

March 18, 2017 – Elmont Baptist Church
Message Series: The Gospel of Mark
Week 9: "...He Was Made Clean..."
Text: Mark 1:40-45

We have launched into unpacking and understanding the Book of Mark. By the time we are done, we will have read every verse and unpacked every passage. Here's a little background – the author is Mark, or John Mark. Mark served as Peter's interpreter, and is giving us Peter's account of the life and ministry of Jesus. This book was written about AD 53-57, making it the first of the four Gospels to be written and the fifth earliest book in the New Testament to be written.

Mark's audience is Romans believers, and as theologian Danny Akin says, "he is telling them that Jesus is the Messiah King and suffering servant who actively ministers on our behalf and gives his life as a ransom for many."

Mark records more miracles and actions of Jesus than direct teachings and parables, but whenever Jesus is doing anything, He is teaching us something. So we will look at one of the healing miracles of Jesus today, and see what He is teaching us.

We Need to See...

✓ **The Leper's Humility & Faith – v. 40**

- **Admit Your Brokenness** – "implored Him and kneeling"
- **Trust His Fullness** – "If you will, you can..."

Leprosy goes deep under the surface. It spreads, it defiles, it isolates. This man is desperate! Desperate enough to violate customs, rules of religion, and expectations of others in order to get to Jesus. He believes, trusts, that only Jesus can heal him. But even in his desperation, we still see his humility – "if you will, you can".

✓ **Jesus' Compassion & Power – v. 41-42**

- **No Matter What, Jesus Cares** – "Moved w/ pity...touched him"
- **No Matter What, Jesus Can** – "I will, be clean"

It may have been years since anyone touched this man, and Jesus did. Jesus could have spoken a word of healing, but instead He showed compassion and touched the untouchable. Having a God that cares but is limited in power, leaves us stuck in our mess and brokenness. Having a God that is all powerful, but doesn't care, leaves us trembling in fear. This is every other false god ever dreamed up by man, and this is the temptation of the enemy. He says, "If God loved you, this wouldn't be happening", or "If God was really powerful, He would have stopped it."

✓ **Jesus' Command & the Leper's Response – v. 43-45**

- **Trust His Word** – "Say nothing"
- **Not Your Heart** – "but he...began to talk" (Jeremiah 17:9)

Jesus sends the man away with clear instructions. He is not using reverse psychology here. Jesus means what He says. This man's sin doesn't thwart the sovereign plan of God, but it does create complications. Jesus isn't seeking crowds that just want the spectacular, but rather followers that want to be near the Savior. Jesus wanted this man to experience the fullness of healing, and that could only come about if this man would follow God's design for him as prescribed in the OT law, the instructions that God Himself wrote. Another thought here is that not everything that you experience with Jesus is always for your next conversation or bible study group. There are times when God speaks to you or stirs your heart in such a way that it's just for that moment and just for you. There is also some irony in this passage though. Jesus tells this guy to tell no one and he tells everyone, but Jesus tells us to tell everyone and we tell no one. He is overjoyed. His emotions overwhelm him. How could it be wrong to tell everyone along the way what Jesus has done? Because there are things this guy cannot see or know, but must trust Jesus about. He needs to trust the perfect Word of Jesus, not the ever-changing feelings of his heart.

Bottom line – some of us need to recognize our brokenness and it's not that some of us have it and some do not. We're all broken and will be to some level until we are out of this sinful world, but are you digging deep and giving it to Jesus and crying out "if you will, you can". Here's the encouragement though, Jesus cares. He really has compassion on you. No. Matter. What. The question is, are you going to trust your heart and feelings, or trust Jesus at His Word. His word has never failed. How often has your heart failed you?

Thinking it Through...

- ✓ **Will you come to Jesus in humility and trust Him to heal your brokenness?**
- ✓ **How have you experienced the compassion and power of Jesus in your life?**
- ✓ **The cross and resurrection of Jesus tell us that no sin, hurt, or experience are beyond the healing power of Jesus. Will you trust Jesus at His Word?**

From Pastor Brian Bill...

He knew something was wrong...very wrong. But he hoped if he waited long enough, it would just go away. But it didn't. In fact, it only got worse. Soon, others started to notice that he looked pale and sickly; and he realized that he would have to take a journey to a far-away city to figure out what exactly was going on.

After several days, he reached Jerusalem and was shown to a room. After what seemed like several hours, the door opened and an official looking man entered and examined the stranger, "It's here," as he rolled up his sleeve to reveal an open, runny sore. Again he said, "It's here," as he slipped his collar to the side, exposing another one. "It's here too," as he removed his sandal, where there was yet another nasty nodule on the top of his foot.

And with that, the official jumped back with a wild look in his eyes and said to the man, "I declare unto you that you are unclean." And then he quoted Leviticus 13:45-46: "The leprous person who has the disease shall wear torn clothes and let the hair of his head hang loose, and he shall cover his upper lip and cry out, 'Unclean, unclean.' He shall remain unclean as long as he has the disease. He is unclean. He shall live alone. His dwelling shall be outside the camp."

He then said one last sentence: "May God have mercy on your soul!" And at once, the door slammed shut and the priest was gone.

The man's worst nightmare had just come true. Leprosy was the most dreaded disease at that time, much like AIDS or Ebola today. As he slowly picked himself up, he stood in that dark room for several minutes in a state of shock. Then, with determination, he started ripping his favorite robe that his wife had made for him. Then he bent down and gathered some dust and rubbed it all over his face and hair until he looked like someone from a horror movie. When he stepped outside, he slowly covered his mouth and choked out the dreaded words, "UNCLEAN! I'M UNCLEAN!!!"

And for the first time in his life, people wretched and recoiled when they saw him. A mother quickly grabbed her children and yelled, "Don't touch that man! Stay away from him!" A vendor of vegetables threw something at him and shouted, "GET OUT OF HERE!"

Quickly the leper made his way outside the city into the open countryside and headed for the 80-mile walk home. But the worst was yet to come, because he knew he could no longer have contact with his wife or children! When his wife saw him coming from a distance, she and their children ran to him with joy and excitement, only to hear him growl, "KEEP AWAY FROM ME! I AM NO LONGER YOUR FATHER! I AM A LEPER!"

A funeral was held for him by the local Rabbi because he was considered dead the moment he was diagnosed. The man's health went downhill quickly. His body started decomposing and the odor of death poured out of every pore. He lost all feeling in his extremities and could no longer sense pain. His fingers eventually fell off. The word "leprosy" is from lepros, meaning scaly. In the Old Testament "leprosy" means "to rot" and that's exactly what was happening. His skin was like a pool of slime. He was a dead man walking...or trying to walk.

When people saw him they would throw stones at him...as he neared the end of his life, his face resembled a lion's more than a man's. He hardly looked human anymore. He was isolated and unwanted. One of the laws added by the rabbis said that it was unlawful for a leper to get within 50 feet of a clean person. On a windy day the rule changed to 200 feet.

Leprosy was a physical disease but it also made this man spiritually dirty and socially distant. He was decaying and dying in slow motion as he progressively self-destructed. His eyesight was failing and he knew complete blindness was approaching. The leper had become utterly repulsive to others...and to himself!

These five words describe his condition

Unclean! Unwanted! Unworthy! Unloved! Isolated!

Storying Mark 1:40-45

The parallels in this passage about leprosy and sin, and how Jesus heals and how Jesus saves are wonderful for us.

- **Questions**

- **Observation:** (emphasize that these are rather obvious answers)
 - What is wrong with the man in this passage?
 - How does he come to Jesus?
 - What does he ask Jesus to do?
 - What is Jesus' response?
 - What is Jesus' instruction?
 - What is the man's response?
 - What is the result of this man's response to Jesus' instruction?
- **Interpretation:**
 - What do the words "imploring" and "kneeling" tell you about his man?
 - Why does Jesus touch this man instead of speak to heal him?
 - What all does the leper gain from Jesus in this act of healing?
- **Application:** Use the "Thinking it Through" questions as needed
 - What does it mean for you personally that Jesus touches the untouchable?
 - What kinds of people are shunned today? What can we do to touch them?*
 - How should we share about Jesus so that people have a true picture of what they should expect from Him?*

*Paraphrased from *Christ-Centered Exposition* by Daniel Akin