

14 – Jesus Cleansing the Unclean

Series on Mark

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Let's turn now to the Gospel of Mark 1 and we read verses 35 through 45. Mark 1:35.

35 And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed. 36 And Simon and they that were with him followed after him. 37 And when they had found him, they said unto him, All men seek for thee. 38 And he said unto them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth. 39 And he preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and cast out devils. 40 And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. 41 And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean. 42 And as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed. 43 And he [Jesus] straitly charged him, and forthwith sent him away; 44 And saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man: but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them. 45 But he went out, and began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places: and they came to him from every quarter.

May God bless the reading of his sacred word.

Dear congregation, how would you feel if tomorrow your physician told you that you had a debilitating, loathsome, spreading, degenerative disease that was going to take your life in the weeks to come? And how would you feel if you received the shocking news and perhaps even a notice from the local Board of Health, saying that within 24 hours because of your disease you need to move outside of the city and be isolated from your neighbors and from everyone in the community? And how would you feel if another 24 hours later you received a letter from the elders of this church that due to the contagiousness of your dreadful disease, you could no longer come to a church worship service, you could have no more fellowship with God's people? That is a little bit what it was like to be a leper and this morning, we want to look at a leper coming to Jesus and finding healing, and

consider the many spiritual and practical applications from the story for our lives, our relationship with God, and our relationship with each other.

The words of our text are in verses 40 through 45. I just want to read to you the closing words of 40 and 41 right now, "If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. I will; be thou clean." So our theme this morning is "Jesus Cleansing the Unclean." We'll look at four thoughts: the coming leper; the compassionate cleanser; the charge disobeyed; and the coming multitude. The coming leper, the compassionate cleanser, the charge disobeyed, the coming multitude.

The life of a leper in Israel was a miserable one. According to Leviticus 13 and 14, God gave many specific rules of how leprosy could be detected, treated, and the ceremonial cleansings that one would have to go through if it pleased God by his miraculous power to heal a leper. One of the summaries of how bad leprosy was is in verses 45 and 46 of Leviticus 13 which read this way,

45 And the leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, Unclean, unclean. 46 All the days wherein the plague shall be in him he shall be defiled; he is unclean: he shall dwell alone; without the camp shall his habitation be.

The word "leprosy" was even more dreaded in biblical times than the word "cancer" today. It was the worst by far, the most dreaded, of all diseases. And there are five things that all forms of leprosy, there were different forms of leprosy in those days just like there are different forms of cancer today, all five of these things I want to mention now are in common for every form of leprosy.

Number 1: it's an inherited disease. It's a communicable disease. It was highly infectious. It worked insidiously and it spread usually with deadly rapidity. The worst kind of leprosy, which apparently this man had, would slowly progress usually from the head down to the feet until the person was, as Luke 5 describes this meant in the parallel account, full of leprosy.

Secondly, it was a loathsome disease. It was so loathsome that it was called a state of living death. Some people called lepers walking sepulchers. It involved discoloration of skin, open and oozing sores, loss of sensation, loss of hair, spreading ulceration. Nerves would die causing injuries to go unnoticed. Fingers and toes and even the nose would gradually waste away. Vision would be impaired. Blindness would commonly result. And after a while, a full-blown aggressive disease would overtake the deeper human organs and kill the person. It was a loathsome disease.

Thirdly, it was a shameful disease. It was an object of shame. It was dealt with by banishment. The leper was excluded from family and friends. He carried with him utter humiliation every moment of his life. There was never a moment he could escape his dreaded disease. If anyone were to touch him, that person was unclean. He could never be

touched by another human being. And if there were people even in the distance, he had to take a rag or a cloth and cover his face with his hands and cry out, "Unclean! Unclean!" and people would run from him and he would have to run from people as well. In a sense, in a very real sense, he was excommunicated from the life of God's people, from the public worship of God, from the walled cities of his day. No leper was allowed inside of a walled city. He could come into certain unwalled villages but then he had to stand on the other side of the street and when he saw people, that cry would always have to go out of his lips, "Unclean! Unclean!"

And fourthly, it was a judicial disease. Leprosy was commonly regarded as God's judgment upon an individual. Think of Gehazi. Think of Miriam and Aaron. Think of King Uzziah. You know when Miriam was afflicted with leprosy, Aaron said, "Alas, my Lord," to Moses, "I beseech thee, lay not the sin upon us where in we have done foolishly." You see, it was connected often with God's judgment upon sin.

Fifthly, it was an incurable disease. There was no solution. No human answer. No prescribed remedy. No means, even, that could be used. Only a divine miracle could heal.

This is the kind of man that now comes to Jesus and you see in all of these things there is just the tremendous parallel between our natural state with this leper. By nature, you and I, boys and girls, parents and grandparents, whether young or old, we are all spiritually leprous. Sin eats away at us almost imperceptibly. We've inherited its pollution from our parents, its guilt from our covenant in Adam. We are shapen, says the psalmist, shapen in iniquity, conceived in sin. Sin is our communicable deadly disease that poisons us, spoils our accomplishments. We are spiritual lepers so by nature we are living in a state of death, living death. Alive physically but dead spiritually. Totally depraved. Every part of us stained by sin. Every part of us, our will, our mind, are emotions, our soul unacceptable in the sight of God. Filled with loathsome disease. Walking sepulchers. Objects of shame. Banished from God and his communion. Without God. Without Christ. Without hope in the world. Spurgeon put it so well, he said by nature no matter what we accomplish in this life, without God we've got coffins on our back and we will soon have grave dust in our mouth.

And you see, the tragedy of all this is that our disease is humanly incurable. We can't resolve it ourselves. There is no apparent solution. There is no human answer. Only the Holy Spirit can miraculously give us that new birth, turn us around, convince us of sin, draw us to the Lord Jesus Christ, show us our leprosy. One of our greatest problems is we are lepers and we don't know it. We are blind to our own leprosy but when the Spirit works, you see, then we too will come like this leper to the Lord Jesus Christ and cry out, "I'm unclean! I'm unclean! My sin, my leprosy! Oh, if thou wilt can still make me clean."

That's the amazing thing here, not just the leprosy but that this man comes to Jesus. Luke tells us that this happened in one of the villages or cities. Obviously it was an unwalled city or the leper wouldn't be allowed there. And according to Matthew 8:1 in the other parallel account, we read that a multitude was nearby. This was an amazing thing for a leper to be near a multitude of people in an unwalled city, crying out, no doubt,

"Unclean! Unclean!" But then coming directly to the Lord Jesus Christ. A leper suddenly approaches Jesus and if he's an obedient Jew, as he probably was, even as he approached, you see, the hand was on his lips and the towel was over his mouth and he was crying out, "Unclean! Unclean!"

Now verse 40 says did he came and beseeched him and kneeling down to him. Kneeling down, he fell on his knees and Matthew tells us that he fell on his face. He just took the lowest posture before the Lord Jesus and he said, "If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." This is astonishing. You see, there was another time in 17 where there were 10 lepers that came to Jesus but they stood afar off, kept their distance, and they cried out saying, "Heal us!" But this leper is in desperation. He is bold. He breaks the law, as it were. He comes straight to Jesus covered in leprosy, full of leprosy, says Luke. He is risking his life. He is risking every remnant of reputation that he might yet have in his shame. Nothing can keep him from Jesus. It's Jesus or he perishes forever. He is desperate. He knows his only hope is Jesus so he comes, he falls on his knees with his face to the ground, he begs, he pleads for mercy in desperation.

Have you ever come to Jesus this way no matter what people would say or think about you? Or are you blind, perhaps even apathetic to your own spiritual leprosy? Or worse, content and even in love with your own spiritual leprosy? Are you slaves of sin that enjoy the prison of sin? Do you not even long to be free from that prison? Or have you needed Jesus so badly in your life to cleanse you from your sin that nothing and no one could keep you from him and you came just as you were? You came in your filth? You came experientially casting your all at his feet earnestly begging for his cleansing for your fully leprous soul even though you felt, "I'm incurable. I'm a hell-worthy outcast. I have no rights to mercy." But have you come leprous from head to toe? Come needing absolutely to be cleansed, desperately to be cleansed from your sin though it all seems so impossible? Or maybe better yet, are you coming every day now? For in some senses, you see, in terms of sanctification, we still are coming leprous, as it were. We defile ourselves every day and we bring our sin-stained soul when things are right within us every day to Jesus for mercy, for pardon, for strength.

You see, now you are beginning to get the picture that this leper actually possessed a kind of remarkable faith. All his faith was in Jesus. There was no other hope, no other source of refuge. He says, "If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." You see, it's all thou. Thou must do it. And it's personal. Thou canst make me clean. Not the other leper over there but I need to be cleansed. That's what happens. You see, when the Spirit works in our heart a sense of our spiritual leprosy, it becomes a personal matter between God and our own soul. He has to do the work but it needs to be done to me and I come believing that he can do the impossible for me.

So this leper has no question about the ability of the Lord Jesus even though everyone else said leprosy is incurable. He knows. He knows that Jesus is able to cure. He has an unshakable confidence in Jesus' ability even though he's still uncertain as to the will of Jesus to cleanse him in particular. It's interesting that that is just an incredible parallel spiritually too. This is the way, not always but usually, God leads his people, convicting

them of sin and then bringing them to Jesus and they begin to see that Jesus can do for them and he alone can do for them what they need to have done for them, but then the question often is, isn't it, and many of you know that question, "But will he do it for me? I believe he is Almighty. I believe he would do it for anyone else but for me, such a leper as I am, will he do it for me?" That's the question, "If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean."

Now, you may ask the question why did he express himself that way? Now part of the answer as commentators point out may well have been there was no precedent up to this time of Jesus cleansing a leper. Actually, we only read of two cleansings of lepers in the Gospels, this man and then the 10 lepers in Luke 17. And yet when John asks about Jesus' ministry, Jesus tells the people who asked the question, John's disciples, to go back to John and tell him this, "Go back to John and tell him that lepers are cleansed." So there must have been more that weren't recorded. Maybe a leper heard of one of those but maybe this is still, by the way, of course, remember, Jesus' beginning of ministry so we don't know, but whatever the case may have been, certainly there had not yet been many cleansings at this early point, and yet this is going to be so typical of Jesus' ministry that when Jesus describes his ministry to John he says, "Go and tell John that lepers are cleansed." This is the heart of Jesus. This is the character of Jesus. Jesus loves to cleanse even more than the body from leprosy, the soul from spiritual leprosy. This is his delight. This is his joy. This is the staple of his ministry. "Go, preacher, and tell the good news of the Gospel," is what Jesus is saying, "that lepers, spiritual lepers, are cleansed by me."

But also, this man not only has a remarkable faith, he has an intelligent and submissive faith. His theology is actually astonishingly well developed here. He's saying something like this, really, "Thou art the Lord." In fact, Luke says he calls upon him as Lord and he may well have done that beyond the polite form of, "Sir"; he may have recognized some deity in Jesus or that Jesus was the Messiah, "Lord, if thou canst, or if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." So he's saying, "Thou art the Lord, the Almighty, the sovereign Lord. Thy will is the supreme determiner of everything in my universe. I have no doubt about thy power, Lord, but I'm not going to presume thy sovereign will. I don't deserve healing but if thou art willing, thou canst do it."

So this man has a kind of submission. He bows before Jesus. He needs him desperately but he realizes that he doesn't deserve it so he bows, just like a sinner wrought upon by the Holy Spirit today comes to a place in his life, usually more than once where he says, "Lord, I bow. I don't deserve mercy but I cast myself upon mercy." What about you, you personally this morning? Do you know these experiential leadings of the Spirit with your own spiritual leprosy? Some of you I know are in this place. Some of you actually are fearing that he will not have mercy on you. Or some of you are saying, "I just don't dare to come because I've sinned too much. I'm too wicked. My heart is too hard. I'm too insignificant, too leprous for him to show compassion to me. Why would God bother with a person who has sinned so many years, so many decades? A worthless outcast like me, why show compassion to someone like me?"

That's the way we reason humanly when we begin to see who we are, but that's not Gospel reasoning. Listen to what Jesus does in verse 41. He's a compassionate cleanser, our second thought, "Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean." It's the word of a King. We saw that earlier in Mark 1. He's got authority, you see. "I will; be thou clean."

Actually, Jesus shows here three compassionate actions as compassionate cleanser. First, his compassion itself. Jesus moved with compassion. You know, the Hebrews had a much more vigorous way of describing inner emotions than we do. We sometimes say, "Oh, my heart is moved," focusing on one internal organ. But the word here in Greek actually means the upper viscera that would include the heart, the lungs, the liver, the spleen, the stomach. In other words, "My whole insides are moved." That's the word used here. Jesus has a deep visceral feeling of pity toward this man. Boys and girls, you know that feeling you get when you are so moved by someone else's hurt and someone else's needs that your stomach tightens and tears fill your eyes. Well, that's the kind of compassion Jesus felt here. He looks upon this massive human misery, this living death of leprosy, and he doesn't say like society would, "When you've seen one, you've seen them all. Get this man out of my sight." No, his whole being is moved. Jesus moved with compassion. This is who is.

Then his second action: touch. Astonishing. I think the crowd must have shrieked or groaned or something. The multitude, "What? He's going to touch a leper? He's going to make himself unclean?" Jesus stretches forth his hand and tenderly touches this man who is full of leprosy, who is crying out, "Unclean! Unclean!" He stretches out his hand. Gasps of horror and shock would come from the multitude.

Then he speaks, that's the third thing: his words. His compassion, his touch and now his words. "And saith unto him." You see, you weren't even supposed to speak to a leper but he "saith unto him, I will; be thou clean." And the beautiful thing is that Jesus' words correspond exactly to the express need of the leper. You see the parallels. It's obvious. "If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." "I will; be thou clean." He is a God who hears prayer, who hears the cry of the needy. He does exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. "If thou wilt," he says, and he says, "I am willing. I'm not only able, leper, I'm willing as well. I will do more than you can ask or think. I will. And once my will is committed, my word will bring to pass what my will decrees. I will." When Jesus says, "I will," he will. He commands and it stands firm.

You see when Christ's ability and willingness and words, Christ's ability and willingness and words meet at the same time, everything changes. Verse 42, "As soon as he had spoken," as soon as he had spoken, "immediately," there is that word again coming out in Mark, all throughout Mark, "immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed." As soon as he had spoken. No delays. No process. No stages of healing. No antibiotics for weeks. Immediately the leprosy departed from him and he was cleansed. Completely cleansed. He must have looked at his skin, don't you think, and body parts that were wearing away are miraculously grown back. In a moment the leprosy with all of its attendant circumstances, shrunk back at the Word who created all things, the same

Word, the living Word, Jesus, who spoke all things into existence, powerfully, compassionately speaks to make lepers clean of leprosy and sinners still today clean from sin.

So this man is rendered clean because he no longer has this dread disease, just as a poor spiritual leper who is brought by the Holy Spirit to trust in Christ is cleansed of his sin and is justified before God for Christ's sake. That's almost too good to be true. And yet the leper looks and it is true. It is true. One moment he's crying out, "Unclean! Unclean!" and now clean. Clean by the word, by the touch, by the compassion of Jesus Christ. And my friend, Jesus can do that for you as well. He can do that in an instant. That is the kind of compassion he has for people like you and me, a compassion that is not only perfectly able but also totally willing.

Never doubt the power or the willingness of Jesus Christ to forgive sins and to cleanse you from unrighteousness. He loves to forgive sins. He's in the business of forgiveness. When he declares you forgiven, you are immediately forgiven. When he declares you clean, you are considered clean. Oh yes, the process of sanctification continues but when you're declared righteous with God, that's what you are. There is no delay. The living Word says it and when he says it, it is done. The old has passed away and the new has come. Do you believe that? Do you really believe that? That when a poor sinner casts himself by faith on the Son of God, that in a moment Jesus cleanses that sinner? Do you believe the Gospel? That he comes not to seek the well but to seek and heal the sick?

Don't believe that you are beyond help; that you are too unclean for his compassion. This is a faithful saying and worthy to be accepted of all, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom, says Paul, I am chief. You can't get beyond chief, can you? He's the Almighty. He's the great Almighty, willing, one-sided, Sovereign, gracious, compassionate cleanser who really cleanses chief sinners.

"Oh," you say, "but why me? Why me? Why would he ever notice me?" No, no, you don't understand the Gospel. The Gospel's question is: why not me because I am a sinner? That's the Gospel. Psalm 25, "Pardon mine iniquity, Lord, for it is great." Not because it's small. Don't tidy up yourself, don't try to change yourself or reform yourself into salvation. Come just as you are as a big sinner to a big Savior, to a compassionate cleanser and say, "If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean," and he will. He will. He's promised never to cast out those who come to him. Come, then, just as you are, with all your leprosy. Don't hide a tad of it from him. Come full of leprosy. Cast yourself upon him unreservedly and if he turns you away, you will be a real anomaly. You will be the first human being in all of history, human history, to be turned away as a needy sinner from a compassionate cleanser. He won't do that to you. He will receive, he will heal.

And then suddenly our text takes a surprising turn. Look at verses 43 and 44 where Jesus issues a very strange and solemn charge, "he straitly charged him," you could translate it, "he sternly or strictly charge him and forthwith sent him away; And saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man: but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them." What in the

world does this mean? What a study in contrast. The eyes of compassion, the words of compassion now become strong words and strong stern eyes of a charge. And the word "strictly charged" here in Greek comes from the root word of a horse, an angry war horst pawing the ground, snorting through his nostrils. The root actually means to snort. Jesus has a tinge of anger here. He vehemently charges the leper sternly, "Tell no man but go to the priests."

Well, there is a lot of debate about what that means. Actually, two things are going on at once, both negatively and positively. The negative aspect is in these words "see thou say nothing to any man." In Greek it's a double negative, "Say to no man nothing," we would say. Double negative, which means a positive in our language, but it's bad English but it's good preaching. This is a temporary, a relative prohibition. At this time, this man may definitely not speak to others about his healing.

But why? Well, for two negative reasons. First, Jesus did not want to stir up the crowds to seek for miracles only which is exactly why they were prone to be moved. Remember we saw that last time, a few verses before when the crowds wanted him to do more miracles and heal more people. But he went out and prayed and hid himself and then said to the disciples when the crowd was following them, "Let us go to the next town so that I may preach there also, for therefore came I forth." And you remember last time we saw that Jesus is saying, "The primacy of my ministry is preaching. Healing is secondary. I've got to preach the word of God. If you go out and tell everyone, healed leper, all kinds of people are going to come to me for healing and they're going to forget that my main task is preaching the kingdom."

But secondly, Jesus also does not want to upset the religious world too much at this very beginning of his ministry because the time is not yet come for him to go into Gethsemane and Gabatha and Golgotha, those intense sufferings, and to die. There are many more things he had to teach his disciples. You see, Jesus wants his kingdom to break into this world gradually so as to build to the climax of the cross and the empty tomb and if this man goes out and spreads it abroad, it could impact his preaching negatively and people could be upset with him and that type of thing. Someone put it this way: Jesus will not storm Israel with his messianic claim at the beginning but will not quietly at its door leper by leper, little by little.

But there is something positive here as well in this charge, something deeper. Notice the positive this way: go not to a priest but to the priest, that is the high priest who is now on service at Jerusalem. Go down to Jerusalem. Go to the temple. Go to the high priest and go through the very things that are prescribed by Moses, that is, the ritual outlined in Leviticus 13 and Leviticus 14. Go there and go through every detail of this Mosaic ritual so that you will be declared ritually clean by the high priest, by a proper recognized authority. Now after the cross, of course, and the resurrection, Jesus would do away with these Mosaic cleansing rituals but for now, even these rituals testify of him. And if you study Leviticus 13 and 14, I hope you'll do that, maybe even later today because it's an interesting study, what you find out is that the ritual was an eight day affair. On the first day, there was a ritual which basically reinstated the cleansed leper to the position of

acceptance within the community of God's people. Then seven days later on the eighth day, there was a more complicated ritual with the offering of two animals that reinstated him to the very worship of the living God.

So what Jesus is saying is, "I don't want you to go and proclaim everywhere what has happened to you, but first things first. You go immediately, as a matter of priority, to the priest, offer what is prescribed in the law of Moses." But why? Jesus tells us, "for a testimony unto them." Do you see that at the end of the verse? For a testimony unto them. What does that mean? Well, Jesus is saying, "You know the priests and the scribes and the Pharisees, they like to discount my miracles. They don't believe I'm the Messiah, but I want you to go to them, they know you're a leper, and I want the high priest himself to see it, that you are healed, so he can't deny it himself. Go as a witness unto the priests. Go to them. Show them that I have not come to overthrow the law but to fulfill the law. You can tell them I've sent you. I'm a fulfiller of the law, but also show them that I am the one who truly cleanses lepers; that I'm the Almighty Lord, the one who am who and what I say I am." So that even the high priest has to say, "This man, it's a miracle! He doesn't have leprosy anymore," so they won't be able to just talk about rumors of healing a leper, he'll see you face to face.

Now that's one interpretation. Testimony unto them but now this makes it a tad more complicated but stay with me: testimony unto them can also be translated testimony against them. Jesus could say not only, "I want you to show to them that my ministry is real, my messiahship is real," but also it's a testimony against them. "They will use these kinds of things as incriminating testimony against me one day but I, on the great day, will use these things as an incriminating testimony against them and I will have the final word."

So it's a complicated text here but there are several motivations, you see, of why Jesus wants this man to go directly to the high priest. But this man disobeys and he blazes abroad, verse 45 says, "he went out, and began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad." That's a unique expression. One of the two words means "to proclaim like a herald," almost like he was a preacher, and the other "to report a matter until it permeates through an entire area." He told everyone, infiltrated the area with what Jesus had done, "insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places: and they came to him from every quarter." Well, it's a sad thing. This man thought he was doing Jesus a favor, no doubt, spread about Jesus' fame, but in so doing, everything came to focus just on his miracles, which is exactly what Jesus didn't want, and because of the fame of the miracles, he no longer felt free to go to the city or he'd be arrested by the scribes or whatever, and so he has to stay out in the desert place for a little while at least, has to be like John the Baptist and people have to come to him out in the desert.

So Jesus had to suspend his practice for a time. You saw that back in verse 39. Remember we talked about that a few weeks ago. He preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee. That was Jesus' approach. First go to a city, go to the synagogue, preach there, and then he'd do some healings. But now that opportunity is wiped away for

him. He can't go to the synagogues. He'll be arrested. He'll be taken in. It's too early. So the mobs, the multitudes now are not so concerned about his preaching through this man's error, but only about his healing. They want more signs, more miracles, and so they come to him from every quarter. So he couldn't do his primary thing, preaching in the synagogues. Everyone is clamoring for a miracle.

So, you see, you can be zealous about something, you can even be zealous about the Lord and be unwise in how you carry out that zeal. But the multitude, we need to say something before we close about the multitude, the coming multitude, because the text ends graphically, "they came to him from every quarter." What a fascinating ending to this story, a coming multitude. Not just a coming leper. Unfortunately, some of them, of course, did not come for the right reasons. Some came for loaves and fishes. Some to receive physical benefits only. Some out of admiration perhaps for his eloquence. Some out of temporary excitement. Some because they thought he would set up an earthly kingdom. Some because they misunderstood his character in spiritual ministry. But blessed be God, among them were, no doubt, also those who came spiritually to Christ by faith and they, too, came from every quarter. Some from high class. Some from lower classes. Some educated. Some not. Some came more through heavy conviction of sin. Others drawn more by Christ's love and compassion. But they all came in truth, all those true comers, and none of them are disappointed in him. All sorts of people who come to Christ in truth find that he meets all their needs.

And you see, that's still true today. In fact, the Greek here is in the progressive tense. Literally, if you translated it literally it would say this, "They kept on coming to him from every quarter." Not just today. Not just tomorrow. But 2,000 years later in our day and age, sinners are still keeping on coming to Jesus. The unsaved lepers who need healing but also the saved keep coming every day. Still today he brings to himself a multitude no man can number from every quarter, from every country, and they do come and I hope you're among them. I hope you're in the crowd. I hope you, too, are coming to him every day, through tribulations entering into his kingdom that your soul may be cleansed in the blood of the Lamb. And none are turned away. He receives all comers. What a blessing. What an amazing blessing.

And dear believer, how critical it is that you and I strive to come freely to the Savior from every quarter of our lives every day. We need to come to him individually by his grace for all our needs: for forgiveness of daily sin; for daily sanctification. We need him as our prophet to teach us, as our priest to intercede for us, as our king to guide us. We need him in our inner closet. In our homes. At church. At school. At work. Every moment every day, we need him. We need him in the midst of our daily trials, our perplexing moments, but also our times of prosperity and success. We need him in our intellectual pursuits, our emotional ups and downs. We need him on our Lord's days. We need him throughout the week all for more daily and hourly comings to the Lord Jesus from every quarter of our lives, to gather with the multitude of his disciples. What a joy to come to him with the multitude that kept holy day.

Spurgeon said, "It makes my Lord so much the more precious to me when I remember that he is so precious to multitudes of others. You may have a whole Christ to yourself and yet millions of happy spirits are doing the same in living upon his inexhaustible supplies."

Are you a comer to Jesus? Can you say that you fly to Jesus thousands of times? Do you come to him from every quarter of your life? And when you do, do you strive to bring others with you so that the multitude will be enlarged? You see, if you would be used of Jesus Christ to take his Gospel message to others, you've got to be like your Savior and be willing to touch sinners that others regard untouchable. Touch them where they are and speak words from the Word to them. You've got to be like Jesus, to be in the world but not of the world. You've got to separate from the world but separation does not mean aloofness from sinners. It means getting close enough to make it known that something of the compassion and care of Jesus Christ is in your heart and manifested that compassion that he might use you as a channel so that his mighty power might work through you to lead sinners to the Lord Jesus. Ultimately that's what the sermon was all about on Thursday night. You are to be witnesses for my word.

They came to him from every quarter, themselves, bringing their neighbors with them. So we ought to do. And one day, don't forget, the multitude of those coming to Jesus from every quarter will be massive. It will be complete, all seated around the Lamb in the midst of the throne for the great wedding feast. Praise God that not one chair will be empty in that day. And what a cosmopolitan heaven that day shall reveal. They shall come from every tribe and nation and people, all taking their own unique path to get to Jesus yet all of them knowing something of experiential misery, experiential deliverance, experiential gratitude.

That's why we do mission work. That's we evangelize. That's why we speak a good word. Our lives, our words, our touch, our compassion, God can use all these things to bring others along with us and one day, happy day, the number gathered around the throne for that great eternal family gathering shall be absolutely complete, absolutely perfect, absolutely joyful, and that forever.

Let me close by giving you just three practical lessons that I want to apply to your soul. The first is this: we need to notice throughout this account the glory of our Savior. This account really is more about Jesus than about the leper. Remember how Mark begins, it's a summary of his whole Gospel, "The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." That's his goal, to show you the glory of the Savior and he does that in at least three powerful ways here. He shows you the large and tender heart of our Savior. Jesus is so approachable. He's not aloof like the rabbis. He's not afraid of defilement. He's willing to touch lepers. But also you see here his infinite condescension as a Savior of sinners, willing to come into contact with the unclean. This is really a picture of his entire Incarnation, willing to be born bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh; made in the likeness of sinful flesh yet without sin so he could touch sinners, touch them in the Incarnation, touch them through his sufferings, touch them with spiritual healing.

Then we see his glory also in his almighty power. "I will; be thou clean." You see, how many times have you not heard in your life this message, this glorious, compassionate, willing, touching, powerful Savior? He promises, "He who comes to me, I will in no wise cast out." Yet some of you still are not coming, still holding back. J. C. Ryle said, "Men are not lost because they're too bad to be saved, but they're lost because they will not come to Christ that he may save them." Manasseh was a spiritual leper but he came and found mercy. Saul of Tarsus was a spiritual leper. His hands were red with the blood of saints. He was a blasphemer, persecutor, but he found mercy. By the grace of God you may find mercy too. That precious hymn says it so well, "He is willing, he is able, doubt no more." Just one will. Just one "I will" from Jesus' lips and your chains will fall off.

"Ah, yes," you say, "but the patterns, the habits, the tremendous mountains of guilt and memory on my conscience, it all testifies against me." Of course it does. You're a leper so go to the only one who can heal you, not trying to tell him your leprosy is not what it appears to be. No, don't hide it from him. Tell him how bad you are. Tell him, "I'm detestable. I'm a foul leper from head to toe, Lord, but I've heard you've healed lepers, you can heal me as well." And don't rest until he does, until he says your sins are forgiven.

Them, secondly, notice here the example set forth by the leper. The leper has this wonderful aggressive faith. It's amazing. He just goes to Jesus against all the cultural norms of the day. He is a man determined to receive blessing from the Son of God despite public ridicule, public rebuke. He places himself in the posture of earnest entreaty that cannot be ignored by the Son of God and yet he comes in submissive faith. In submissive faith, "If thou art willing, thou art able."

You see, this is the way to come to God. Even though he had unwise zeal afterwards, he's still a sinner, we need to learn to obey Jesus unconditionally, but still there's something in this man that's an example for all of us. He throws himself in loving trust upon the goodness and the dispositions of Jesus' sovereign will and that's the way to come to him. You can't save yourself. You can't give it to yourself. The Holy Spirit alone can do it, of course, but you'll put yourself in the way by casting yourself upon him, by crying out to him, "If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean."

Now, of that unwise zeal, we need to say this, that it was natural for this man to go out and blaze it abroad because what happened to him was so great, but we need to unconditionally obey Jesus. David Brown puts it so well, "After receiving the command to keep silence, the part of duty was not to judge the command but to obey it. As he was no competent judge of the reasons which dictated the command, so he ought to have brought into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." In other words, God does not use our need, our unwise zeal, to do his work. Unholy zeal that disobeys the words of Christ always undermines the work of Christ. Obey him. Walk in his ways.

And finally, notice here the uniqueness of leprosy. The uniqueness of leprosy. He comes with the most dreaded disease of all, conscious of his leprosy, all things against him, but he finds in Jesus everything is for him. There is no problem in your life, no sin too great,

nothing too big for Jesus to resolve. When that man left Jesus, do you realize how precious Jesus was to him? To you who believe, he is precious, says Peter. Why is he not precious to you? Either because you don't regard yourself as a leper and you still think there's something good in you that can please God, or perhaps because you think that he won't heal someone like you. But you heard this morning again that is completely wrong. The whole message of this story is that there is grace for lepers. Come as you are and give yourself no rest until you see how suited Jesus is for you. He is the compassionate cleanser of lepers. Trust him. Amen.

Great God of heaven, we thank thee so much for thy amazing amazing cleansing power. Please, Lord, work mightily in the hearts of every one in our midst, boys and girls also, who are not yet saved. Show us our leprosy and help us to see it so full in the face that we can do nothing but come unto Jesus and cast ourselves at his feet, sinners though we be. And do have mercy, do show us, do speak to us, "I will; be thou clean." And Lord, may that be the continued daily experience of thy people every day coming for forgiveness and cleansing, every day experiencing that Jesus is faithful to his word to poor, hell-worthy, totally depraved in self sinners, no wonder too great for thee. So come and bless us, we pray, with the wonders of thy compassionate cleansing Son by thy Holy Spirit according to thy fatherly will. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

SUNDAY MORNING

5/28/17

Dr. Joel R. Beeke

Votum and Salutation

Psalter 10:1, 3

Reading of the Law of God

Scripture Reading: Mark 1:35-45

Prayer

Psalter 390

Sermon Text: Mark 1:40-45

Series on Mark (14)

Jesus Cleansing the Unclean

1. *The coming leper*
2. *The compassionate Cleanser*
3. *The charge disobeyed*
4. *The coming multitude*

Psalter 280:1, 2 (standing)

Sermon Conclusion

Closing Prayer

Psalter 254:3-5

Doxology of Praise (pg. 415)

Benediction

SUNDAY MORNING

1. *How did the leper come to Jesus desperately? How does this present a perfect picture of our desperate need (v. 40a)?*

2. *How did the leper come to Jesus believably? How does this present a perfect picture of faith (v. 40b)?*

3. *What can we learn from Jesus' compassion (v. 41a)?*

4. *What can we learn from Jesus' touch combined with His words (vv. 41b-42)?*

5. *Why did Jesus warn the cleansed leper that he shouldn't speak about the miracle Jesus performed on him (vv. 43-44)?*

6. *How does disobedience hinder God's mission rather than advance it (v. 45a)?*

7. *What can we learn from the concluding words of the text: "they came to him from every quarter" (v. 45b)?*