



## Parkway Fellowship

CHURCH ONLINE • DESPERATELY HUMBLE • MARK 1:40-44 • 4/5/2020

### MAIN POINT

Christ calls us to participate in His kingdom ministry by humbly obeying His commands.

### INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**What are some Easter traditions you and your family typically observe? Which part of your normal Easter routine will be most disappointingly disrupted as a result of COVID-19?**

**What if you could wipe away all memory of previous Easter celebrations and start fresh this year, in this context. What are some specific ways you could happily choose to prepare your heart and your family members to celebrate the resurrection?**

Sometimes when things don't go the way we planned, our initial reaction is to be upset or indignant. Our pride gets in the way of adapting to the situation and humbly coming before the Lord to see what He would have us learn from it. We don't want that to happen this week. Easter this year might look different than ever before, but the message and meaning of Jesus' last days and resurrection is the same. If we will come before the Lord in humility, desperation, and obedience, we will experience God in powerful ways, regardless of our crazy circumstances.

### UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MARK 1:40-44.

**What did the leper believe to be true about Jesus (v. 40)?**

**The early church used these stories as illustrations of how Jesus frees people from sin. What parallels between leprosy and sin come to your mind as you consider their effect in the life of a person?**

The man addressed Jesus as “Lord.” This term denoted respect and honor. The man saw Jesus as One with great authority. The diseased man said, “If You are willing, You can make me clean.” The statement about Jesus’ willingness to heal indicates humility on the part of the sick man. He recognized that Jesus could make him clean. Cleansing represented a number of things in this context. It stood for healing from disease, spiritual purification, and a return to normal living. The man entrusted his life to Jesus to make it happen.

**What is the significance of Jesus’ two commands in verse 44? How did the man respond to each command?**

**How did the man’s disobedience impact Jesus’ ministry?**

Afterward, Jesus warned the man not to tell anyone about his miraculous healing. Jesus did not want to gain the reputation of being just a miracle worker. This would hinder His ability to spread the good news and fulfill His mission. Instead, He instructed the cleansed leper to show Himself to the priest to be pronounced ceremonially clean (Lev. 14:2-31). Contrary to the arguments the religious leaders would bring against Jesus, He clearly valued obedience to God’s law. Furthermore, the religious authorities would ascribe such healing to God, thus admitting that Jesus was truly God.

However, the leper disobeyed Jesus by proclaiming his healing to everyone. Because he ignored Jesus’ warning, Jesus could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside in lonely places. Jesus had to curtail His public ministry and stay in isolated places. But even in His isolation, people still found Him.

**For the leper, excitement over his healing mattered more than obedience to Jesus’ two commands. What are some things that pose challenges to you as you seek to obey God?**

Everything we need to know about obedience we learn from Jesus. He not only taught on the topic often, He also lived it out, giving us a model to follow and a command to fulfill. The fourteenth chapter of John’s Gospel continues what some Bible scholars designate as Jesus’ farewell discourses or speeches (see John 13–17). Anticipating the sorrow His disciples would experience at His departure, Jesus offered a message of comfort and consolation to enable them to live confidently and obediently out of love for Him.

**The call to silence was a temporary measure for a particular purpose. Typically, the Scripture calls us to tell others of God's good work in our lives. What is one thing that God has done for you for which you are particularly grateful? Who could you encourage by sharing this news? How could you do so?**

**Jesus risked both His health and His reputation by touching this man. What groups of people have you taken a risk in reaching out to? How has God met you as you took that risk? What risks are before you now in terms of reaching out to others?**

## APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**In this week's message, we learned that Jesus has compassion on the humble and desperate, a touch from Jesus fixes more than my grabs for control, and it's time to tell. Which of these three points stands out to you the most personally? Why?**

**Are you someone for whom obedience comes easily, or are you more likely to rebel? In what area are you struggling to obey Jesus' commands in your life right now in the midst of this pandemic?**

**How does the reality of your ultimate healing through Jesus' death and resurrection impact your view of your current circumstance? How can the group support you in prayer?**

## PRAYER

Thank Jesus for His death and resurrection, providing you ultimate healing over the sickness of sin and death. Ask God to help you be people who come before Him in humility and desperation as you seek to obey Him. Ask Him for opportunity to tell someone about the healing you have experienced in Jesus and the hope He gives you.

## COMMENTARY

| MARK 1:40-44

1:40. Widespread agreement exists among commentators that in the Bible "leprosy" is a general term covering various chronic skin diseases and is not limited to Hansen's disease, as is the contemporary use of the word. Without treatment in a hot climate, many skin diseases were vicious. Not only was the disease painful and debilitating but it rendered the victims religiously and socially unclean. They were required to live outside of cities and towns, have no contact with

anyone, and declare themselves unclean when anyone approached. The law regarding leprosy is found in Lev 13–14. The Bible never speaks of healing leprosy, always of cleansing it. Part of the reason may be the loathsome nature of the disease, but a more likely explanation is that leprosy is a symbol of sin that must be cleansed. The episode implies that Jesus can forgive sin and therefore prepares for 2:1-12. The account further implies that, contrary to the law, the man approached very near to Jesus. By the statement “If you are willing,” Mark probably did not intend to suggest any doubt on the leper’s part.

1:41-42 This verse contains a more important textual problem. The vast majority of textual witnesses, including those usually considered the most reliable, have a word meaning filled with compassion. Only one Greek manuscript, four Old Latin manuscripts, and one early Christian writer—all of medium value—have a word meaning having become angry. Whether Jesus was “filled with compassion” or “moved to anger,” He displayed human emotion. Mark had no reservations about depicting the humanity of Jesus.

The question then arises, About what or with whom was Jesus angry? Was He angry with the leper? Most interpreters insist that such a thing would be out of character for Jesus, and certainly the idea that Jesus was angry with the leper for interrupting Him or approaching Him contrary to the law may be set aside. Most who adopt the variant reading take the position that Jesus was angry with the strangely unnamed religious authorities for being unable or unwilling to help the man or that Jesus was angry with the entire evil order in which suffering has such a prominent part. Before a decision can be made about the object of Jesus’ wrath, the stern verbs of verse 43 need to be considered. Jesus was perhaps angered that the leper doubted that the God active in Jesus’ ministry desired his cleansing (cf. Jesus’ reaction to doubt in 9:22-23).

Before leaving verse 41 we should observe that even if “with compassion” is not the original reading, the compassion of Jesus comes out clearly in the fact that He touched the leper. Such a thing was unheard of and made Jesus ceremonially unclean. Ritual uncleanness, however, was of no consequence to Jesus in comparison with human need. At many points He is depicted as being indifferent to ritualistic prescriptions. To the Jewish leaders, however, such an attitude was a threat to the established order and could not be condoned.

1:43 The verb translated “sent ... away” usually means to cast out and is often used with reference to expelling demons (vv. 34,39). Unless Mark used the verbs in this verse with milder-than-usual meanings, it appears that Jesus was angry with the man and that He cast him out (of a house or synagogue?). It is highly probable therefore that verse 41 also indicates that Jesus was angry with the leper. If anyone except Jesus had been involved, few would ever have suggested any other interpretation. Why then was Jesus so angry with the man that He threw

him out? Jesus may well have realized that the man would disobey His command to be silent and that this would greatly hinder His ministry. Furthermore Jesus—and Mark—wanted to make very plain that His primary ministry was not healing but redemption. This interpretation, as difficult as it may seem, is quite in keeping with the candor Mark displayed elsewhere.

1:44 Here we find another example of the “messianic secret.” In the last part of verse 44, Jesus is pictured as upholding the law, an appropriate balance to the subsequent conflict stories where He appears to have violated it. The early church may have found this account useful in disputes with Jews to show that Jesus did not indiscriminately violate the law. Whether the man had to go to Jerusalem is uncertain. Presumably, a priest anywhere could declare him cleansed, but sacrifices could be made only in the temple.

Still another problem is the meaning of the last item in the verse. The word “them” probably refers to the priests, even though the word “priest” earlier in the verse is singular. Alternatively, it could refer to the people generally; but in this case there is no antecedent for the pronoun. In Greek, the testimony can be either “to them” or “against them.” If the former, evidence of the healing is presented; but this is so obvious that it need not be stated. If the latter, the priests who do not recognize the power of God at work in Jesus produce evidence against their worthiness to hold the office. In 6:11, the same three words certainly mean “against them,” and that is probably the idea here.