

The Gospel According to Mark Jesus Makes the Unclean Clean

Mark 1:40-45

Sunday, February 23, 2020

Introduction

What kind of thoughts have you had about Jesus this week? Have you had any thoughts of Jesus since last Sunday? If so, have your thoughts of Jesus been thoughts of hope or thoughts of doubt?

Over the last several weeks we have been considering what the Gospel of Mark reveals about who Jesus is and why He came. As we continue to see Jesus more clearly through His Word it should lead us to a deeper trust in Him and a greater reliance on Him.

Context

As Jesus travels throughout the region of Galilee teaching in the synagogues and proclaiming His message of the kingdom, repentance and faith, a man with a great need approaches Him. Once again Jesus shows His compassion and power and His commitment to His mission.

A Man with a Great Need – A man with leprosy (1:40a)

- **A Leper** – Without understanding the nature of leprosy during this point in history we may miss the magnitude of the situation. Not only was leprosy an incurable disease and not only was it unfathomably painful, it also had serious social and religious implications.
 - **Social implications** – Because leprosy was highly contagious, lepers were not allowed to remain in their communities; they were sent out and forbidden to come into contact with others.
 - **Religious implications** – The Law of Moses pronounced anyone with leprosy as unclean and as such they were separated from the covenant community. Any contact with another person would cause the other person to be made unclean (Leviticus 13:1-3, 45-46).

A Man with Strong Faith – He came to Jesus in faith (1:40b)

- The social and ceremonial standards were clear, a leper was not to approach another person, but this man put these rules aside, believing that Jesus could make Him clean.
- He came to Jesus with urgency and passion (*imploring*), he came to Jesus with reverence and humility (*kneeling*) and he came to Jesus with great faith in His healing power (*you can make me clean*).

The Response of Jesus – His Compassion and Power (1:41-42)

- **The compassion of Jesus** – While both the law and societal standards called for Jesus to shun the approaching leper, Jesus responded to the man in need with compassion. This is the heart of Jesus, a heart of love and care for those who are in great need (Ex 34:6; Jn 15:13; Rom 5:7-8).
- **The touch of Jesus** – The compassion of Jesus is made clear in his act of touching the leper. While Jesus could have healed him with a word, He did more; He came close and touched him. In a similar way, Jesus comes close and draws near to sinners in order to show compassion.
- **The power of Jesus** – As in previous healings we see the power of Jesus as he heals immediately and completely. It was believed that only God could heal a leper, and that's exactly what Jesus did.

The Commands of Jesus and His Commitment to His Mission (1:43-44)

- In a seemingly sudden turn of events, Jesus sends the man away with urgency and with very specific commands.
 - **A command to silence** – The aim of Jesus ministry was not primarily to work miracles but to proclaim salvation. Knowing that the healing of a leper would cause people to seek Him for the wrong reasons, Jesus commanded the healed man's silence.
 - **A command to live by the law** – The Levitical law required that a cured leper be evaluated by a priest. Through this command Jesus shows both his respect for the law and also a commitment to His mission. The healing of a leper would serve as proof (testimony) to the priests of who Jesus really is.

The Response of the Leper and the Impact on Jesus' Mission (1:45)

- The healing by Jesus was followed by an expectation of obedience, but the leper did not obey. He couldn't help but tell others what had happened, but his disobedience had consequences. Because of his announcement people flocked to Jesus and He was prevented from going into cities to teach and preach.

Summary – Mark's primary aim in His Gospel is that we would see Jesus fully and rightly. In this account we see the compassion and power of Jesus. But we also have an example of how we should approach Jesus. As those with a great need (sin), we should go to Jesus in faith knowing that He is willing and able to make us clean. He came to save sinners and through His death and resurrection we can be forgiven and cleansed.