08. The Gospel of Mark—1:39-45

"Jesus, the Only Hope for the Hopeless"

(10/17/26)

Mark 1:39 (NKJV)
[39] And He was preaching in their synagogues throughout all Galilee and casting out demons.

"Synagogues"

Jesus ministered not only in the open air but also in the synagogues.

- The Jewish synagogues developed during the nation's exile when the people were in Babylon after the temple had been destroyed.
- The synagogue was not a place of sacrifice—that was done at the temple—but of reading the Scriptures, praying and worshiping God.
- The services were led, not by priests, but by laymen; and the ministry was supervised by a board of elders which was presided over by a "ruler" (Mark 5:22).
- It was customary to ask visiting rabbis to read the Scriptures and teach, which explains why Jesus had such freedom to minister in the synagogues. The Apostle Paul also took advantage of this privilege (Acts 13:14–16; 14:1; 17:1–4).

"Casting out demons"

Last week we read—

Mark 1:23–28 (NKJV)
[23] Now there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, [24] saying, "Let *us* alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!" [25] But Jesus rebuked him, saying,

"Be quiet, and come out of him!" [26] And when the unclean spirit had convulsed him and cried out with a loud voice, he came out of him. [27] Then they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, "What is this? What new doctrine *is* this? For with authority He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him." [28] And immediately His fame spread throughout all the region around Galilee.

It is interesting that Jesus would not allow the demons to speak—**"We know who You are, the Holy One of God!"**

Now even though that was a true statement, Jesus still commanded the demons to *shut-up*—He didn't need nor did He want any help from Satan and his demons *'partnering with Him'* to promote His ministry.

And yet today in the church there is a strong movement toward ecumenism (partnering with unbelievers in the name of unity), in which many in the church are saying that we need to put aside our doctrinal differences in order that we might come together in unity—because unity, they say, is the most important thing!

Unity among true believers in Christ is important—but unity with darkness and doctrinal error is forbidden by God.

2 Corinthians 6:14–17 (NKJV)
[14] Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? [15] And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? [16] And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: *"I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people."* [17] Therefore *"Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you."*

Mark 1:29 (NKJV)
[29] Now as soon as they had come out of the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John.

One pastor commented on this,

"Peter and Andrew not only brought their friends James and John home with them from the service, but they also brought the Lord home. That is a good example for us to follow: don't leave Jesus at the church—take Him home with you and let Him share your blessings and your burdens."

Mark 1:29–31 (NKJV)
29 Now as soon as they had come out of the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. **30 But Simon's wife's mother lay sick with a fever, and they told Him about her at once. 31 So He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and immediately the fever left her. And she served them.**

So, we can see that Peter had a wife (I thought popes were supposed to be single and celibate?)

Mark 1:39–45 (NKJV)
39 And He was preaching in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and casting out demons.
40 Now a leper came to Him, imploring Him, kneeling down to Him and saying to Him, "If You are willing, You can make me clean." 41 Then Jesus, moved with compassion, stretched out *His* hand and touched him, and said to him, "I am willing; be cleansed." 42 As soon as He had spoken, immediately the leprosy left him, and he was cleansed. 43 And He strictly warned him and sent him away at once, 44 and said to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone; but go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing those things which Moses commanded, as a testimony to them." 45 However, he went out and began to proclaim *it* freely, and to spread the matter, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter the city, but was outside in deserted places; and they came to Him from every direction.

Jesus Cleanses a Leper—Mark 1:40-45

1. Leprosy—the disease

The root word behind *lepros* (**leper**) means "scaly," which describes one of the most obvious characteristics of leprosy.

Biblical leprosy ranged from skin conditions that were less serious to the full-blown variety that we often think of which medically is known as *Hansen's Disease*.

A less serious type of biblical leprosy caused the entire skin to turn white, in which case the affected person could be considered clean.

That disease was probably a form of psoriasis, eczema, vitiligo, tuberculoid leprosy—or perhaps a condition which Herodotus and the great Greek physician Hippocrates called leukodermia

When a person was found to have the serious form of leprosy, his clothes were to be torn, his head uncovered, his mouth covered (to prevent spread of the disease)—and he was to cry, *"Unclean! Unclean!"* to warn anyone who was approaching him to stay away.

In order to protect His people from any form of the disease God gave strict and specific regulations to Moses regarding leprosy—the details of which are found in Leviticus 13.

A person suspected of having the disease was taken to a priest for examination—if he showed signs of having more than a superficial skin problem, he was isolated for seven days.

If the symptoms became worse, the person was isolated for seven more days—and if, at that time, the rash had not spread further, the person was pronounced clean.

If, however, the rash had become worse, he was pronounced unclean.

In his book *Unclean! Unclean!* L. S. Huizenga describes some of the horrors of leprosy (Hansen's Disease):

"The disease which we today call leprosy generally begins with pain in certain areas of the body. Numbness follows. Soon the skin in such spots loses its original color. It gets to be thick, glossy, and scaly. ... As the sickness progresses, the thickened spots become dirty sores and ulcers due to poor blood supply. The skin, especially around the eyes and ears, begins to bunch, with deep furrows between the swellings, so that the face of the afflicted individual begins to resemble that of a lion. Fingers drop off or are absorbed; toes are affected similarly. Eyebrows and eyelashes drop out. By this time one can see the person in this pitiable condition is a leper.

By a touch of the finger one can also feel it. One can even smell it, for the leper emits a very unpleasant odor. Moreover, in view of the fact that the disease-producing agent frequently also attacks the larynx, the leper's voice acquires a grating quality. His throat becomes hoarse, and you can now not only see, feel, and smell the leper, but you can hear his rasping voice. And if you stay with him for some time, you can even imagine a peculiar taste in your mouth, probably due to the odor (of rotting flesh)."

Among the sixty-one defilements of ancient Judaism, leprosy was second only to a dead body in seriousness.

Of course, it wasn't only the physical toll that leprosy had on its victims—it was also the *psychological* toll that made the disease so feared as well.

Lepers were universally scorned by society—and they were especially despised by the rabbis, who saw their condition as a judgment of God upon their lives.

The Talmud (the oral traditions of the Law) forbade a Jew from coming closer than six feet to a leper, and if the wind was blowing, the limit was one hundred fifty feet.

In Jesus' time rabbis spoke about how badly they would treat lepers—one boasted that he refused to buy even an egg on a street where he saw a leper; another bragged that he threw rocks at lepers when he saw them.

Lepers were legally ostracized and forbidden to live in any community with their fellow Israelites (Num. 5:2); They were also forbidden from entering the Temple area and therefore excluded from the worship of God and the fellowship of His people.

Why was God so hard on lepers?—

Well, from a practical standpoint it was to limit the transmission of the disease—but also because <u>leprosy was a type of sin</u>.

B. Leprosy—a type of sin

Isaiah 1:5-6 and other places in the O.T. makes it clear that leprosy is a type of sin.

- *Sin (like leprosy) is incurable—the only hope is a miracle from God.*

- *Sin (like leprosy) is deeper than the skin; it spreads; it defiles; and isolates us from God.*

- *Sin (like leprosy) eats away at us slowly until it destroys us which, according to Leviticus 13, is why God commanded that anything leprosy touched was fit only for the fire—as is true with those defiled by sin.*

- *And finally, sin (like leprosy) can't be healed by man it can only be cleansed from our lives by God.*

That's why in the N.T. lepers are never said to be "*healed*" they are said to be "*cleansed*" because we aren't 'healed' from sin we are <u>cleansed</u> from it through the blood of Jesus Christ.

C. The hope of the leper—v.40

Mark 1:40 (NKJV)
40 Now a leper came to Him, imploring Him, kneeling down to Him and saying to Him, "If You are willing, You can make me clean."

The leper didn't doubt Jesus' *ability* to make him clean—He doubted His <u>*willingness*</u> (comment).

But Jesus is always willing to cleanse us from our sin if we come to Him in faith—

Matthew 11:28–30 (NKJV)
28 Come to Me, all *you* who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For My yoke *is* easy and My burden is light."

D. The willingness of Jesus to cleanse (save)—v.41-42

Mark 1:40–42 (NKJV)
40 Now a leper came to Him, imploring Him, kneeling down to Him and saying to Him, "If You are willing, You can make me clean." **41 Then Jesus, moved with compassion, stretched out *His* hand and touched him, and said to him, "I am willing; be cleansed." 42 As soon as He had spoken, immediately the leprosy left him, and he was cleansed.**

It was against the ceremonial law to touch a leper, which made the touch all the more meaningful to the afflicted man. (Elaborate)

Of course, as soon as Jesus touched him, he was no longer a leper!

Once again, God is always willing to save!

Paul tells us that He *"desires all to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth"* (1Tim.2:4); And Peter says that He is *"longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance".* (2Peter 3:9)

Mark 1:43–45 (NKJV)
43 And He strictly warned him and sent him away at once, 44 and said to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone; but go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing those things which Moses commanded, as a testimony to them." 45 However, he went out and began to proclaim *it* freely, and to spread the matter, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter the city, but was outside in deserted places; and they came to Him from every direction.

The interesting thing about this is that even though leprosy was incurable—God made provision in His law <u>for the working of a miracle</u>! (Lev. 14 gives the offerings after a leper has been cleansed.)

And even so God has made provision to take care of the incurable leprosy of sin that is destroying the human race—the miracle of the new birth.

One author tried to capture what leprosy meant for the person diagnosed with it back then—

"Have you ever stopped to think that this man not only had the physical disease of leprosy but that he had a psychological hang-up that was terrible?
I do not know this man's background, but I imagine that one day he noticed a breaking out on his hand. Perhaps he had been out plowing, came in, showed his wife, and she put some ointment on it. The next morning, it was just as red as it could be, and he went out and plowed again. This went on for about a week, and his wife started getting uneasy. She suggested he visit the priest. He went to the priest who isolated him for fourteen days. At the end of this period of time the disease had spread. The priest told him he had leprosy.

The man asked the priest if he could go and tell his wife and children and say good-bye. The priest said, "I'm sorry, you cannot tell them good-bye. You cannot put your arm around your wife again or hold your children in your arms anymore. When anyone comes near you, you must cry out, 'Unclean, unclean.'" He saw his children grow up from a distance. They would leave food in a certain place, and he would come and get it after they withdrew. He could not touch them. In fact, he had been able to touch no one, and no one had been able to touch him.

Then one day he came to Jesus and said, "Lord, if You will, You can make me clean." And what did the Lord Jesus do? He touched him. May I say to you that the touch of Jesus was one of the most wonderful things that ever had happened to the man. It not only cleansed his leprosy, but it brought him back into the family of mankind and into the family of God. "Immediately his leprosy was cleansed."

I am calling this message—**"Jesus, the Only Hope for the Hopeless."**

➔ Relate to the physical and psychological effect of the destructive power of sin on health, marriage and families and how the only hope is Jesus.

The Mel Trotter Story (Born May 1, 1868—Died Sept. 11, 1940)

"From the time I began going to school, it was easy for me to make friends. This caught the eyes of some who began to groom me with political ambitions in mind. Soon, what had started as rather innocent affairs, began to turn into social events including the social drink and all that goes with it. It wasn't long before the social drink was not reserved for special occasions, but became a morning, noon and night experience. The virtues I had been noted for began to disappear as steam does when it hits cold air. My ambitious political friends left first. They couldn't have faith in a young lush - even if they had been the ones who started me drinking. I went from one job to another and from one place to live to another, and each time both the job and apartment became less desirable.

One day found me in Chicago living in a rat-infested cellar apartment in the worst section in the city. Why my wife and little child stayed with me only God knows, for the pain and suffering I caused them cannot be described.

One day our little child was taken seriously ill. A faithful doctor came even though he knew there would be no payment for his call. After diagnosing the case, he reached into his own

pocket, took out some money and thrust it into my hands, shouting, "Mel, run, don't walk, to the drug store which is two blocks from here - here's the prescription. Come right back. It might even now be too late - so hurry!"

I climbed the stairs and was out on to the pavement. I looked to my left and sure enough I saw a drug store about two blocks away, but then I looked to my right and saw that the saloon was only one-half block away. A sudden desire came over me - one that drove all thought of my sick child out of my head. Even the fact that the money in my hand did not belong to me was erased as I blindly rushed to the bar and shouted, "Let's all drink - it's on me!" Soon the doctor's money was gone and then some other fool threw his money on the bar and we continued on and on through the day and into the night. When it was time to close I was so far gone that the saloon keeper just threw me into the back room to "sleep it off." When he came back the next day, I was still there and it wasn't until the night began to approach that I came enough to my senses to decide to go home.

When I arrived back, I slowly descended the rickety stairs. I saw that someone was talking very quietly to my wife and they were crying. I still did not know why and was still too far gone to have understood. There had been no furniture before, but now there was a little box on a stand. I wondered what it could be. As I went over and looked into the box I saw that it was the body of my little child, but looking very different. Someone had put on her clean clothes, new clothes and somehow there was even a pair of brand new little shoes. Still I didn't get the message. As I stood there that urge came over me. I craved another drink. What I wouldn't do for another drink! As the urge overwhelmed me, I hurriedly slipped the new shoes from the cold feet of my precious child, rammed them into my pocket - as yet I had not attracted the attention of my wife and the woman with her - I stole out of the apartment and I sold those little shoes for a few pennies and bought another drink. I had gone down so low that I have often said that I had to reach up to touch bottom.

With all of this, I was not awakened to reality, until one day, after some debauchery, I decided to end it all. With me gone, I reasoned that the world would be a lot better off, especially my wife.

With this in mind, I headed for Lake Michigan to drown myself. It had gotten dark and cold and, as I wove down a street that would take me to the lake, I was suddenly given a push by someone who said: "Why don't you go in there Bud? It's nice and warm."

As I went through the open door, someone set me in a chair. It all happened so quickly that it took my muddled brain a little while to realize that I was in a room filled with men and a man was speaking. He was talking as if he knew all about me as he said: "Perhaps you have come in here tonight and you haven't even planned it - in fact you had decided that you're going to end it all - for you feel that no one understands you, no one cares, and there is no hope. My friend, I'm here to tell you there is someone who understands you, there is someone who cares for you, and I can tell you that there is hope for you. You will find all of your answers when you come to Jesus Christ and receive Him as your personal Saviour. He not only wants to save you from your mess but wants to go with you the rest of your life, to keep you from getting into any more trouble. "
The speaker was Harry Monroe, and the place was the Pacific Garden Mission. I became a different person that night. God saved me and made me a new man. My wife got a new husband the part with its sin and stain was washed away and I found a brand-new tomorrow."

Mel Trotter went on to become a preacher of the same message that saved his soul and changed his life - the message that JESUS CHRIST ALONE SAVES. He saw many hundreds come to put

their trust in the only One who has the remedy for broken hearts, and broken homes…broken by sin.

No one is beyond the power of God to save and make brand new!

Sometimes God saves the worst of us to give hope to the rest of us that no one is irredeemable.

Believe God for a miracle in your marriage—and submit yourself to Him as a willing instrument in His mighty hands to be used to accomplish His will.

Before we leave this passage of Scripture it is worth noting something that I believe is here for a reason. That is the change in position between Jesus and the leper who was cleansed.

The leper started in the wilderness in isolation. After he met Jesus, he was able to mingle freely in the city.

On the other hand, Jesus started in the city. After meeting the leper, Jesus was isolated out in the unpopulated areas. In that sense, Jesus took the leper's place.

Notice that the leper came to Jesus—and so must you!

Leprosy required a miracle to heal—Jesus has the power to heal and change your life no matter what!

No matter how hopeless your situation—Jesus can work so have hope!