



## One Prayer

### Mental Illness at the Cross: Hope in the Midst of Brokenness (Mark 1:39-44)

By Charlie Lehardy, 17 July 2016

**BIG IDEA:** Some wounds cut a ragged gash through our minds, our hearts, and our souls. They can drain us of hope and fill us with toxic shame. The church must be a refuge where the wounded are welcomed, comforted, and embraced by the unflinching love of Jesus.

Mental illness is stigmatized in society and in the church. We are sometimes embarrassed by it, often afraid of it, and a little too quick to spiritualize it. As a consequence, many who suffer from mental illness feel ashamed; they hide their struggles and pretend everything is fine. There is an important distinction between guilt and shame. Guilt is a painful feeling of regret; however, shame is a painful feeling about oneself as a person.

Every year, 1 in 5 adults experiences a mental health crisis and 1 in 25 lives with a serious mental illness like schizophrenia or bipolar disorder, according to NAMI, the National Alliance on Mental Illness, <https://www.nami.org/>.

**Lamentations 3:18-23** reminds us that even in the midst of our worst pain, God is faithful, God is good, God is present with us. And we dare to hope. Jesus is not ashamed of us. Our guilt and shame have been placed on Jesus, on the cross, and we are set free.

In **Mark 1:39-44**, a man with leprosy, begging to be healed, meets Jesus. Jesus responded to the leper's need in three ways:

1. **He felt:** Jesus let His heart be moved by the leper's need. He stopped, took His time, listened, engaged, and made an emotional connection with this stranger.
2. **He touched:** Jesus touched the leper with His hand. He didn't feel a need to keep a safe distance.
3. **He restored:** Jesus tore down the barrier that separated the leper from God and his family. The leper, approaching Jesus with great humility and nothing to offer, was washed clean, removing shame and restoring dignity.

My **One Prayer for Grace** is that we would be a place where we can be honest about our brokenness, and compassionate towards the wounded as we pray for their healing.

If you would like to learn more about Grace's HopeSpring mental health support group, contact Charlie Lehardy at [chas.lehardy@gmail.com](mailto:chas.lehardy@gmail.com) or 520-289-3549.

### Next Step

*Who do you know who needs God's comfort today? How might God be leading you to pass along his comfort to those who need it?*

### For My Personal Time With God This Week:

1. Read Luke 7:20-23. John the Baptist wants to know if Jesus is the Messiah. In response, Jesus points to the people he has healed (including lepers) and the Good News he has preached to the poor. What is it about Jesus that impresses you the most? He claimed to be the Messiah: As you look at Jesus' life and ministry, what leads you to believe or disbelieve his claim to be the Messiah?
2. Read Hebrews 2:9-11. The writer of Hebrews says that Jesus is not ashamed to call us his brothers and sisters. And yet, it is common for us to feel ashamed of ourselves before God. What are the things in your life that are hardest to forgive yourself for? Has God forgiven you? What does it mean to you, personally, to think that Jesus is not ashamed to call you his brother or sister?
3. Read 2 Corinthians 1:3,4. Do you or someone close to you struggle with depression, anxiety, bi-polar disorder or some other mental illness? How have family members responded: with embarrassment, disinterest, fear, kindness, support, offers of help, ...? As you think about people who are sick or disabled or struggling, in what ways would Jesus want us to comfort them? How do we need to learn to comfort better?
4. Sometimes, it's hard to talk about the places in our lives where we are hurting. Talking brings up painful things, but not talking leaves those painful things to eat holes in our hearts. Is there something like that in your life? If you were to talk about it with someone, who could you trust to listen well, without judgment, to support you as a friend, and to pray with you for God's healing touch?