

from OUTSIDE to INSIDE the camp (45)

The passage begins with Jesus on the inside of the community and the leper being on the outside of the community, but it ends with Jesus being on the outside and the leper being on the inside. What a transaction! It is as if Jesus and the leper have traded places!

Leviticus 14:1-7

Two living birds were taken for the cleansed leper. One must die; the other is set free. The first clean bird would die in an earthen vessel; the other would be bound on cedar wood with hyssop and tied with a scarlet cord. The second would be dipped in the blood of the deceased and sprinkled upon the leper seven times.

Once his cleanliness was pronounced, the bird was set free into an open field. The bird went out, so that the leper could come in. That is the power of Jesus! He came down, in full humanity, and was slain upon the cross, but in His resurrection and ascension, intercedes for those whom the Law called *Unclean*, declaring us righteous before the throne of God! Hallelujah, He died so that we might live! He took our sins outside the camp, so that we might have forgiveness in Him!

Conclusion: Luke's final note on this synoptic story is this: Jesus knew that He needed rest and solace, and He would not be deterred. Though the disciples interrupted him and had much to learn, He would not be deterred from neither His preaching ministry nor His solitude and rest. May we learn that lesson from our Lord. It is great to work, and rest in God is the necessary component which makes the work a delight.

Resources:

¹ http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S2305-08532014000200004

² <https://www.leprosymission.org.uk/about-us-and-leprosy/what-is-leprosy/>

³ Alexander Macalister, Retrieved from <https://www.biblestudytools.com/encyclopedias/isbe/leper-leprosy.html>

⁴ Zuch, Roy. *A Biblical Theology of the Old Testament*

⁵ Enns, Paul. *Everything Happens for a Reason?*

⁶ Swindoll, Charles. *Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary of Mark*. Carol Stream: Tyndale House Publishers, 53.



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3 Transactions of Grace | Mark 1:40-45

In Mark's gospel, we have traced the steps of Jesus' compassion and grace, and it seems that the concluding story of Mark's opening declaration suggests that we could be little surprised by the power and authority of Jesus. What else does He have to prove? The Lord Jesus Christ is the greatest preacher, the greatest teacher, the greatest Rabbi, the greatest healer, and the greater Philanthropist to ever live. If you were a Roman reading just the first chapter of Mark, your interest in the prolific career of Jesus must be piqued! And in comparison to Caesar Augustus, what is he "the son of God" in comparison with God's only begotten Son!

Looking for ministry opportunities that might seize upon the momentum of Jesus' day at Capernaum, the disciples had interrupted our Lord's praying to beseech Him to enter into the same city to heal and minister, but Jesus forbade them. He wanted to preach throughout all of Galilee— which He would do. Yet, seemingly, before His itinerant ministry continued, a leper approached him. He was probably not the kind of sinner the disciple's envisioned approaching our Lord! However, the ministry of Jesus was intensely personal; it was a one-on-one type of revolution. Jesus wanted the ones the Pharisees rejected. He wanted the impure ones which were outcasts from Jewish life. For this cause came He into this world!

from UNCLEAN to CLEAN (40-42)

1. The condition of leprosy

"Leprosy is a slowly progressing and intractable disease characterized by subcutaneous nodules, scabs or cuticular crusts and white shining spots appearing to be deeper than the skin." ¹ Many lepers lose sensation in their eyelids, leading to blindness. In time, the disease spreads to the bones of the nose, causing its collapse. ²

2. The condition of the leper

-his condition was said to be incurable

"It should be observed here that the attitude of the Law toward the person, garment or house suspected of leprosy is that if the disease be really present they are to be declared unclean and there is no means provided for cure, and in the case of the garment or house,

they are to be destroyed. If, on the other hand, the disease be proved to be absent, this freedom from the disease has to be declared by a ceremonial purification.”³

-he was considered unclean⁴

The best way to clear a room full of Jews was to make this cry: “Unclean!” God’s people from the times of Moses had been challenged to distinguish between clean and unclean things, and in the Jewish sense, *unclean* meant that something was “unfit to use in worship to God.”

-he was untouched by society

He is asking for (1) **healing** of the disease and (2) **restoration** to the community

3. The spiritual consequences of leprosy

“In the Hebrew Bible, leprosy was usually viewed as God’s punishment for sinful behaviour.”

“In the Jewish communities in the Second Temple period, the concept of purity functioned as an identity marker and was regarded as an absolute binding inheritance from early Judaism. This issue was directly related to the authority of the Mosaic Law... This unholy condition was seen to violate God’s will... Leprosy was regarded as highly symbolic within the sphere of death (Senior 1998:97). As living dead, they were regarded as being under God’s judgement Josephus wrote: ‘Anyone who touches or lives under the same roof [with a leper] is regarded unclean’ (Contra Apionem 1.281) and that such people were kept away from normal society.”

“In ancient Israel leprosy was a powerful object lesson of the debilitating influence of sin in a person’s life.”⁵ Leviticus chapter thirteen outlines the social and spiritual consequences of leprosy:

1. leprosy is deeper than the skin (3)
2. it spreads (5-8)
3. it defiles and isolates (44-46)
4. it fits for the fire (47-59)

“If, on the other hand, the disease be proved to be absent, this freedom from the disease has to be declared by a ceremonial purification. This is in reality not the ritual for cleansing the leper, for the Torah provides none such, but the ritual for declaring him ceremonially free from the suspicion of having the disease. This gives a peculiar and added force to the words, ‘The lepers are cleansed,’ as a testimony to our Lord’s Divine mission.”

Matthew 11:5 contains a great statement. In answer to John’s doubts about the Messianic reality of Jesus, the Lord says to John’s disciples, “The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, *the lepers are cleansed*, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.”

The ONE THING this man wants it to be declared *clean*. He wants to go home. He wants his family to be considered *clean*. He wants to be *touched*. He wants to live a *normal* life. He wants to pass through the streets like everyone else is allowed to do. So, a transaction takes place. *I know you can do it! If thou wilt, this is what I would ask you to do.*

Notice that the man’s doubts have been erased. He knows that Jesus can heal him. As F.B. Meyer notes, “He concluded that the only question which remained was that of Christ’s willingness to hear. As to His power there could be no doubt.” We, too, stand in that place, between *knowing of His power* and *asking for an extension of His power!*

Notice, lastly, that when we are brought into peace with God we are brought back into community with man. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. (1 John 1:7)

from PREACHING ministry to HEALING ministry (43-44)

Jesus had a great mission statement: “The Spirit of the Lord *is* upon me, because he hath anointed me **to preach the gospel** to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, **to preach deliverance** to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, **To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.**” (Luke 4:18-19)

Jesus came to preach. He knew what should fill His time and that which God would use to propagate the gospel. Seeing that the miracle-working ministry of Jesus would portend towards sensationalism, the goal was to preach. We must never forget that the miracles were not ends of themselves— they were to be starting points for gospel conversations and opportunities for preaching.

1. we are to know the will of God for our lives
2. we are to seek the Lord’s guidance in placing walls of protection around that purpose
3. we are to know when to say “no” to the demands of the crowds

Charles Swindoll notes of the cleansed leper’s disobedience to the Lord’s command, “Of course, this didn’t thwart God’s plan; it merely created unnecessary complications.”⁶