

MIRACLES: A LEPER CLEANSED

Text: Mark 1:40–45

Touching the Untouchable & Curing the Incurable

Introduction:

1. **We Are in Week 2 of the Covid-19 Quarantine here in Oregon...**
 - a. A Stay at Home Quarantine Order We've Not Experienced in Our Generation
2. **In Ancient Times, However, several plagues spread across continents**
 - a. In Italy in the 14th century people noticed that Jews were much less severely hit by the Plague than anyone else.
 - b. After some investigation They Determined that Jewish laws of uncleanness must have something to do w/ it.
 - c. Especially considering that a Jew was unclean after touching a dead body.
 - d. So Italian authorities made a law that anyone who had been in contact with a suspected case of the plague must be isolated for 40 days.
 - e. The Italian word for 40 is quaranta, (hence the word quarantine, we use today)
3. **In Ancient Times There Was No More Dreaded / Feared Disease than Leprosy**
 - a. Even When a Leper was alive—He Was a Dead Man Walking and When a Leper Died—He Died Alone
 - b. The Only Way to Isolate the Spread of Leprosy was Quarantine...
 - c. Exactly as God Directed in Leviticus over 3,000 yrs ago.
4. **But Leprosy Broke Out and Spread in the Middle Ages as well**
 - a. According to the Roman Historian Pliny, Leprosy was brought to Britain by Roman soldiers who had served in Syria in 61 BC
 - b. Remember, Naaman the Captain of the Syrian Army was a Leper
 - c. Much later, Robert the Bruce, King of Scotland, was a leper

I. THE CONDITION OF THE LEPER

Text: Mark 1:40–45

A. A LEPER WAS A DEAD MAN WALKING

1. **There was no disease more dreadful than Leprosy...**
 - a) No Disease Regarded with More Terror or Pity...
 - b) No Disease that Reduces a Human Being for so long to such a hideous wreck
 - c) Even Alive a Leper is in the process of death
 - d) Josephus declared that lepers were treated "as if they were, in effect, dead men."
2. **Leprosy is Like a Flesh Eating Disease...**
 - a) **It Began with a Constant Fatigue and Joint Pain...**

But Then in Time Little White Spots would appear on the Skin

 - (1) These White Spots would harden into nodules that turned brown and scaly
 - (2) And in Time Become Like Ulcers on the Skin that would fill with puss and ooze out onto the skin with a terrible stench
 - b) **Nothing Could Stop the disease from spreading all over the body...**

- (1) Eventually eyebrows would fall out, hair turn white,
- (2) skin begin to rot and fingers and toes literally fall off.

c) Rats would be attracted to Lepers...

- (1) and since the disease caused the skin to lose all feeling to pain,
- (2) rats would gnaw on them in the night,
- (3) so lepers often carried a cat to keep rats away.

3. Luke gives the more descriptive detail – he was “full of leprosy” (Lk 5:12)

- a) This was NOT a slight case, but a full blown case in it’s most Advanced Stages

B. ISOLATION WAS PHYSICAL, SOCIAL, PSYCHOLOGICAL & RELIGIOUS

1. When a Leper was alive—He Lived with the Public Stigma of Shame and When a Leper Died—He Died Alone

2. A Leper Was Not Allowed within 50 Feet of a Clean Person.

3. The Problem was that in order to avoid the stigma of isolation, people would not seek treatment in the early stages...

- a) They Would Wait Until it Was Too Late
- b) And All That Time They Were a Danger to Others to become infected

What Does this Have to Do With Us Today? In Bible Leprosy is much more than a Disease Of all the Diseases in the Bible—None is more Spiritually Symbolic of Sin than Leprosy

C. SYMBOLISM OF SIN

1. Lepers were not worse sinners than anyone else... we have all sinned...

- a) But the toxic, disfiguring nature of Leprosy Became Symbolic of Toxic Nature of Sin
- b) Like Blindness Became Symbolic of the Self-Deception of Sin

2. BOTH LEPROSY AND SIN...

a) Start Inwardly — But Metastasizes Outwardly

- (1) As Jesus explained—a man is not made unclean from the outside,
- (2) but from within the heart comes murder, adultery, Hatred, covetousness

b) Both LEPROSY & SIN: Start Out Small — But Then Spreads

- (1) Starting Small within it spreads outward
- (2) Eventually Consuming a Living Person with a Slow Motion Death

c) Both LEPROSY & SIN: Defile Everything it Touches (Isaiah 64:6)

But we are all like an unclean thing, And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags;

d) Both LEPROSY & SIN: Disfigures and Scars

- (1) Adam & Eve in Garden had a pure, pristine environment & relationship w/ God
- (2) But Sin Destroyed, Disfigured and Scared the world and still does today

e) Both LEPROSY & SIN: both Separate:

- (1) Leprosy separates the infected — Sin separates us from God

f) Both LEPROSY & SIN: Lead to Death

- (1) Even while a leper is alive his body is a rotting corpse of death
- (2) Without Christ we are dead men walking

(3) Ephesians 2:1 – “You He has made alive who were dead in trespasses and sin.”

3. GOD EVEN USED LEPROSY AS A LESSON AGAINST SIN...

- a) Miriam and Aaron were complaining & undermining their brother Moses...
- b) Apparently Miriam was the instigator (**Numbers 12:9–12a**)
- c) God removed the Leprosy but she had to leave camp alone for 7 days.
- d) Leprosy Strikes Fear in anyone—because it's a slow motion death sentence
—But it would especially cause Horror for the vanity of a woman's face

4. **A MORE MODERN DAY EXAMPLE WOULD BE THE FACES OF METH...**

a) **The Most Effective Ad Campaign Against Meth Use was called Faces of Meth**

- (1) Especially Effective for young girls when they saw the before and after pictures
- (2) Meth Not Only Poisons the Body—it Depletes it of Nutrients and Life, and Leaves the Scars to prove it... **[FACES OF METH IMAGES]**

b) **But Meth—Like Sin—Is a Lie...**

→ **QUESTION:** Why would we be tempted to ingest something extremely addictive, extremely dangerous, extremely harmful—that will eventually kill us

→ **ANSWER:** Because It Claimed to Meet a Deep Need Within You—

- (1) “You feel ugly—But I’ll Make You Beautiful”
- (2) “Your Flawed—I’ll Make You Perfect”
- (3) “Your Weak— i’ll make you Strong”
- (4) “Your Vulnerable—I’ll make you powerful”
- (5) “You Fail at Everything—but with Me You Can Do Anything”
- (6) “You don’t have real friends—I’m your best friend”

II. THE FAITH OF THE LEPER

A. **HIS HUMILITY**

- 1. **This Leper came to Jesus and Knelt Down (Mk 1:40) Pleading**
- 2. **But Luke Adds that He Fell Down to His Face (Lk 5:12)**
- 3. **But it Was Even More Than Humility, it was worship! (Matthew 8:2)**

B. **HIS HONESTY**

1. **He Was Honest and Aware of His Need...**

- a) No Effort to Act Like Nothing Was Wrong...
- b) No Attempt to Fake it—I’m Fine, I Don’t Need God, I’ve Got Everything Under Control

2. **Two Common Stories that People Like to Tell Themselves...**

- a) ONE Is That They Don’t Need Forgiveness or Healing—They’re “a Good Person”
What Few Flaws They Have They Can Fix w/ Self-Help Books & earn way heaven
- b) The Other Lie is Believing that God Could Never Love Them, Never Forgive them
And They Could Never Make it all Back Up or Pay All their Debts

3. **This Man Could Not Cure His Own Leprosy!**

Just Like We Can’t Atoned for our own sin! (we need to be honest)

We can only know God well when we know our own sin. All those who have known God without knowing their wretchedness have not glorified Him but have glorified themselves." –Blaise Pascal

C. HIS FAITH

1. He Didn't Say "IF you can" — He Said, "If You are WILLING, you can."
He Had Faith Jesus Could Heal
 2. He Didn't Ask Jesus to Petition God on his behalf as a priest
He Asked Jesus to Heal him as his Savior
 3. He Didn't Just Ask Jesus—He Worshipped Jesus,
Falling on His Face and Bowing to Him
 4. This Was Not a Demanding or Presumptive Faith
— it was a Humble, Honest, and Desperate Faith
-

III. THE COMPASSION OF CHRIST

A. JESUS WAS MOVED WITH COMPASSION

1. Most People Feel Compassion for the Sick...
 - a) but lepers usually did not arouse compassion.
 - b) Their whole appearance was too repulsive,
 - c) So they usually made people feel disgust instead of compassion.
2. But Jesus Was Moved with Compassion...
 - a) The Greek word meaning: a Deep Stirring, Moving Compassion

B. JESUS DID NOT DRIVE AWAY A MAN WHO HAD BROKEN THE LAW

1. It Was Recorded by Josephus that some Rabbi's Would Throw Rocks at a
Leper to Keep Them Away
2. A Leper was to stay 50 feet away from a clean person...
200 ft away if the wind was blowing!
3. It Was Unlawful for This Leper to approach Anyone this close!
 - a) But He Knelt Down at the Feet of Jesus—
 - b) Close Enough for Jesus to Reach out and Touch
4. Jesus Was Willing to Heal This Man's Desperate Disease

C. JESUS TOUCHED THE UNTOUCHABLE

1. A Leper Never Felt the Sensation of a Touch
But Jesus touched the untouchable and cured the incurable.
 - a) The Greek Word does not mean a Superficial Light touch,
—it means "to lay hold of" Like a Firm Grip.
-

IV. THE CLEANSING OF THE LEPER

A. JESUS HEALED THE LEPER (v.42)

1. Notice: "**As soon as He had spoken, immediately the leprosy left him, and he was cleansed.**"

2. Remember, It was not sinful to touch dead bodies, or lepers;
 - a) but to do so brought ceremonial defilement (Leviticus 13-14).
3. In the case of Christ's touch, it brought cleansing and not defilement.

B. JESUS TOLD HIM TO TELL NO ONE (v.43-45)

1. **Now I Don't Know About You—but I Can Keep a Secret...**
It's the People I Tell Who Can't Keep a Secret!!
2. **MAYBE HE MEANT WELL—**
 - a) Maybe He Thought He Was Giving God the Glory by Telling People...
 - b) But his disobedience hindered the ministry of Jesus.
 - c) Jesus could no longer openly enter the city.
 - d) It's always best to obey Jesus — we Don't have a better plan than He does.
3. **This Man Was Told NOT To Tell—and He Told Others About Jesus...**
We Are Told to Tell People about Jesus—and We Don't!
 - a) So When I look At My Own Lost Opportunities of Telling Others About Jesus...
 - b) I'm Not Too Hard on this Man when I Look at Myself!

C. JESUS TOLD HIM TO MAKE THE PROPER OFFERING (v.44)

1. **FIRST to Go to the Priest and Offer the Sacrifice Commanded by God**
 - a) The sacrifice commanded by Moses was a triple offering of two male lambs without blemish and one ewe lamb without blemish (Leviticus 14).
2. **SECOND: "As a Testimony to them"**
 - a) To Show the Priests He Was Cured! —
 - b) And to Set the Man Free From the Restrictions of the Law—He Could Be Free Now!

CONCLUSION:

1. **IF We Truly Knew How Much Sin Disfigures Our Inner Self...**
We Would Be Repulsed at our own Wretchedness...
—And Yet it IS this Knowledge That Leads Us to Jesus to be Healed!
2. **JUST AS JESUS REACHED OUT TO TOUCH THIS LEPER...**
HE EVEN REACHED DOWN TO US...
 - a) By Leaving Heaven and Coming to Earth in the Flesh—In Human Form
 - b) Jesus Touched Humanity in the Flesh By Entering Our World in the Flesh
 - c) Jesus Knows What It's Like to Be Weak, Hungry, Exhausted, Rejected, Isolated, Scorned, Mocked, Spit on and Whipped by Hardened Soldiers.
3. **Jesus touched our human nature by means of his incarnation**
So That He Could Bring Eternal Life To All Humanity
By His Own Crucifixion, Resurrection and Ascension.

1 John 4:8–10 > 1 John 5:11–12