

## **THOUGHT FOR THE DAY: Friday 7<sup>th</sup> July 2023**

**By Rev Kit Gunasekera**

### **Touch**

When Jesus came down from the mountainside, large crowds followed him. A man with leprosy came and knelt before him and said, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean." Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man.

- Matthew 8:1-3

One of the stories of Jesus that means a lot to me, is when he was approached by someone who had leprosy. It was a major infectious disease at that time, with no cure, and there was a massive social stigma attached to it as well. If you got it, it pretty much meant total isolation. Lepers had to be apart from the community, and they often had to ring a bell when they went about, so it acted as a warning, so other people could move away from them. We know a little bit about isolation, from covid, it was for many people a very difficult time being separated from physical company.

Jesus was a public figure, thought to be a VIP by those who followed Him, and so one can imagine the consternation when this man approached him. Its not unreasonable to suggest that those around Jesus would have tried to shoo him away. I am struck by Jesus reaction. He reached out, and touched the man. Turning him from a leper to a human being. Jesus then heals him, which was the only way that man at that time could be integrated back into society and be able to make a living. Although Jesus had broken several taboos, and will continue to do so, people, specially large crowds, tend to have short memories.

This is a major reason why I trust Jesus and try to follow Him. I give thanks to people and organisations, of any kind, who come alongside those who are alone and isolated. Specially those who 'touch' the 'untouchables', or who are there for those who would otherwise be forgotten. I am reminded of the work of the Ace of Clubs, the food banks, those who work in mental health, Christian Aid, the Amos Trust, to name a few, but also people who just visit other people who just need a visit.