

**Introduction**

1. In the fall of 2013 Deborah and I travelled to St. Petersburg, Russia where I completed a short-term teaching assignment at St. Petersburg Evangelical Theological Institute.
  - a. On our way back home, we stopped over for four days in London where we stayed in the beautiful Elizabeth Hotel across the street from Hyde Park.
  - b. One of the things that we did was go to Buckingham Palace to see the Queen.
  - c. Of course, we didn't get scones and tea on the inside but took a front row position by the main gate.
  - d. As we waited, the crowd of people grew with many layers of people behind us, pushing us into the fence. They came because they knew the Queen would make an appearance to officially start the Commonwealth Games.
  - e. Eventually, we did see the Queen at a distance of about 100 yards as she spoke and then drove through the gate in her limo.
2. That's the way it goes with famous people. Perhaps you have gone to see someone famous. There is always a big crowd surrounding them, trying to get as close as possible.
3. At the end of the narrative today, Jesus had become so famous in the region of Galilee that he could not enter a town without immediately being surrounded by a crowd of people who wanted to see him and be healed by him.
4. **Read Mk 1:40-45.**

**A. The Approach (40)**

1. "A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, . . . ." (1a)
  - a. The term leprosy (Gk., *lepros*) was used by the Jews to describe any of a number of skin diseases, not just what we know as Hansen's disease. Whatever it was, the man's disease was both physically painful and also socially and religiously devastating.
    - 1) Leviticus prescribed how a leper among the Jews was to be treated. "Anyone with such a defiling disease must wear torn clothes, let their hair be unkempt, cover the lower part of their face and cry out, 'Unclean! Unclean!' As long as they have the disease they remain unclean. They must live alone; they must live outside the camp (Lev 13:45-46 NIV).
    - 2) One of the miraculous signs God gave to Moses as he sent him to bring Israel out of Egypt related to leprosy. At the burning bush God said to Moses, "'Put your hand inside your cloak.' So Moses put his hand into his cloak, and when he took it out, the skin was leprous—it had become as white as snow. 'Now put it back into your cloak,' he said. So Moses put his hand back into his cloak, and when he took it out, it was restored, like the rest of his flesh" (Ex 4:6-7).
    - 3) The rabbis believed that only God could cure leprosy and make a leper clean.
  - b. The man showed courage, humility, and faith in coming so close to Jesus that he could touch him.
  - c. Daniel Akin writes, "This encounter is startling, provocative, and even offensive. A leper was a man whom the culture considered an outcast, the law judged unclean, and the people deemed cursed by God. Even one with AIDS today fares far better than the leper of the first century. A leper was to stay at least 50 paces from others. That he came near to Jesus, so close that Jesus could touch him, was unthinkable (Daniel L. Akin, *Christ-centered Exposition: Exalting Jesus in Mark*, 36).
  - d. Warren Wiersbe adds this insight, "When you read the 'tests' for leprosy described in Leviticus 13, you can see how the disease is a picture of sin. Like sin, leprosy is deeper than the skin (Lev. 13:3); it spreads (Lev. 13:5-8); it defiles and isolates (Lev. 13:44-46); and it renders things fit only for the fire (Lev. 13:47-59). Anyone who has never trusted the Savior is spiritually in worse shape than this man was physically" (Warren Wiersbe, *Be Diligent*, 27).
  - e. There is a linkage between sickness and sin in the gospels. While not all sickness is the result of sin, both sickness and sin are healed by the master.
    - 1) Sin is the greatest illness that we have.
    - 2) Here, Mark foreshadows the next encounter of Jesus with one who is sick in Mk 2:1-12. In that encounter, which we will study next week, Jesus does not address the man's sickness but his sin.

2. The leprous man was on his knees and begging Jesus, “‘If you are willing (Gk., *dunasai*), you can make me clean (Gk., *katharisai*).’” (1b)
  - a. The Greek word clean is the source for our English word cauterize.
  - b. The man was convinced of Jesus’ ability to heal him but was unsure of his willingness to do so.

## B. The Healing (41-42)

1. “Jesus was indignant (Gk., *orgistheis*).” (41a)
  - a. Indignant is a harsh word. The American Heritage Dictionary defines indignant as “moved by mixed emotions of anger and scorn; provoked by something regarded as unjust, ungrateful, or unworthy.”
  - b. This raises some interesting questions, why was Jesus indignant? And at whom or what was he indignant?
    - 1) Several reliable Greek manuscripts have a different word here which means “compassion” (Gk., *splagchno*.)” This is a common word used by the Gospel writers to describe Jesus when he encounters those in need of his help/healing. For example, Jesus has compassion on the 5,000 who need his teaching on a hillside (Mk 6:34), the 4,000 whom he miraculously fed (Mk 8:2), and on a demon possessed boy whom he healed (Mk 9:22).
    - 2) James Brooks shares an important insight about the Greek text. “The vast majority of textual witnesses, including those usually considered the most reliable, have a word meaning *filled with compassion*. Only one Greek manuscript, four Old Latin manuscripts, and one early Christian writer—all of medium value—have a word meaning *having become angry*. . . . Despite the massive external attestation for ‘filled with compassion,’ internal considerations are so strong that ‘having become angry’ probably is the original. Furthermore, several other references in Mark refer to Jesus being angry, although they use different words (See 3:5; 10:14). Whether Jesus was ‘filled with compassion’ or ‘moved to anger,’ he displayed human emotion. Mark had no reservations about depicting the humanity of Jesus” (James A. Brooks, *Mark*, 55).
    - 3) Perhaps Jesus was indignant at the man’s lack of belief that he could heal him but the man’s uncertainty regarding his “willingness” to heal him. The man had faith that Jesus could heal him but was unsure if Jesus would heal him.
    - 4) Perhaps Jesus was indignant with people in general who continued to come to him for physical healing while not truly hearing his more important message about spiritual healing through repentance and faith in the coming kingdom of God.
  - c. At any rate, Jesus shows great compassion in touching and healing his leprous man.
2. Notice that the healing came in two parts. (41b)
  - a. An Action – “(Jesus) reached out his hand and touched the man.”
    - 1) This was a bold, faith-filled action since the disease was most likely quite contagious.
    - 2) While the Jewish ceremonial law (cf., Lev 13:1-46) forbade touching the man, the law of love (Lev 19:9-18) trumped the ceremonial law.
    - 3) A modern parallel of the faith and compassion shown by Jesus might be like our touching someone that we knew had COVID without wearing a mask or gloves.
    - 4) Touch is a powerful, connecting, healing action.
  - b. Words
    - 1) “I am willing (Gk., *thelo*).” – Jesus leaves no doubt in the man’s mind. He is willing.
    - 2) “Be clean! (Gk., *katharistheti*)” – Furthermore, he is able. Jesus issues a strong command.
  - c. The man’s healing occurred “immediately” (Gk., *euthus*).
    - 1) Just like the evil spirit had left the man in the synagogue, the leprosy left this man.
    - 2) “He was cleansed (Gk., *ekatharisthe*).” – The healing happened immediately at a past point in time. The healing was all about Jesus—his actions and words. The man received the healing action of Jesus.

### C. The Result (43-45)

1. Jesus gave the man a strong warning and two commands (43-44)
  - a. “Jesus sent him away at once . . .” (43)
    - 1) The word “sent away” (Gk., *eksebalen*) is the same one used to describe Jesus casting out demons (Mk 1:34) and even of the Holy Spirit driving Jesus into the wilderness (Mk 1:12) after his baptism.
    - 2) This action took place immediately (Gk., *euthus*) after the healing. There was no lingering to talk.
  - b. “. . . with a strong warning.” (43)
    - 1) This powerful word “strong warning” (Gk., *embrimesamenos*) literally means “to snort; to have strong feeling within; to be angry; to scold; to warn” (Brooks, 56)
    - 2) Maybe Jesus knew the man would not obey his command to keep quiet and that by telling others, the man’s testimony would hinder his ability to preach in the synagogues of Galilee.
    - 3) Jesus’ primary mission was to redeem not simply to heal.
2. The first command of Jesus to the man was: “See that you don’t tell this to anyone” (44a)
  - a. This reminds us of the Messianic Secret that Jesus had commanded the demons that he cast out to keep (Mk 1:25, 34).
  - b. Here he commands it of a human being whom he has healed.
  - c. Jesus was more interested in converts to the kingdom by faith than followers who came to him one time for healing.
  - d. Daniel Akin well said, “He does not want people to come to Him to get what they want. He wants people to come to Him to get Him!” (Akin, 37)
3. The second command of Jesus was for this man to obey the OT law: “But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them” (44b).
  - a. Leviticus 14 prescribes the process for one cleansed of leprosy must follow to be officially declared clean and welcomed back into religious and social life of the Jewish community.
  - b. Warren Wiersbe shares that Leviticus 14 “. . . presents a beautiful picture of the work of redemption. . . The blood [of the sacrificial animal] was applied to the man’s right ear (God’s Word), right thumb (God’s work), and right great toe (God’s walk). Then the oil was put on the blood, symbolizing the Holy Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit cannot come on human flesh until first the blood has been applied” (Wiersbe, 27-8).
  - c. But why would Jesus command this man to keep OT ceremonial law that he had come to ultimately fulfill?
    - 1) I believe the key can be found in the final phrase of this command: “. . . for a testimony to them (Gk., *eis marurion autois*).
    - 2) The little preposition *eis* can be translated either as “to” or “against.” In this context, the translation “against them” may be best.
    - 3) The next question is who is that that this man brings a testimony against? Is the object the people or the priests? I think is the priests.
    - 4) If the priests accept that the man has been healed by Jesus’ command, then they become witnesses to the power of God at work in Jesus.
      - a) Remember that the Jewish leaders believe that leprosy could only be cleansed by an act of God.
      - b) Their acceptance of this man’s cleansing would be an admission that God has done something new, that the kingdom has drawn near through the teachings and actions of Jesus.
4. The man couldn’t keep quiet (45a)
  - a. “Instead he went out and began to talk freely, spreading the news” (45a).
  - b. What he had experienced was too good to keep quiet.
  - c. As Jesus knew, the man’s testimony the people had a restrictive effect on Jesus’ ministry.
    - 1) He could no longer move freely in Galilee to teach and preach the good news.
    - 2) He could not fulfill his plan to preach in the synagogues of Galilee (cf., Mk 1:38).
  - d. We are not told if the man obeyed the second command to present himself to the priests and to offer the sacrifices of cleansing prescribed in the law.

5. Jesus' popularity grew (45b)
  - a. Jesus could not enter a town in Galilee due to immediate recognition and a crushing crowd of those seeking healing.
  - b. Jesus stayed "outside in lonely places (Gk., *eremois topois*)" like the one where he went to pray alone in Mk 1:35.
  - c. Akin notes, "Ironically, Jesus and the leper have traded places. The leper is now on the inside with family and friends. Jesus is on the outside in a lonely and desolate place. This picture of substitution is the heart of the gospel. It is why Jesus came. He will take on Himself our sin, our sorrow, and our shame. In return He gives us His forgiveness, His holiness, and His righteousness—praise the Lord! What an exchange!" (Akin, 37).
  - d. Yet the people "still came to him from everywhere." Like Peter and the people of Capernaum, the people found Jesus even out in the lonely place.
6. This marks the end of Jesus' preaching tour to the synagogues of Galilee.
  - a. In Mark 2:1-3:6 the gospel story moves to five controversial encounters between Jesus and Jewish leaders, the teachers of the law and Pharisees.
  - b. We will begin that part of the journey next week.

#### **D. Lessons for Us**

1. We must seek out Jesus for our healing.
  - a. He is there when we call on him and is still able and willing to heal us as we come to him.
  - b. Our healing from sin is more important than our physical healing.
2. Jesus is not unreachable or uncaring.
  - a. Jesus wants to heal us. He has compassion on us.
  - b. In turn, we must be like Jesus as we show compassion and patience with others whose needs may not always seem reasonable or convenient to us.
3. Jesus takes action to bring us healing both physically and spiritually. We must trust him no matter what comes our way.
4. Like Jesus, we must be willing to reach out to those in need of help and healing with our actions and words. We are servants meeting the needs of others in Jesus' name and power.
5. Unlike the man in this story, we are not under command to keep the good news of Jesus quiet.
  - a. Jesus has commanded us to go out proclaim the good news in our words and actions each day.
  - b. Let's not follow the leper's bad example of disobedience that hindered Jesus' ministry.
  - c. Share the good news of Jesus in your words and actions every day.
6. We are no longer bound to keep the Old Testament ceremonial law.
  - a. Jesus has fulfilled the ceremonial law and freed us from that burden by his once-for-all sacrifice for our sins.
  - b. However, we by Jesus' command must still keep the Old Testament law of love. We must love God and our neighbors as ourselves (cf., Mk 12:29-31).
7. Those who are hurting and in need still come to Jesus for healing.
  - a. We as Christ-followers must meet the needs of those who are in need.
  - b. As we meet needs in Christ's power, those in need will find us.
  - c. We must meet the needs of others not in our own strength but with the power and Spirit of the Lord Jesus at work in and through us.