

Trading Places

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 04 December 2024

Preacher: Lee Roberts

[0 : 00] Tonight, we're going to finish Mark chapter 1.

So let's read Mark chapter 1, verses 40 through 45. It says, But go, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded for a proof to them.

But he went out and began to talk freely about it, and to spread the news, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter a town, but was out in desolate places, and people were coming to him from every quarter.

The leper's healing demonstrated Jesus' compassion and provided a picture of every believer's salvation. That's the main idea for tonight. The leper's healing demonstrated Jesus' compassion and provided a picture of every believer's salvation.

Before we dig into the verses in Mark, we need to remind ourselves how serious leprosy was in ancient times. In the ancient world, there were 72 distinct diseases of the skin under the broad heading of leprosy.

[1 : 36] Mark doesn't tell us what variety of leprosy this poor man had. It may have been Hansen's disease, which was the worst form of leprosy, but any form of leprosy was tragic and disastrous for people in those days.

According to medical experts who have studied modern cases of Hansen's disease, that leprosy usually begins with the pain and is followed by numbness as the disease progressively attacks the nervous system.

The skin in those areas will lose its color. It becomes scaly and thick and eventually turns into sores. And the effects are especially noticeable on the face, where eyebrows and lashes fall out because the skin bunches up, especially around the eyes and ears.

The disease also causes those it affects to emit a foul odor, making leprosy repulsive both to the sight and to the smell. So it's little wonder that it was one of the most dreaded diseases of the ancient world.

And because leprosy numbs its victims, making them incapable of feeling pain, they unintentionally destroy their own tissue because they're unable to feel the damage that they're doing.

[2 : 46] One author said, Hansen's disease numbing quality is precisely the reason that destruction and decay of tissue occurs. For thousands of years, people thought Hansen's disease caused the ulcers on hands and feet and face, which eventually led to rotting flesh and loss of limbs.

But through modern medical research, it has been established that in 99% of the cases, Hansen's disease only numbs the extremities. The destruction follows solely because the warning system of pain is gone.

And then he gives some examples from the villages of Africa and Asia. He says that a person with Hansen's disease has been known to reach directly into a charcoal fire to retrieve a dropped potato. And that's because nothing in his body warned him not to do that, and he couldn't feel the fire. He also said that patients at a hospital in India would work all day gripping a shovel with a protruding nail or extinguish a burning candle with their bare hands or walk on splintered glass.

So as they went about the daily routines of life, they would grind away at their own hands and feet. It even says that if they turned an ankle, which would tear a tendon potentially and muscle, the patient would just adjust and walk crooked because he couldn't feel any pain.

[4 : 06] Or if a rat chewed off a finger in the night, the person wouldn't discover the finger missing until he woke up the next morning. So we may think it might be good not to feel as much pain, but we need to remember that pain is a good warning system that something is wrong.

When we see leprosy in the Bible, the Bible never speaks of healing leprosy. It always speaks of cleansing leprosy. God went to great lengths to spell out how to protect his people from leprosy.

Two full chapters in Leviticus deal with the leprosy. Leviticus 13 spells out how leprosy is to be diagnosed. Then Leviticus 14 provides instructions on how to tell whether a person is free from leprosy.

Leviticus 14 also specifies how to cleanse a house previously occupied by someone who had the leprosy disease. We'll look at some portions of Leviticus 14 later in the lesson, but for now flip over to Leviticus 13 and we'll look at a few verses there.

We'll start with Leviticus 13 verses 1 through 3. Here are Leviticus 13, 1 through 3. The Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron saying, When a person has on the skin of his body a swelling or an eruption or a spot and it turns into a case of leprosy disease on the skin of his body, then he shall be brought to Aaron the priest or to one of his sons the priest.

[5 : 38] And the priest shall examine the diseased area on the skin of his body. And if the hair in the diseased area has turned white and the disease appears to be deeper than the skin of his body, it is a case of leprosy disease.

When the priest has examined him, he shall pronounce him unclean. Pay particular attention to something in Leviticus 13, 3.

Leprosy is noted to be a disease that is deeper than the skin of a person's body. Beauty may be only skin deep, but the disease and disfigurement of leprosy goes much deeper.

We already have heard quotes from relatively recent doctors and scientists that leprosy is more than skin deep, but we see here that God knew that before anyone else did. The next several verses of Leviticus 13 document in detail how to confirm whether suspected leprosy is indeed the dreaded disease.

For our purposes tonight, skip down to Leviticus 13, verse 45. Starting with that verse, God details what must happen next if a person is confirmed to have leprosy.

[6 : 48] We'll read Leviticus 13, 45 through 52. So here are those verses. And in Leviticus 13, 45 through 52, God still is speaking to Moses.

And he says, When there is a case of leprosy disease in a garment, whether a woolen or a linen garment, in warp or woof of linen or wool, or in a skin or anything made of skin, if the disease is greenish or reddish in the garment, or in the skin or in the warp or the woof, or in any article made of skin, it is a case of leprosy disease, and it shall be shown to the priest.

And the priest shall examine the disease and shut up that which has the disease for seven days. Then he shall examine the disease on the seventh day. If the disease is spread in the garment, in the warp or the woof or in the skin, whatever be the use of the skin, the disease is a persistent leprosy disease.

It is unclean, and he shall burn the garment or the warp or the woof, the wool or the linen, or any article made of skin that is diseased, for it is a persistent leprosy disease.

It shall be burned in the fire. So from these verses, we see that lepers had to be isolated, and any clothes they left behind were fit only for burning.

[8 : 28] Just to make sure we grasp the seriousness of the disease, look at just Leviticus 13.45 again. It says, The leprosy 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! In ancient times, leprosy was a slow death sentence that isolated the leper from well, family, and friends. And as we saw, the leper had to live alone, although in some cases, lepers lived with other lepers in a colony just for them.

You'll hear some commentators say that Old Testament people were cleansed of leprosy only two times, but three instances of cleansing actually occurred. One of those instances was in Numbers 12.10-15 when Miriam was cleansed of leprosy.

The second was in 2 Kings 5.1-14 when Naaman was cleansed. And the third cleansing, which most commentators omit, is when Moses' hand was made leprosy and then quickly healed as a sign to Pharaoh.

If you want to look at that, you can look at Exodus 4.6-7. But the thing to note is that in all cases, God did the cleansing. The priest and the people knew that leprosy was incurable by human means.

[9 : 54] Moses cried out to God to cleanse Miriam. Elisha interceded on Naaman's behalf, but neither Miriam nor Naaman received any treatment. Their cleansings obviously came from God and God alone.

That gives some background for tonight's verses, so let's start digging into tonight's text. We'll break tonight's passage into four sections, starting with verse 40.

And in verse 40, we see the leper's plea. So the leper's plea is your first set of blanks. Listen to verse 40 again.

It says, And a leper came to him, imploring him, and kneeling, said to him, If you will, you can make me clean. Mark summarizes the beginning of the encounter between Jesus and the leper.

Matthew and Luke give us more details. So here are Matthew 8, 1 and 2, talking about the same thing. Matthew 8, 1 and 2 say, When he came down from the mountain, that's talking about Jesus, great crowds followed him.

[11:03] And behold, a leper came to him and knelt before him, saying, Lord, if you will, you can make me clean. Now listen to what Luke wrote in his parallel account of this event.

This next verse is Luke 5, verse 12. So here is Luke 5, verse 12. While he was in one of the cities, there came a man full of leprosy.

And when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and begged him, Lord, if you will, you can make me clean. Notice the additional details in Matthew and Luke.

The man obviously was seriously ill because Luke tells us that the man was full of leprosy. Matthew tells us that great crowds were following Jesus, but somehow the leper got to Jesus.

It doesn't take a lot of thinking to deduce how the leper made it through those crowds. Leprosy was so feared that someone shouting unclean repeatedly would have been able to part the crowds.

[12:07] And the crowds in that day would have done just about anything to get away from a confirmed leper. They might have even smelled the leper before they heard him. So even though the leper probably expected the crowd to clear a path for him, consider what a big risk the leper was taking.

The leper was supposed to have been isolated, so he violated ceremonial law and exposed himself to penalties that could have included death. But he ventured out in public just hoping to get to Jesus.

The leper's determination to get to Jesus and his public effort to do so are impressive, but something else about the leper is even more impressive. The leper's faith is the most impressive thing.

The leper gives evidence that he believes Jesus is God. Remember what we just talked about in the introduction. The Old Testament recorded only three cases of people being cleansed from leprosy.

When this encounter happened, no leper in the New Testament had been cleansed at all. Also remember that the people believed that only God could cleanse someone of leprosy.

[13:16] And that is one reason we can confidently say that the leper believed that Jesus was God. The leper's word choice recorded in Luke 5.12 and in Matthew 8.1 gives us another indication that the leper believed that Jesus was God.

Matthew and Luke note that the leper called Jesus Lord. And the word translated Lord in both Matthew and Luke is the word that the New Testament uses for God.

That same word also can be used in the New Testament of ordinary humans in important positions. But when we combine the leper's word choice with the fact that the people believe that only God could cleanse leprosy, we safely can assume that the leper was calling Jesus God.

And that assumption is bolstered by what else the leper says. Matthew, Mark, and Luke all say that the leper said the same words at the end of Mark 1.40 and that is, if you will, you can make me clean.

So the leper is certain that Jesus can heal him. The only doubt in the leper's mind is whether Jesus will be willing to heal him. The leper's certainty that Jesus is capable of healing provides even more evidence that the leper believes that Jesus is God.

[14:35] As we've mentioned, this faith is remarkable because every Jew knew that only God is able to heal leprosy. Naaman in 2 Kings 5 was a mighty man in the Syrian army, but he had leprosy.

And the king of Syria, hearing that there was a prophet of God in Israel, sent a letter to the king of Israel asking him to heal Naaman of his leprosy. And the king's response is telling.

In 2 Kings 5-7, the king said, Am I God to kill and to make alive that this man sends word to me to cure a man of his leprosy?

And that verse also tells us that the king tore his clothes. So when we put all the evidence together, we can be confident that the leper already had figured out the most important thing about Jesus, and that is that Jesus was and is God.

The people watching this encounter we're about to see evidence of Jesus' deity as well. So now that we've seen the leper's plea, let's look at how Jesus reacts.

[15 : 41] And that reaction comes in verses 41 and 42. In those verses we see the Lord's pity. So the Lord's pity is your second set of blanks.

Here are Mark 41 and 42 again, and these verses tell us this about Jesus. Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand and touched him and said to him, I will be clean.

And immediately the leprosy left him and he was made clean. Mark's note that Jesus was moved with pity or compassion as some translations have it could be translated as angry as well.

Jesus wasn't angry because the man had violated the ceremonial law in coming to him. Jesus was filled with righteous indignation against the ravages of a fallen world such as disease.

Jesus hated disease but he cared for the person afflicted by the disease. And the phrase moved with pity or compassion uses a Greek word which comes from a word meaning guts.

[16 : 48] So this is why the King James Version sometimes translates it as the bowels of compassion. So Jesus is portrayed as being compassionate to the core. The man with leprosy would have turned the stomachs of others with disgust but he turned the stomach of Jesus with love.

Chew on that last sentence when you reflect on this passage. The man with leprosy would have turned the stomach of others with disgust but he turned the stomach of Jesus with love.

Every detail is significant in these verses. Notice the order of what happened. Jesus expresses his willingness to heal the leper then Jesus touches the leper before healing him.

In Leviticus 5.3 the Mosaic law included a regulation forbidding the Jews from defiling themselves from touching anything or anybody that was unclean including a leper.

But Jesus could not be defiled by anything. He could have healed a man with a simple word but the Lord wanted to make a point one that would have left a lasting impression.

[17 : 58] The infinite compassion of Christ was dramatically illustrated by the profound act of kindness. His love was such that he was willing to touch those whom no one else would even come near and he touched this untouchable man.

Most people would have healed the man first and then touched him but not Jesus. He knew this man probably had not felt human touch in a long time so he reached out to touch him first.

And by touching the man Jesus revealed his attitude toward ceremonial law. By touching the leper Jesus himself would be made ceremonially unclean but Jesus placed love and compassion above ritual and regulation.

Daniel Aiken wrote Jesus' touch speaks louder than words ever could yet his words must have thrilled this man's soul when he said I will be clean.

Unlike any ordinary man the Lord Jesus is not polluted by the leper's disease when he touches him. Instead the leper is cleansed by the gracious touch and contagious holiness of the Son of God.

[19 : 07] Look at Mark 1.42 again it says and immediately the leprosy left him and he was made clean. Mark states the result so distinctly that we could overlook the significance here.

This man had just become the first person recorded in the New Testament to be cleansed from leprosy and Jesus cleansed that man with only a touch and a few words. The healing was instantaneous.

The leper who had come disfigured defiled and despicable was instantly transformed into a man in full health completely cured and ready to be restored to society.

His sores were gone and his limbs were made whole. His skin would look like new. His faith would have been vindicated because his face would be smooth and unscarred and even in an age of modern medical marvels nothing today can compare to this kind of miraculous healing.

Medical advancements have made it possible to control the symptoms of leprosy but doctors today still cannot cure the disease or reverse its effects. Jesus could though and he did so instantly.

[20 : 20] The healing of the leper had a profound effect on Jesus' early disciples. We know that because the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke all record this incident.

None of the first disciples nor any of the people watching would have ever seen anything like it. By the word of his power, Jesus healed the disease for which there was no known cure, one of the

most dreaded afflictions of the ancient world.

After Jesus heals the leper, he gives the leper stern instructions and we'll look at those instructions in the third section of the lesson. Moving to verses 43 and 44, we see the Lord's pronouncement. So the Lord's pronouncement comes next. Here are verses 43 and 44 again. And Jesus sternly charged him and sent him away at once and said to him, See that you say nothing to anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded for a proof to them.

Before we look at Jesus' pronouncement and its significance, consider something else. These verses give further evidence that the man previously full of leprosy was now fully healed.

[21 : 44] And why do we say that? Well, we can say that the former leper was fully relieved of the disease and he was physically fit. Considering that leprosy had racked his entire body, considerable damage must have been done to his external appearance and also internally.

But when Jesus healed him, he was made completely well. And we know that from this passage because Jesus instructed him to go to Jerusalem and that would have been a hundred mile walk. So he's gone from being full of leprosy to being able to do a hundred mile walk. We see from verse 43 what Jesus sternly charged the leper to do.

And we also see what Jesus said in verse 44. In other words, Jesus gave the leper a clear command. And verse 44 tells us what that command was.

He said, See that you say nothing to anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, for a proof to them.

[22 : 51] Commentators through the years have used a lot of ink by giving their opinions about why Jesus told the leper to say nothing. One commentary said, Jesus' demand for silence has several possible explanations.

The report of Jesus healing the man may have prejudiced the priest who needed to pronounce him clean. Jesus did not want to be known primarily as a miracle worker, so he often commanded those who received his healing to remain quiet.

Or the man's testimony would possibly have hastened the confrontation between Jesus and the religious leaders. Another John Grasmick said, A more satisfactory view is that Jesus wanted to avoid misunderstandings that would precipitate a premature and or erroneous popular response to him.

He did not want his identity declared till he had made the character of his mission clear. Thus, there was a progressive withdrawal of the veil from his identity until he openly declared it.

R.C. Sproul wrote something similar. He said, Everywhere Jesus went, people completely misunderstood his mission and what the Messiah was to do. They were waiting for the champion who would deliver them from Rome, not for the suffering servant of God who would deliver them from their sins.

[24 : 11] So Jesus was loathed to make public his true identity, particularly early on in his ministry. Those last two quotes point to the most likely explanation.

Jesus knew what would happen if the word about his miracles got out and he had many things to do before revealing his true identity. Daniel Akin said this, he said, Jesus does not want persons who merely seek miracles.

He wants followers who seek him. People are always tempted by the sensational. Jesus desires followers who long for the truth and want to know him.

He does not want people to come to him to get what they want. He wants people to come to him to get him. Let's look at the second part about what Jesus told the cleansed man to do.

In the middle of verse 44, Jesus told the man, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded. Jesus had violated the ceremonial law developed by the religious leaders, but as always, Jesus carefully avoided violating the Mosaic law contained in the first five books of the Old Testament.

[25 : 28] The fact that Jesus sent the man to the priest not only shows Jesus' high regard for the law of Moses, but also his great compassion for the man. The man would need the consecration of the priest to be reinstated into society, and Jesus did not want him to remain in social isolation.

Let's go to Leviticus 14 now and see some of what the Mosaic law required. We're going to read Leviticus chapter 14, starting with the end of verse 3 all the way through verse 20.

So starting about in the middle of Leviticus 14 3, it says, Then if the case of leprous disease is healed in the leprous person, the priest shall command them to take for him who is to be cleansed two live clean birds and cedar wood and scarlet yarn and hyssop.

And the priest shall command them to kill one of the birds in an earthenware vessel over fresh water. He shall take the live bird with the cedar wood and the scarlet yarn and the hyssop and dip them and the live bird in the blood of the bird that was killed over the fresh water.

And he shall sprinkle it seven times on him who is to be cleansed of the leprous disease. Then he shall pronounce him clean and let the living bird go into the open field.

[26 : 49] And he is to be cleansed, shall wash his clothes and shave off all his hair and bathe himself in water, and he shall be clean. And after that he may come into the camp, but live outside his tent for seven days.

And on the seventh day he shall shave off all his hair from his head, his beard and his eyebrows. He shall shave off all his hair and then he shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in water and he shall be clean.

But they're not done yet. On the eighth day he shall take two male lambs without blemish and one ewe lamb a year old without blemish and a grain offering of three tenths of an ephah a fine flour mixed with oil and one log of oil.

And the priest who cleanses him shall set the man who is to be cleansed and these things before the Lord at the entrance of the tent of meeting. And the priest shall take one of the male lambs and offer it for a guilt offering along with the log of oil and wave them for a wave offering before the Lord. And he shall kill the lamb in the place where they kill the sin offering and the burnt offering in the place of the sanctuary. For the guilt offering like the sin offering belongs to the priest.

[28 : 03] It is most holy. The priest shall take some of the blood of the guilt offering and the priest shall put it on the lobe of the right ear of him as to be cleansed and on the thumb of his right hand and on the big toe of his right foot.

Then the priest shall take some of the log of oil and pour it into the palm right finger in the oil that is in his left hand and sprinkle some oil with his finger seven times before the Lord.

And some of the oil that remains in his hand the priest shall put on the lobe of the right ear of him who is to be cleansed and on the thumb of his right hand and on the big toe of his right foot on top of the blood of the guilt offering and the rest of the oil that is in the priest's hand he shall put on the head of him who is to be cleansed then the priest shall make atonement for him before the Lord.

The priest will offer the sin offering to make atonement for him who is to be cleansed from his uncleanness and afterwards he shall kill the burnt offering and the priest shall offer burnt offering and the grain offering on the altar thus the priest shall make atonement for him and he shall be clean.

We'll stop reading Leviticus there but to summarize what comes next verses 21 through 33 of Leviticus 14 give instructions for a modified ceremony if the person who was to be cleansed is too poor to afford the requirements that we just read.

[29 : 33] You may be thinking what in the world do all these requirements mean or what do they symbolize? Warren Wiersbe provided a helpful explanation in his commentary and when citing others I normally omit any explanation that appears in only one commentary but Wiersbe is the only one I could find who even attempted to provide an explanation of this ceremony and he believes that the ceremony is a foreshadowing of Jesus' mission and here's what he said the ceremony described in Leviticus 14 presents a beautiful picture in type of the work of redemption the two birds represent two different aspects of our Lord's ministry his incarnation and death the bird put into the jar and then killed in his resurrection and ascension the bird stained with blood and then set free the blood was applied to the man's right ear symbolizing hearing God's word right thumb symbolizing doing

God's work and right great toes symbolizing living 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 the blood first has been applied Wiersbe likely drew his explanation about the significance of the blood from elsewhere in scripture putting blood on the person's ear thumb and toe matches what was done to Aaron and his sons when they were consecrated as priests in Leviticus chapter 8 verses 22 through 24 so here are Leviticus chapter 8 verses 22 through 24 then he talking about Moses presented the other ram the ram of ordination and Aaron and his sons laid their hands on the head of the ram and he killed it and Moses took some of its blood and put it on the lobe of Aaron's right ear and the

thumb of his right hand and on the big toe of his right foot then he presented Aaron's sons and Moses put some of the blood on the lobes of their right ears and the thumbs of their right hands and on the big toes of their right feet and Moses threw the blood against the sides of the altar and about these particular verses John MacArthur said using a part to represent the whole Aaron and his sons were consecrated to listen to God's holy word to carry out his holy assignments and to live holy lives so in our passage tonight the blood applied to the ear thumb and toe of the cleansed leper likely symbolized the same thing and you can see that is what Warren Wiersbe thought as well the end of Mark 144 has something else that we need to see Jesus told the now cleansed leper to present himself to the priest for a proof to them the cleansing of the leper was an undeniable messianic sign it was a sign that God was working in a new way if the priest declared the leper clean but rejected the one who cleansed him their unbelief would be incriminating evidence against them and keep in mind those priests likely had never had to do a ceremony like this because nobody had been cleansed of leprosy before we've seen the Lord's plea the Lord's pity and the Lord's pronouncement In the final verse tonight we see the Lord's predicament so the Lord's predicament is your final section check out verse 45 speaking about the now former leper Mark wrote these words but he went out and began to talk freely about it and to spread the news so that Jesus no longer could openly enter a town but was out in desolate places and people were coming to him from every quarter we can understand the excitement about being cleansed however he violated a direct command from Jesus a person whom the leper knew to be God because of the leper's actions Jesus was inundated with people wanting miracles from him consequently the Lord began to minister in isolated areas whether in the wilderness or by the shore of the sea of Galilee whenever he ventured back into places like Capernaum the crushing crowds were waiting and he was compelled to retreat to less populated areas Jesus was well aware that his popularity was the result of superficial and temporal desires and expectations the crowds got excited about his healing and his miracles but they largely were uninterested in the message of the gospel a reality that ultimately would result in his crucifixion as they turned on him in a deadly way in spite of all his miracles so think about how Jesus and the former leper have traded places the former outcast put the one who healed him in a somewhat similar predicament as the leper previously was the leper started in a wilderness in isolation after meeting

[34 : 49] Jesus the leper was able to mingle freely in the city Jesus had started in the city but after the meeting Jesus was isolated to the wilderness so in that sense Jesus took the leper's place remember the main idea the leper's healing demonstrated Jesus' compassion and provided a picture of every believer's salvation we've spent a considerable amount of time talking about how the leper's healing demonstrated Jesus' compassion but we've yet to talk about how the incident also provides a picture of every believer's salvation salvation and that approach was intentional the leper's cleansing was an actual event that provided undeniable proof that Jesus is God and we needed to focus on those actual events first but now let's talk about how the event also provides a picture of every believer's salvation earlier we discussed how countries today can control

Henson's disease with medication however every human who ever has lived has had a problem that no earthly medicine can control and that problem is sin put simply sin is disobeying God when we looked at Leviticus 13 we saw that leprosy goes deeper than the skin sin also goes deep within us sin goes to the heart of who we and every human are as early as Genesis 6 5 the Bible says the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually if you need more proof how about Jeremiah 17 9 Jeremiah 17 9 says the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately sick who can understand it heading to the New Testament listen to what

Paul wrote in Romans chapter 3 verses 9 through 12 Romans chapter 3 verses 9 through 12 say! What then? Are we Jews any better off?

No, not at all, for we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin. As it is written, none is righteous, no, not one, no one understands, no one seeks for God, all have turned aside, together they have become worthless, no one does good, not even one.

And we know from Romans 6 23 that the wages of sin is death. So the poor leper was condemned to a horrible physical death until he was touched by Jesus.

[37 : 39] But everyone today is condemned to a horrible spiritual death unless they are savingly touched by Jesus. Listen to this quote from H.A. Ironside.

He said, every unsaved soul is afflicted with this dread disease and is an unclean sinner in the sight of God. A man was not a leper because he had horrible ulcers and other sores on his body. These were but evidence of the disease within. And a man is not a sinner because he sins. He sins because he is a sinner, and as such he is corrupt constitutionally.

Only the power of the Lord can give deliverance. In Mark 1:45, we saw that Jesus suffered because of the leper's disobedience. And for believers, Jesus suffered for our disobedience, for our sins. Consider something else about this passage tonight. As God, Jesus certainly knew that the leper would disobey him because God knows everything. Yet Jesus willingly suffered for that leper.

[38:49] Now take that one step further. Jesus knew that every true believer would disobey him, yet he willingly suffered for everyone who believes in him.

In our passage tonight, we see Jesus trading places with the leper. In the lives of every believer, we see Jesus trading places with the sinner.

God provided a way of salvation through his son, Jesus Christ, and to accomplish that plan of redemption, the son left the presence of God and went into isolation. On the cross, Jesus was forsaken.

He was rejected by men and even forsaken by the Father. Yet because he was treated as an outcast, believers have been accepted and welcomed into the presence of God.

So let that last sentence sink in. Because Jesus was treated as an outcast, believers have been accepted and welcomed into the presence of God. According to the law of Moses, when Christ touched the leper, he contracted the defilement of the leper, but that contact was done to bring healing.

[39:57] And this is a beautiful picture of the gospel message. We know from 2 Corinthians 5:21 that Christ became sin for us that he might save us.

This picture of substitution is the heart of the gospel. It's why Jesus came. He will take on himself our sin, our sorrow, and our shame, and in return, he gives us his forgiveness, his holiness, and his righteousness.

There is, however, one place where the symbolism between the leper and us breaks down.

Remember that Jesus told the cleansed leper to keep quiet, and yet he told everybody.

Jesus commands us to tell everybody, and yet we often keep quiet. The cleansing of the leper was an undeniable miracle, but the leper's earthly body eventually died.

And when we see that cleansed leper in heaven one day, we will know that Jesus did an even greater miracle for the cleansed leper and for us. Jesus gave that former leper and us eternal life.

[41:04] And when we're tempted to keep quiet about our belief in God, think even more about what Jesus did for us, and think about what Jesus is still doing for anyone who comes to him repenting of their sins.

For those who come to him in humble faith, recognizing their own unworthiness and asking for mercy, he offers full cleansing. And to the spiritual leper who cries out in faith, if you will, you can make me clean, the Lord's compassionate reply is always the same, and that is, I will be clean. Let's pray. Father, we thank you for this example from Scripture of how your Son proved that he was the God and is the God that he claimed to be.

Thank you even more for what this healing symbolizes, because it symbolizes what he has done for us as true believers. Let that reality make us more willing to share that with everyone we meet.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. you