North American homosexual community in the 1980s. In Africa, it was associated with forms of promiscuous sexual behaviour and intravenous drug users as early as 1982 (Mageto 2005:294). This initial association between the disease and sexual activities led many

Christians to regard it as God's judgement upon sinful lifestyles (Van Klinken 2010:449; van Wyngaard 2006:268). Thus the negative attitude towards PLWHA has grown out of the assumed link between sexuality and sin. It includes the widely held assumption that HIV is always contracted as the result of 'sinful' sexual relations, with the additional tendency to regard sexual sin as the gravest of all sins (Senzanje 2011:17). This association between HIV/AIDS and sex is now widely accepted as being too simplistic. It is not always the case.

Moreover, a serious theological objection to such a view of AIDS is that it totally negates the central dimension of compassion in the Christian tradition. Compassion is not confined to the righteous, but is extended especially towards sinners, the poor and the outcasts (Saayman and Kriel 1992:10). Additionally, as Denis (2003:68) points out, social factors such as the combined effects of migrant labour, urbanisation, poverty and poor socio-economic conditions, gender violence and abuse, are far more important than assumed levels of promiscuity in explaining the epidemic proportions of the spread. I agree with Nicholson (1995:34-35) who suggests that if we see AIDS as God's punishment for promiscuity, we shall fundamentally misunderstand the root causes of AIDS in Africa, and therefore miss the real point about where Christians should be involved.

Secondly, the Bible, particularly the Old Testament, has been used by some to justify the view that God makes certain that a person reaps what he/she sows, and that illness and suffering is usually the result of a person's sins or of the sins of their parents (cf. Ezek 18:20; Exod 20:5-6; West and Zengele 2004:114-116). The HIV and AIDS pandemic was thus interpreted as fulfilling the curses cited in Deuteronomy (28:22, 27), which include God sending wasting and incurable diseases to a stubborn and sinful generation (Chitando and Gunda 2007:1). Furthermore, Miriam is struck with a skin disease after God had rebuked her for rebelliousness towards Moses – again, the disease appears to be a consequence of transgression and, therefore, part of the punishment (Num 12; Stieberk

2003:28). These and other issues have fed the notion in certain quarters of the Church that reinforces the negative attitudes. These negative attitudes within the church towards PLWHA are as a result of the Church's uncritical, and sometimes simplistic and moralistic approach in the early phase of the epidemic. During this early stage, some African Christians were made to believe that PLWHA were immoral and disobedient, having been involved in promiscuous activities.

The third origin of this negative Christian attitude towards PLWHA was the belief that AIDS was extremely contagious. Based on this assumption, it was presumed that individuals with HIV posed a threat to their community of transmitting HIV to others through casual contact such as touching or sitting next to them or sharing of utensils (Patterson: 2005:36). Despite all medical evidence to the contrary, this myth still persists among some African societies resulting in the isolation and rejection of PLWHA.

While there is a complex of theological, biblical and social factors which have contributed to entrenching Christian negative attitudes to PLWHA, it is my view that there is no reason to retain these attitudes. Jesus' example in reaching out and touching the leper points us in the opposite direction, as the following discussion will confirm.

### 5.3.3 The Significance of the Healing of the Leper to Shaping Christian Attitude to PLWHA.

Reflection on the narrative of the healing of the leper reveals that although the dominant social vision in first century Palestine was centred on purity, the alternative social vision of Jesus was centred on compassion. As Borg (1994:59) opines, we see an alternative social vision in the message and activity of Jesus: a community shaped not by the ethos of purity, but by the ethos of compassion. Although the attitude towards people with leprosy and other physical defects was still characterised by discrimination and isolation, when Jesus came, He accepted the sufferers (cf. Mt 26:6-13; Mk 14:1-11) and healed them.

Through this miracle, Jesus announced the arrival of the kingdom of God, establishing a new kind of community in which God's presence and power would be evident above all, in a love through which unconditional acceptance and care of the needy is experienced even by the poor and the socially marginalized, like the lepers (van der Laan 2014:10).

The word 'compassion' originally comes from the two Latin roots, *cum* (with) and *pati* (to suffer) – thus, 'to suffer with'. The idea is that one individual enters into the hurt and suffering of another with true feeling and solidarity (Stone 2005: xi). This is vividly illustrated in Jesus' response to the leper's plea. Compassion is not distant, neutral or indifferent. It rather denotes engagement, involvement and activity. Compassion cannot be passive. It must move us to do something (Breetvelt 2009:19). Here we see Jesus being prepared to challenge the boundaries that were present and to stand in solidarity with an outcast.

However, too often compassion is translated as pity. Patterson (2009: 32) argues that compassion is not the same as pity, which implies condescension towards the person who suffers; compassion is neither condescending nor patronizing. She goes on to say that compassion should rather be 'an intelligent long-term commitment to seeing the person brought back to the fullness of life and restored to their own community' (Patterson 2009: 32).

Just as Jesus does not pass judgement on the leper, a compassionate response towards PLWHA needs to be one which is inclusive, and without judgement. In some contexts, religious doctrines, moral and ethical positions regarding sexual behaviour and homophobia, have helped create the perception that those infected have sinned and deserve their 'punishment' (Parker and Aggleton 2002:7). In light of Jesus' response to the leper, these judgemental attitudes should be challenged.

As van der Laan (2014:29) argues, statements which call upon Christians to be compassionate towards AIDS victims, but still judge them by saying

that they 'deserve' compassion despite their 'immoral behaviour' need to be avoided. An example of such an incorrect statement is one from the Catholic Bishops of Kenya (1999:61):

'We are particularly distressed by the stigma attached to people living with AIDS and their families. We call upon all Christians to overcome any prejudice they feel towards AIDS victims even when contracted through immoral behaviour.'

Compassion called upon here has not lost the judgmental tone of the discourse of morality. A genuine compassionate response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic would be inclusive, and without judgement – it would leave out the last sentence. Moreover, the above statement does not call for a solidarity which does away with 'othering'. Rather the tendency to see the people infected with HIV/AIDS as outside of the Christian community is effected through the use of 'people living with AIDS and their families'. A more inclusive statement would be 'We are particularly distressed by the stigma attached to those among us living with AIDS'.

In seeking to provide PLWHA with hope, that can enable them to deal with their present state, we need to avoid verbal 'forms of dualism that form clear-cut lines between 'us'/'the Church' and 'them'" (van der Laan 2014:29). However, to be fair towards these bishops it is important to acknowledge the difficulties and tensions that they would have encountered in addressing the problem posed by the interface between not seeming to condone 'immoral behaviour', but at the same time encouraging compassion towards those who sin or suffer its consequences. After all, there needs to be a balance between the sternness of the law and the mercy of the gospel. Since God is both perfectly and eternally holy (cf. Exod. 34:6-7; Ps. 62:11-12; Rom. 2:4-5; 1 Jn. 1:9) and loving, we 'must picture [God]' as Stott (1986:170) asserts 'neither as an indulgent God who compromises [God's] holiness in order to spare and spoil us, nor as a harsh, vindictive God, who suppresses [God's] love in order to crush and destroy us'. Therefore, believers should

hold themselves at the highest ethical positions as Jesus obviously did and yet at the same time compassionately reach out to others not living or sharing that position without judging.

Furthermore, Smith (2003:66) recommends that the church should 'see' and respond to suffering people in personal and creative ways; it is important that we understand and interpret the Christian truth in terms of human experience in the world. Our challenge is to interpret God and salvation in terms of contextual life issues. We need to be sensitive to the context in which we and PLWHA live and intervene in concrete ways (Magezi 2010:31). Just as Jesus was sensitive to His context, we too need to be sensitive to the context in which we and PLWHA live and intervene in concrete ways (Magezi 2010:31). Understanding what holistic healing would entail for the leper, Jesus deliberately reached out and touched him (cf. Lk 5:17-26; 6:6-10 and 7:11-17). Through touching the leper, Jesus allowed him to experience acceptance, respect and human dignity as He removed the barrier of isolation. Moreover, as Ndlovu in Patterson (2005:2) observes, in 'a world so divided and separated within itself,' Jesus restored human community with the touch of His hand.

This touch of Jesus, which brought about release from marginalization, can be seen as a challenge to followers of Christ to leave the stigmas, the exclusions and rejections that stigmatizing attitudes have instituted (Perez 2013:125). Scholars like Landman (2003:192) have emphasized the importance of physical touching of PLWHA. Banda (2011:20) concurs with her, suggesting that touching PLWHA can be construed as a positive demonstration of love and acceptance which is contrary to the stigmatization they too often experience. Physical contact allows the PLWHA to feel that he/she is not excluded from human warmth and companionship and works towards restoring his/her self-worth and dignity. Jesus showed the way through reaching out and touching the leper.

It is apparent that Jesus was both available and responsive to the leper's plea. Jesus not only acknowledged him but heard what he had to say: He responded to his plea using the leper's own phrases (cf. Lk 5:12b and 5:13b). Rather than being indifferent to, and/or excluding PLWHA, our ministry needs to be one of presence and one in which the voices of PLWHA are heard and responded to. This ministry is expressed in 'the moving towards, the being with, and the being part of as well as the being enthusiastic about' those to whom we minister (Duncan 1988:67).

Compassion leaves no room for the on-going 'them' and 'us' mentality or 'othering'. 'Othering', according Volf (1996:75), results in separation and 'the removal of mutual relationships of giving and receiving'. Furthermore, it can result in the other becoming invisible or anonymous (Ferreira 2012 274). Volf (1996:77) reminds us that indifference can be more destructive than hate, for when people become disconnected they choose not to take responsibility.

Finally, Jesus ensured that the man was restored to 'wholeness'. Knowing that he would not be allowed to return to his community without the priest's confirmation of his cleansing, Jesus sends him to the priest. As part of a compassionate attitude, one needs to ask what is required for each PLWHA to be whole. Perhaps part of the answer is in seeking to empower PLWHA. Jesus empowered the leper by giving him a role to play in his 'healing' – he needed to go to a priest and offer sacrifices (cf. Lk 5:14). PLWHA need to be empowered and emboldened to participate in activities that will enable them to take their place in society, as a people with dignity and equal human rights. Encouraging PLWHA to advocate for themselves is a very important aspect of this.

In addition, the priest was given an opportunity to share in the ministry of Jesus in assuring the leper's acceptance and re-entry into his community. In sending the leper to the priest for certification and restoration to the community, Jesus presents a challenge to the contemporary priesthood in Southern Africa. The priests in first century Palestine had authority and

control over the community, determining who was inside and who was outside the community. So too today, Christian ministers often play a similar, even if not as powerful, role as 'gate-keepers' of the Christian community.

The role of the church and its ministers in an HIV and AIDS infected world is very important and significant in promoting acceptance and relationships with the PLWHA today. If the church 'clears' and accepts PLWHA to be an integral part of its community, possibly society will also do the same. As Ogunbanwo (2011:199) opines, just as Jesus reforms the purity rules, 'the priests of our world need to do the same for us to have a fair world where social justice and equity prevails and reigns'. Perhaps this is the example that everyone is looking for.

#### 5.3.4 Summary of the Contemporary Practical Significance of Lk 5:12-16

Although the belief within parts of the church that HIV and AIDS is God's retribution for promiscuity, is no longer widely accepted, it has been so entrenched that its effects are still experienced today. As Thatcher (2009:100) confirms, such attitudes are deeply rooted, and they will not be removed by being ignored. Negative attitude towards PLWHA, which are evidenced as fear, judgementalism and even indifference, need to be intentionally replaced by the compassionate acceptance expressed by Jesus to the leper.

The above discussion has revealed that the various elements of Jesus' interaction with the leper, presented in this narrative, give some guidelines as to the attitude Christians are expected to express towards PLWHA. Just as Jesus did not allow the religious and socio-economic prejudices of His society, with the associated attitude of judgement, to impede Him from showing care and compassion towards outcasts, we as His disciples need to do likewise. Through compassionate acceptance of PLWHA, we need to become an inclusive community of healing, which reaches out to those who are stigmatized. In so doing we will facilitate the liberation of PLWHA

from all that inhibits them from experiencing the love, life, hope and salvation which Jesus came to bring to all who seek and believe in Him.

#### **5.4 Conclusion**

Throughout his Gospel and particularly in the account of the healing of the leper, Luke presents Jesus' message as that of hope to the outcast, the socially ostracized and the featureless members of the society, among whom PLWHA can be counted. It is therefore, my contention that Luke's presentation of Jesus' attitude towards the leper has implications for believers in the contemporary church today, in shaping Christian attitude towards people stigmatized by HIV and AIDS. The concluding chapter will summarise the findings of this mini-thesis and briefly explore a number of recommendations on shaping Christian attitude towards people stigmatized by HIV and AIDS.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

This final chapter summarises the findings of this mini-thesis, relates them to the stated aims and objectives and draws relevant conclusions. Based on the lessons that have been highlighted, I conclude with a few recommendations on how practically to shape the attitude of Christians to PLWHA.

#### **6.2 Summary of Chapter 1**

In seeking to answer several questions regarding the significance of Jesus' attitude towards a leper who implored Him for cleansing as found in Luke 5:12-16, the first chapter provided a framework for the study. The following elements were included in this chapter: key exegetical-theological questions in relation to the narrative of the healing of the leper, Luke's pastoral purposes in light of the narrative of the healing of the leper, scholarly perspectives which connect the stigmatization of biblical leper to the contemporary stigmatization of PLWHA the reasons for the study, the objectives of the exegesis, and the outline for the rest of the study.

The hypothesis of the research was that, in breaking the purity and socio-cultural laws by touching the leper of Luke 5:12-16 and in sending him to the priest for verification of healing, Jesus sets the Church the example, and by extension the mandate for shaping contemporary Christian attitudes to address the stigmatization of PLWHA.

The basic exegetical process adopted for this study was based on the hermeneutical principles discussed in Zuck (1991:76-142; 279-292). To this end, the main objective was to exegete Luke 5:12-16 and ascertain whether it contained a directive applicable to contemporary Christians in shaping their attitude towards PLWHA.

### **6.3 Summary of Chapter 2**

In order to conduct a comprehensive examination of the chosen text (Luke 5:12-16), it was essential to understand the wider context of the passage being studied. Consequently, the second and third chapters were central to answering the first key question of the research problem – ‘What is the socio-historical and literary theological context of Luke 5:12-16?’

Chapter Two dealt with aspects relevant to the historical and literary contexts of the Gospel of Luke in which the narrative of the healing of the leper is located. In particular, it discussed the general background of Luke-Acts in terms of the author, date of writing, occasion and purpose of writing. It also surveyed the genre, literary structure and key literary motifs and devices as well as the major theological themes of Luke.

Luke writes to a predominantly Gentile community as a pastor and theologian, therefore he re-interprets the Christian story of Christology and discipleship to a community in the midst of crisis. In providing an account of Jesus’ life and ministry, Luke sought to strengthen this community spiritually, and to show them how they were to live out their Christian beliefs, which would sometimes clash with the expectations of their society.

For the purposes of understanding the wider context of Luke 5:12-16, the discussion on the theological themes focused primarily on those relevant to this research such as salvation, God, Christology, the kingdom of God, Luke's universalism, concern for the poor and marginalized, and discipleship. From start to finish, Luke articulates Jesus as accessible to those generally thought to be outside the boundaries of divine graciousness – the unknowns, the outcast, the lost, and the hopeless. Through the narrative of Jesus' healing of the leper, these themes are voiced.

#### **6.4 Summary of Chapter 3**

With the purpose of forming a foundation upon which to interpret the meaning of Luke 5:12-16, Chapter Three included a brief study of socio-cultural and religious background of first century Palestine, focusing on the purity laws and specifically how they led to the ostracism of those diagnosed with  $\tau\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\pi\tau\alpha$ /λέπτρα ('leprosy').

First century Palestine was characterized by a society that was organized with purity as the core value. Since physical wholeness was associated with purity, and lack of wholeness with impurity, lepers were seen as 'untouchables' and outcasts.

The intensification of purity laws left many people outside the 'pure' community, since holiness advocated a separation from everything unclean. It is within this socio-religious milieu that Jesus ministered, offering an alternative community, which was based on a more inclusive kind of holiness. Luke's narrative of the cleansing of the leper provides a graphic picture not only of Jesus' power to cleanse, heal and restore those deemed untouchable because of their uncleanness, but also of a new community based on love which ultimately represents true faithfulness to God's law.

## 6.5 Summary of Chapter 4

Chapter Four addressed the question: 'what did Luke 5:12-16 mean for its original readers?' The answer to this question was achieved by providing a literary analysis and a grammatical and historical exegetical analysis of Luke 5:12-16.

The immediate context of Luke 5:12-16 was established in the greater narrative of the Gospel of Luke. It was noted that the pericope formed part of Jesus' ministry in Galilee (4:14-9:50). Various aspects of Luke's literary style, such as the structure of the narrative and his use of the style of the LXX, were discussed, taking note of how they enriched the meaning of this narrative.

Having established the literary context of Luke 5:12-16, I provided a grammatical exegetical analysis of these verses. Not only was leprosy rarely cured, but lepers were social outcasts in first-century Palestine. Having reflected on the meaning of the word λέπρα ('leprosy') it was concluded that despite the difficulty in defining precisely what disease is meant in this passage, there is no doubt of its gravity and its consequences for this man. This disease in common with many other physical malfunctions (Lev 15) rendered a person not only physically unclean, but ceremonially unclean as well. As such, they were expected to live on the margins of society and avoid all social contact. Consequently, the original readers would have been surprised by the leper's boldness in approaching Jesus to plead for cleansing.

As in the request, Luke describes both the nonverbal and verbal aspects of Jesus' response in answering the leper's entreaty in 5.13a - namely: He reached out His hand, He touched the man, and He spoke affirming His will and commanded cleansing. Each of these was deliberated upon individually. Since Jesus did not need to touch the leper for healing to occur, it was surmised that the touch was a deliberate action, which went beyond healing the man. Jesus was not deterred by the socio-religious barrier established by the purity laws, as He affirms the dignity of this

'untouchable' man by allowing him to experience tenderness and acceptance despite his isolation and shame. Jesus is pictured here as One whose concern for people and their sense of dignity outweighs legal prescriptions. At Jesus' command of cleansing, the leprosy immediately leaves him, thus, calling attention to the instantaneous effect of Jesus' words and deeds (cf. Lk 4:39).

To the leper, now healed, Jesus gives three instructions: to remain silent about the miracle, to show himself to the priest and to offer sacrifices. It was concluded that since the leper had not only been healed but also cleansed, Jesus' instruction to offer sacrifices was not to assure the leper of cleanness but to serve as a confirmation that the leper had indeed been readmitted to community, and could participate once more in liturgical worship. The offering of sacrifices would be an expression of gratitude to God for his healing and evidence of the messianic act of God in Jesus.

The exegesis established that through the healing of the leper, Jesus continues His mission to the outcast and the oppressed as He intentionally reaches out and touches the 'untouchable'. Jesus' actions towards the leper thus revealed much about His attitude towards this social outcast.

## **6.6 Summary of Chapter 5**

This chapter addressed the significance of Luke 5:12-16. In particular, it sought to answer the question: 'What is the theological and contemporary pastoral and practical significance of Luke 5:12-16 for today's church, particularly with reference to the problem of stigmatization of PLWHA?'

In assessing the theological relevance of Luke 5:12-16, this chapter discussed the theology and purpose behind the account of this miracle. It was noted that the four major emphases reflected through this miracle were: Jesus' concern for the outcast; the universalism of salvation; the inauguration of the kingdom of God; and Jesus' reinterpretation of the purity laws as He healed one who was considered unclean and therefore beyond salvation. Each of these aspects was examined.

It was concluded that Luke's thematic emphasis, concerning Jesus' miracles highlights Jesus' compassion for the outcasts of society. His narrative of the healing of the leper brings the universalism of salvation to the fore, and the dawning of the kingdom of God, as well as highlighting the inclusive characteristic of divine compassion. Moreover, it was an illustration of Jesus' reinterpretation of the purity laws. Jesus demonstrated that compassion, rather than cultic purity, was the essential bond uniting the people of God and their heavenly Father (Lk 6:36).

Using the above as a foundation, the contemporary practical application to how Christians should relate to PLWHA in Southern Africa was then deliberated upon in the following sequence. Firstly, the parallels between the situation of the leper and PLWHA who are stigmatized were identified. Secondly, a brief account of the nature of the contemporary problem and some of the reasons why there is a tendency among some Christians to hold unhealthy attitudes to PLWHA were enumerated. This was followed by a hermeneutical discussion in which the study sought to bring the lessons learnt in the exegesis to address this contemporary problem.

It can thus be concluded that the hypothesis of this research has been confirmed. Luke 5:12-16, in which Jesus breaks the socio-religious boundaries which resulted in the ostracism of the leper, has much to teach the church on addressing the stigmatization experienced by PLWHA today. This research has revealed that as Scripture, Luke 5:12-16 has provided both knowledge and existential direction in shaping Christian attitude towards people stigmatized by HIV and AIDS in Southern Africa.

## **6.7 Recommendations**

The findings of this research suggest various implications for shaping Christian attitude towards people stigmatized by HIV and AIDS in Southern Africa. What now follows, are some recommendations based on the lessons highlighted.

### 6.7.1 Discourse Emphasizing Compassionate Acceptance versus Judgementalism

As Christians, we need to resist using our knowledge of the Bible, to find supposed proof of God's specific judgement on certain particular kinds of sin. Instead, we need to use the Bible to show people that Christ's love is greater than sin and disease. As Chitando and Gunda (2007: 197) suggest, a re-reading of the Bible in context of HIV and AIDS provides the church with a critical resource to undermine stigma. It allows her to proclaim liberation to those who find themselves in bondage owing to the effects of HIV and AIDS. Moreover, the Church can deal with HIV and AIDS stigmatization by renouncing the kind of discourse that sees PLWHA as objects of God's judgement, and replacing it with the discourse of grace, hope and acceptance which Jesus so clearly demonstrated in His attitude towards the leper. However, doctrine and dogma are not to be substitutes for actions of caring, sharing and love.

### 6.7.2 Practising Inclusive Attitudes versus Exclusive Attitudes

The narrative of Jesus' healing of the leper encourages us to enter into the PLWHA's isolation and shame; it can no longer be long-distance relief between 'us' and 'them'. Just as Jesus was not hindered by repressive boundaries which excluded outcasts, the church needs to be prepared to step out of her comfort zone and draw alongside those on the periphery. Appropriate discourses, as outlined above, on their own will not be enough. People living with HIV and AIDS need to know by our actions that we are committed to walking alongside them. This entails establishing relationships of trust as we listen patiently and attentively to their 'stories' and acknowledge the place in which they find themselves. This will hopefully empower them to step back into community.

Furthermore, the church is called not only to proclaim the kingdom of God but to demonstrate it actively through embracing those marginalized and involving them without reserve in her life and ministry. Their full inclusion in all aspects of the church's life is the best possible strategy for changing

negative attitudes and removing fear. Involving PLWHA in church activities such as singing in the choir, teaching Sunday school, serving on the tea roster and occupying decision-making positions will make them feel accepted and valued. Actively acknowledging the presence of PLWHA within the church community through her liturgy and well-informed sermons on the HIV pandemic, can help people to shift the barriers that exist among the church members.

Just as Jesus involved the leper in completing his cleansing (Lk 5:14), it is crucial that the church equips and encourages PLWHA to respect their lives and others. It is essential for their self-esteem that, where possible, they take responsibility in breaking free from unhealthy patterns of behaviour – be it their own or those of others – which resulted in their HIV status.

#### 6.7.3 Christian Public Advocacy on Behalf of PLWHA

Stigma implies the absence of solidarity. Therefore, it is essential for the church to demonstrate practically her solidarity with the marginalized as Jesus did with the leper. This is achieved not only by walking alongside PLWHA suffering the impact of exclusion, but also by becoming involved with organisations such as Centre for AIDS Development, Research and Evaluation (CADRE) and Open Society Initiative of Southern Africa (OSISA), that are seeking to empower them and who are working towards eliminating socio-economic and gender barriers which entrap PLWHA. Furthermore, the church needs to encourage PLWHA to take the lead to become champions of the struggle against HIV and AIDS.

#### 6.7.4 Further Research

I believe that the church will benefit in her ministry towards PLWHA from research into the socio-psychological and religious effects of negative Christian attitude on PLWHA. Areas of research could include the following: identifying trends, reasons and possible actions to improve them. Although focusing on civil servants in Auchi and not specifically the Christian community, the work of Agweda and Dibua (2010) is one such

example of the kind of study that would be of value. Their research concluded that enlightenment and advocacy programmes can change people's negative attitude towards PLWHA. One of their suggestions was that programmes meant to create socio-psychological support for PLWHA should be put in place (Agweda and Dibua 2010:133-134).

## **6.8 Conclusion**

Through the narrative in Luke 5:12-16, Luke presents Jesus whose compassionate acceptance of a leper embodies a message of hope and liberation to the outcast, and the socially ostracized. Since PLWHA are among the outcast, and the socially ostracized today, certainly in Southern Africa, it is my contention that Luke's presentation of Jesus' attitude towards the leper has present implications for the contemporary church in shaping Christian attitude towards people stigmatized by HIV and AIDS, just as it might have had for his first readers' attitude towards those in their society who were similarly stigmatized.

Jesus' response to the leper reminds us that HIV and AIDS is a condition that requires compassion and caring and not an attitude of judgement and exclusion. As Desmond Tutu (Madison 2011:102) says: 'God's dream is that you and I and all of us will realize that we are family that we are made for togetherness, for goodness and for compassion. In God's family there are no outsiders...'

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