

We're returning to the Gospel of Mark, where last week
the newly anointed King shocked everyone w/ His power over demons & sickness
In less than 24 hours, Jesus found He had won over the whole town of Capernaum

Knowing this, Jesus sneaks out of town early the next morning to pray
and when Simon & the disciples finally find Him, He **shocks** them by saying
He wouldn't be attending today's scheduled Jesus' rally in Capernaum
Jesus says, "The reason I came out was b/c I gotta preach the gospel"

"My coming means God's eternal Kingdom is about to swallow up Satan's kingdom,
& all this **healing** business is keeping me from gospel **preaching!**"

And preaching throughout Galilee is what Jesus does next as v. 39 tells us...
and I suspect most of us aren't surprised by Jesus' response, unlike these disciples...
so let's step into their shoes...

Remember Simon's mother-in-law was so sick she could barely move
So Simon & the rest say, "Please help our dear mother Jesus!," & like that He heals her!
and right after others show up at the door bringing folks in really bad shape
v. 32 suggests none of those Jesus healed came to him on their own strength!
→ Broken, hurting, & dying people were **brought** by loved ones
and Jesus restored them all, every one **(PAUSE)....**

So... Who would you bring to Jesus if He was in town healing? (I could make a list...)
I was in the hospital this week praying God would do a miracle for folks here we love
Some of us have children w/ lifelong conditions the best doctors cannot heal
Some of us have **ourselves** been suffering for years...

→ Would you be here right now listening to **preaching** if Jesus was up the road healing?
If Jesus was in town healing, who would fly in a distant loved one who was sick?

And how would you feel if you brought back that sick loved one from the airport,
only to arrive & discover Jesus snuck off to begin a speaking tour to who knows where...
PAUSE... What would go through your mind on that drive back to the airport?
("Don't you want our hurting people to be made well, Jesus?")

Do you get why it is so hard for the disciples here to understand Jesus?
They have seen His power to touch peoples' lives in such a tangible way
but all He wants to do is go around **preaching** about some not yet visible Kingdom

Beloved, Mark's Gospel tells us we got to believe King Jesus knows what is best for us
even when we don't understand Him **Believing comes first, understanding later!**

Which is why Mark will show us a whole lot of **misunderstandings**
as we transition from Jesus' initial ministry in Capernaum w/ all the healing
to Jesus' preaching-focused ministry in the wider neighborhood

& what we'll find is that when we choose not to believe Jesus & think we know best
we actually harm others, *even making it hard for them to find & meet Jesus*
Mark is calling us to trust Jesus even when it makes no sense

And there is no shortage of head scratching in these upcoming scenes in Mark
Perhaps you were already scratching your heads about why Jesus
is still casting out demons on His preaching tour

How can Jesus make time to cast out demons, and **not** do the same for sick people?
In fact, that is probably why this fellow w/ leprosy comes to Jesus the way he does...
In v. 40 we read that this leper comes to Jesus on his knees, begging Jesus
saying, "*If you **will**, you can make me clean...*"

This man had faith Jesus could heal, but wonders how He'll respond to a preaching interruption
probably heard about Jesus' early exit from the Capernaum healing rally

But he comes anyway b/c leprosy was the worst disease you could have
sometimes your skin would be rotting away and you couldn't even feel it
A rat could come gnaw off your finger in your sleep & you'd never know
and b/c it was contagious, you were forced to live isolated in desolate places
Anytime you came close to civilization to beg, you had to shout "**Unclean... unclean...**"

People w/ leprosy were outcasts, and there was an elaborate ritual you had to go through,
IF the priest thought you were actually cured of the disease...
Not that this ever happened in this day!
To have leprosy was seen as equivalent to **being dead**

After Miriam was struck w/ leprosy Moses cries to God in Numbers 12:12 Let her not be as
one **dead**, whose flesh is half eaten away when he comes out of his mother's womb

Or as we see in the King of Israel's statement in 2 Kings 5
after being asked to have Naaman cured of his leprosy
Am I God, to kill and to **make alive**, that this man sends word to me to cure a man of his leprosy?

This unclean man is the living dead, and he comes to Jesus in hopes of being made **clean**...
(And this might cause us to recall Mark began his Gospel w/ John washing folks
and also that Mark describes demons not as evil spirits, but 'unclean spirits')
The point to see is John's baptism and Jesus' casting out of **unclean** spirits
are like preaching, means of bringing in the KOG...

Overthrowing Satan's kingdom to bring in the rule & reign of God's is Jesus' mission
& Jesus' willingness to heal this leper is connected to why Jesus is casting out demons
This man needs the KOG to come to rule & reign over his physical body
Jesus doesn't mind this preaching interruption
b/c restoring the unclean continues the overthrow of Satan's kingdom

Now we have to marvel at the **faith** of this fellow who is fully aware Jesus may refuse,
who humbly approaches & essentially says, "thy will be done" (PAUSE)
Imagine experiencing not just an answer to prayer... but the actual ***touch*** of Jesus!

No one has touched this man in forever, and then King Jesus does
And Mark wants us to see the anointed Kings' authority on display in this healing...
Filled w/ the Spirit, **Jesus' overthrows the powers of the unclean,**
a reversal of the OT principle where touching the unclean infected the clean
This shows what the Kingdom's arrival in Jesus means

And this is important for us today b/c Jesus baptized the Church w/ the Holy Spirit on Pentecost
God's people need no longer fear being contaminated by an evil, unclean world
but instead we go out boldly and infect the world w/ God's holiness
Rev. Confex can continue Jesus' mission in Malawi as we can too right here

Now, we understand that w/ 2,000 years of evidence of the gospel's unstoppable advance
but how do we understand Jesus' reaction to this healing?
Jesus "sternly charged him & sent him away at once"
I would translate this, "Jesus **rebuked** him and immediately **cast** him out"

Mark uses this verb translated sternly charged in the 14:5 scene when the disciples get indignant
at the woman who anointed Jesus w/ costly ointment.
The ESV translates it there as "they scolded her"
& "sent away" is the same word used earlier when Jesus casts out demons

The ESV softens the language, b/c ***why would Jesus scold & cast out a man He just helped?***
Especially after He was ***moved to pity***...
Actually, Jesus may not have been moved w/ pity...
there are ancient manuscripts that instead say Jesus "became angry"
which would better fit w/ Jesus scolding him...

Well, I am not going to try & solve which manuscripts are right → b/c we don't need to...
Jesus clearly pitied the man b/c He healed him,
& undoubtedly, He'd be angry to see evil reigning over this man's body

Either way, we still face a Jesus who treats a man harshly, rebuking him after healing him...
Mark presents a Jesus who is hard to understand until we read on...

We discover that Jesus knew what was in this man's heart when He healed Him
(In the same way Jesus knows what is in the scribes' heart in the next scene)
Jesus saw that while this man had amazing faith Jesus could heal him
he didn't believe Jesus knew best how he should live afterward

Jesus rebuked this man to make very clear not to blab about the healing,
and He cast him away to obey & follow the regulations of the law...
Jesus wants this man to keep quiet & **submit to the Law of Moses**
so Jesus speaks hard words to a heart that doesn't want to submit

You would think that this request would not be that hard,
that out of sheer gratitude for being set free, & **seeing King Jesus' rightful authority**
he would be happy to zip the lip, walk to Jerusalem, do the rituals,
& receive the stamp of approval from the religious leaders.
But he begins blabbing immediately, which indicates he never went to Jerusalem
What an ungrateful, rebellious fellow! (PAUSE)...

But how would you do if you were him?
This man lived in horrible physical agony day after day after day...
was ostracized from the society, a living dead person w/ no hope of any future...
→Imagine hearing about this Jesus, and believing, you go to him begging,

And after hearing your request, He actually does something nobody would do!!!
He touches your scaly, nasty, rotting body, and immediately you are *cleansed*
And I say *cleansed* here b/c the Greek word is not "healed"
You have been made whole, restored into communion w/ God & man
This isn't just the greatest thing that ever happened to you, but it is eschatological!

Jesus' touch & your restoration is evidence the old Jewish religious ways are becoming obsolete
You'd be thinking, "I didn't fully realize your true greatness Jesus!
I can't wait to tell everyone about your Kingdom too....
→**Hey wait a minute... Why are you yelling at me Jesus?**
What? I got to keep this (hold up HANDS) secret?
What? You are saying I have to walk all the way to Jerusalem,
& live another 8 days like an outcast as I wait for some priest's OK?
Jesus, you know I am perfectly whole! (Would this be hard to understand?)

(Like so many new converts, this man is on fire w/ a call that cannot be delayed)
"Jesus, Don't you see I can do far more as a walking testimony of your great healing power
Don't you know I can get everyone excited about your gospel of the kingdom,
In fact, I even know how to frame it!
I'll be the first spokesman of what I'll call the **Health gospel!**"
(Think this guy might make a splash today?)

How many popular preachers say the gospel means **Jesus doesn't want you to be sick?**
They will point to this very text and say all you need is to believe like this man did.
Jesus didn't only come to die for your sins. Jesus came to make you **healthy!**

And they preach this health gospel to huge audiences for decade after decade...
There was one preacher I grew up watching one when I was a child
So I decided last week to check him out really quickly,
And I discovered him preaching this very text...

I watched this man, now in his 80s, play out the scene by dropping to his knees like the leper,
before hopping up & saying "Could I jump up like that at my age if I wasn't healed?"
and the crowd hooted and clapped at this wonderful proof of his great health

Having not seen this man in over 3 decades, I saw something quite different from them,
I saw a man who had gotten old, whose wrinkly face testified he is **dying**,
who won't be moving like that in another decade or 2, if he is moving at all
His **gravestone** will soon testify that there is no gospel promise
that Jesus died to make us healthy in this life

If Jesus did, I am pretty sure the Apostle Paul would have believed that thorn away
and would have healed Timothy's stomach condition instead of recommending wine...

(P) Now we can tear apart folks who buy into the lie, but I will ask you **again**...
Do you have loved ones who are sick? I bet this leper knew more sick folk than us
He was asking after his healing, "***Doesn't this mean Jesus want people to be well?***"
You ever wrestled w/ the question of Jesus' love for sick & suffering folk?

This man believed others needed to know Jesus could do for them what He did for him...
And so, while we see while he had great faith, he also had great unbelief

He didn't believe Jesus knew what was **best** for him, his neighbors, the KOG's advance
Do you see why Jesus, knowing his heart, rebuked him w/ desire he might obey?

But the man refused to submit & began to "talk freely," → the Greek word here is ***knussw***
the same word used to describe Jesus' ***preaching*** in vv. 38-39

Notice the result of his disobedience...

We began w/ Jesus preaching the gospel of "repent & believe" to all the towns
while the leper was living in desolate places
And now the restored leper is preaching the gospel of health to all the towns
& people are so blown away that Jesus & His message are forced into desolate places

This is a not so glorious exchange

We see the health gospel is not a recent phenomena...

I'm left wondering whether God allows healing ministries
to spring up out of anger or pity, or both

What we clearly do see is that when we **come** to Jesus and ask Him to **touch** us
we must also submit ourselves to His rule, acknowledging He knows best,

We simply need **to believe and obey even if we don't understand**

If we refuse to obey Jesus, we will make it harder for people to meet Jesus

*Although, even men's worst gospel distortions cannot impede the gospel advance...

As someone who grew up under health gospel teaching, I am a testimony to that

Like some disciples at the end of v. 45 who go out to the desolate places to find Jesus

Mark shows again the **wilderness place** is where connecting w/ God occurs

(PAUSE)

But we have not yet fully resolved that question,

Doesn't Jesus want us to be well?

And our 2nd story provides yet another healing to answer that...

This is one of the best stories, isn't it?

these loving friends who bring their sick friend to Jesus

And it actually takes place in **Capernaum**, though Mark indicates it was some days later,

The spread of the health gospel has probably died down just enough for Jesus to return,
although its effect is still strong as indicated by this crowd.

People hear Jesus is at home in Capernaum,

which may, but doesn't necessarily mean, this is Jesus' house.

It is a house where Jesus stays,

and we see this house is packed full, so much so they are lined up at the door

And Jesus is back to His mission of **preaching** the word,

"The time is fulfilled, the KOG is at hand, repent & believe in the gospel"

And these 4 guys show up b/c they love somebody,

a man so paralyzed that they have to physically carry him to Jesus.

They get to the place & to find there is no way to get him to Jesus,

so they decide to climb up on the roof, and begin a major demolition...

It was not like taking apart one of our roofs, but it is still major **vandalism**.

These roofs were flat places people built to stand on & store things,

Made out of wooden beams or large branches that were thatched and mudded

There were even stairways up them, which is how these men got up there

And when they did get up there, they are quite serious about tearing this house apart,
Mark literally writes, they “*unroofed the roof, digging it out.*”

Imagine how the folks below react w/ all this mud & thatch falling on their heads
→ I actually think that Jesus probably went on preaching...
Jesus was no stranger to preaching interruptions,
but Jesus’ sermon stops when they drop the man down

Why?

B/C Jesus sees their remarkable faith... Remarkable faith!!!
Jesus sees remarkable faith & responds... “*My son, your sins are forgiven!*”

→ And Jesus saying this makes perfect sense to this guy, right?
Imagine being this poor paralyzed fellow, who is entirely at the mercy of his buddies
unable to lift a hand to stop them as they tear apart some innocent person’s home,
and then they drop him down right into the middle of the crime scene.
This man probably said “Thank you Jesus, for forgiving me of this crime!” **(Ha, Ha)**

Actually, we never hear that this man says or does anything until the final verse.
But I do want us to really think about what Jesus says here.
Imagine being one of these buddies, having faith Jesus can make your friend well.

Faith of such magnitude Jesus can heal this guy...
They drop everything to pick this man up, carry him who knows how far,
were completely unfazed when they find no way in,
but carry him up a flight of stairs and tear up a roof,
b/c they love their friend & they **know** that Jesus can help him

(PAUSE) As an aside, I have to say I have been blessed to see this very scene over & over...
Since I became a member of this church, I’ve had times when I was paralyzed,
And I have watched you, my buddies here at Michiana Covenant
Come alongside me, pick my dead weight up, and carry me to Jesus
I have watched you wear yourselves out for me & for others here
And I want to personally say, “Thank you, Friends!”

I know it wasn’t easy, b/c **you knew you weren’t the healer,**
& sometimes people are even too heavy to carry,
and all you could do is keep nudging them in the direction of the Healer
It is exhausting, messy work!

I want you to see Jesus stops what He is doing when He sees your faith in action,
And He absolutely loves your unrelenting belief that He will restore those you love
Jesus loves your faith in His desire to make people well **(PAUSE)**

He loves seeing these guys to bring their crippled friend to Him

Following the scene of the healed leper, we can assume they had heard his health gospel

Like the leper, they believed that Jesus wanted to make people well...

So they act in faith and drop smack dab in front of Jesus

And here it is again... **Jesus responds in a way they don't understand...**

Jesus' response is not to heal their poor friend, but to say that the man's sins are forgiven and they are left literally looking down on a Jesus who is hard to understand

Think about all they went through to get their friend to the Healer

Wouldn't you be disappointed in simple pardon for sins?

"Jesus! Can't you see why we brought him to you?"

Heal his *visible* need here & stop w/ the *invisible encouragement!*"

They are faced w/ the same conundrum the leper faced.

A Jesus who is hard to understand, who calls us to believe He knows what is best,

How often what Jesus says is best doesn't square w/ what we think is best for us & others
Aren't we, like the leper, tempted to unbelief & disobedience?

Actually, his disobedience is likely why the scribes are sitting here.

Remember, he went off preaching about how Jesus had fully cleansed him,

disobeying the Mosaic cleansing rituals Jesus told him to submit to...

which probably raised the scribes' antennas to seek Jesus out

& see if the new Healer is flouting His disregard for Moses...

This is our 1st intro of the Jewish leadership which will oppose Jesus from this point on...

They are not disciples

they are **sitting** on their butts, which contrasts w/ the working faith of the buddies,

& it speaks to their pride as the rest of the house is standing room only

They may not be up on the roof, but they are looking down on Jesus,

and they not only don't understand what Jesus is meaning here

but we hear their **opposition** at what Jesus says

⁷"Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

The questions they come up w/ provide proof that Jesus is blaspheming, a capital punishment

No **man**, only **God**, can declare forgiveness of sins,

∴. This man Jesus is infringing on what is only appropriate to the divine

And in response, Jesus shows them His divinity by discerning their thoughts...

Jesus knows in His Spirit, (and Spirit should be capitalized here) So He asks them,

“Why do you question these things in your hearts? ⁹ Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Rise, take up your bed and walk’?”

This is the 1st of many **brain-busters** Jesus will level the religious leaders w/

It is certainly easier to say, “Your sins are forgiven you”

b/c it cannot be shown to be **untrue**

But to say to a paralyzed man, “Rise, take up your bed and walk”

subjects the speaker to ridicule if **visible** results aren’t produced

And then Jesus surprises everyone w/ what He says & does next,

proving He is in no way disengaged from recognizing what we need most

¹⁰ But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”—he said to the paralytic— ¹¹ “I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home.” ¹² And he rose and immediately picked up his bed and went out before them all, so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, “**We never saw anything like this!**”

The people walk out glorifying God & saying “We never saw anything like this...”
and they are not talking about the **healing**...

They have seen lots of healings. We are in Capernaum, remember?

They have seen proof through this healing **the KOG that Jesus was preaching,**

The amazing thing is God is opening the gates for all who repent and believe,
and He sent an authoritative messenger to announce the forgiveness of sins

There is an irony that Jesus is declaring **publicly** the true gospel through **healing**,
which the healed leper thought he was doing, but ended up twisting it in unbelief

Jesus shows them by doing what is difficult in their eyes, **the healing**

He has the power to do the more important thing, **forgive sins**

We see in this healing & the previous ones that the KOG is about being made well,
but healing in this life is not the main thing

And even if we don’t understand Him, He understands us.

Notice at the very moment Jesus makes known His divine power to forgive sins,

He takes a new title to Himself, “the Son of **Man**” to show His connection to us

Jesus was born in our flesh and understands our mortal frame

And His authority is so great that it only takes a word, & we can be instantly healed

→but the problem is we still die b/c the wages of sin is death.

Our biggest problem is not our physical health, but our sin before God

Sure! It only takes a word to heal... but that is too a small thing

Your God’s love for you is far too great for such small potatoes!

To heal us temporally takes a word, to heal us forever will take His life

Do you understand why Jesus, who had to come in our weak flesh to make atonement,
cannot spend His time doing short-lived healings, but needs to preach the good news?
We need to hear what Jesus came to do so we can escape the kingdom of darkness
by repenting and believing the good news we are made whole forever!

This is why faithful ministers must preach that the Kingdom of God is at hand!

In fact, I would be remiss if I didn't point out this whole text is a **mini-version of the gospel**
Jesus comes in our flesh, the holy encountering the unholy
Jesus teaches & heals us and is condemned for blasphemy
and Jesus is vindicated before our eyes in the face of these charges
and those who hear His voice are healed and rise to live anew
no longer under the reign of Satan's Kingdom, but God's

The only way people can come under the rule and reign of the Kingdom of God
is through the forgiveness of sins that Jesus preached and died on the cross to bring
This is crystal clear, the gospel in this sense is so simple...

But living it out is tougher

So I want to leave us w/ 2 final points of application...

1) We need to **put to death our unbelief** & listen to our King

We need to examine why we question things Jesus says in our hearts like the leper, the scribes
Jesus calls you to obey the law, not because you are under it,
but because He knows **what is the best way you should be living...**
And He has absolute authority over your life

You'll face something soon, temptation to go around the rules,
to open your mouth when you shouldn't, think that your good works are in vain...
you will feel the pull to think you know better how to live your life
Don't cave to that unbelief and deny people the opportunity to see Jesus

Believe your King even if you don't understand

And if you make the mistake, repent and believe the gospel

2) The last thing I want to say is that God is still in the healing business
God truly does want you to be physically well in this life
and you can come confidently to Him like the leper in faith
Come to Jesus w/ his posture... ***"If you will, you can heal me..."***

Jesus loves to see such faith that He wants to make you whole, even if He doesn't heal

And if it is not His will, know you are in good company

In Mark 14:36 Jesus Himself prayed for relief as He faced the cross
and closed by saying, “Yet not what I will, but what you will”
and the Father did not answer His prayer

And God not answering His own Son’s prayer was the best thing for us all

And if you want prayer for healing, the faith of others can be of great help.

James speaks in chapter 5 of how the **prayer of faith** of the elders is effectual
just like the faith of these buddies of the paralytic
which resulted in his being raised up to walk again on earth

The prayer of faith not only may make you well here,

but better, it raises **sinner up to wellness forever!**

And know that *your King wants you to be well forever*, AMEN?