

## “Love and Compassion of the King”

Mark 1:40-45

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September 4, 2022 • Sunday Evening Sermon

We will be looking at Mark 1 for this study. One of the things people say about the church is that we are raising the next generation or future missionaries and ministers. I praise the Lord that there are future ministers and missionaries that are coming out of Briarwood, but I will let you know that we see our current children and youth here as present missionaries and ministers because we want them to be this right where they are. It's exciting that they can go into their schools and be salt and light in those places now. There was a fourth grader that recently had to do a project for Earth Day and write something to Mother Earth but because she was raised in the church here she wasn't going to do that for she learned here that there is only one true God who created this earth so she wrote her letter to the one true God for her assignment. It's amazing to see a fourth grader who is a witness to her teacher and those at her school. God is working in this next generation and is doing wonderful things. My job is to come alongside of parents and encourage them to continue to do what they are doing in their homes, to pray for these students and help equip them so that they can be current and future missionaries and ministers.

In Mark 1 we will be looking at Jesus healing the man with leprosy. It's a beautiful and powerful story. I love the book of Mark and there is so much that is covered in Mark 1:1-39. Mark is Peter's secretary so he is writing on behalf of Peter, recording Peter's walk with Jesus and Peter's side of the story. In Mark we see a lot of Peter's personality – fast paced and to the point. It's like one action scene after another – an action-packed movie. I don't get that much in my home because I have a wife, two daughters and a girl dog so my Friday nights are generally spent watching a lot of princess movies. So, I love the action that the book of Mark brings out. We will look at the context of the story of the leper but let's first read the text for this study.

Mark 1:40-45 says [40] *And a leper came to Him (Jesus), imploring Him, and kneeling said to Him, “If You will, You can make me clean.”* [41] *Moved with pity, He stretched out His hand and touched him and said to him, “I will; be clean.”* [42] *And immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean.* [43] *And Jesus sternly charged him and sent him away at once,* [44] *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.”* [45] *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.*

Prayer:

Father, we thank You for Your Word and that You have revealed Yourself to us in Your Word, that we see Your authority, kingship, love, compassion and mercy. We ask that You teach us through this story as we study Your Word. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

It's important that we understand the context of this passage and what Mark is trying to communicate to us. Mark is trying to communicate to us a theme throughout his book and that is the kingship of Jesus. Jesus is the long awaited King and the King has finally come. Tim Keller wrote a book titled The King's Cross and has since changed the title to King Jesus and he lays this idea out. In this book he talks about the King's birth, His ministry, His death and that is one of the major themes of Mark and understanding that Jesus is King of Kings, Lord of Lords. As

we realize this makes this story of the leper even more powerful as we see how this King cares for, has compassion and mercy on this very broken man. Let's go back to Mark 1.

Mark 1:1 says [1] *The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.* Mark jumps right into the Good News of Jesus Christ. Jesus here means God saves and then he uses Christ which means a royal anointed figure. Right from the beginning of his book he is identifying Jesus as the Anointed One – the King who has now come. In the same verse Mark gives another title to Jesus – the Son of God. Mark is immediately declaring Jesus' deity and it's an outright claim to Divinity. Mark is telling his readers that this long-awaited King is God and this is the King Israel has been waiting for. This is important to Mark's audience, the Gentile believers in Rome who were under Caesar and who were taught that Caesar was King, the Lord of lords. These in Rome were not allowed to worship anyone else other than Caesar.

The currency they used in Rome had Julius Caesar's head on the coins. Julius Caesar reigned before the birth of Jesus but was assassinated and after he was assassinated, they deified him because they claimed he was god. That is the reason they made the coin with his head on it and on the back of it was a statement that said 'the divine Julius.' He had a stepson name Caesar Augustus who was around during the birth of Jesus and was the one who asked for a census to be made during that time where all were to be registered which came as a decree from him. Because Julius Caesar was looked on as a god, one of Caesar Augustus, name was son of god.

Mark is using this language from the very first verse in his book, to show these Romans who the true King God is and it is Jesus Christ, the Anointed One, the true Son of God. So let's continue in Mark 1 and see how Mark goes from one action scene to the next.

Mark 1:2-3 says [2] *As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, "Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way, [3] the voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.'"* Now we see a kingly herald – John the Baptist. Back then, when kings were about to enter a town or city, a herald or announcer who go before them and tell the city to make way for their king was coming – get ready for his arrival. This is what John the Baptist is doing for Jesus. He specifically telling the people to make way in their hearts for the true King that's coming.

The next scene takes place in Mark 1:9-11 which says [9] *In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. [10] And when He came up out of the water, immediately He saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on Him like a dove. [11] And a voice came from heaven, "You are My beloved Son; with You I am well pleased."* Here we see this royal coronation, this royal confirmation in Jesus' baptism and God the Father looks at His Son and presents Him before the people. This where Jesus starts His formal ministry. His formal ministry isn't to rule an earthly throne but to rule in the hearts of men and to set up the heavenly kingdom. This is another part of this theme of the Kingship of Jesus.

The next action scene happens in Mark 1:12-13 which says [12] *The Spirit immediately drove Him out into the wilderness. [13] And He was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. And He was with the wild animals, and the angels were ministering to Him.* This is the King's conquest. King Jesus' conquest was over sin and we see this beautiful picture of Him doing that in the wilderness as He overcomes temptation. Jesus did what Adam could not do in the Garden. Adam wasn't even in the wilderness, for he wasn't fasting, he had all the food he needed, walking with God yet Adam could not fulfill the law – do not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

The next action scene is in Mark 1:14-15 which says [14] *Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, [15] and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."* Here is the King's mission and message, His proclamation. In Mark 1:29-39 we see the King's authority and power over sickness and the demonic.

So why is this important as we look at the leper? It is because this Kingship theme shows us Jesus' authority. He is sovereign and almighty. We see Jesus' authority and power over the sickness in the leper but we also see that this King is very personal. He is unlike any King the world ever knew for He dwelt with, lived with His people, empathized with His people, He suffered for His people and would eventually die for His people.

I think we need to be reminded of the care, compassion and mercy of our King and I know I need to be reminded of that every day – that He is powerful, almighty and sovereign. I need to see that He does all that in my life so in this study we will take a closer look at this passage by taking a closer look at the man in this passage, the King and the Gospel.

Let's look closer at this man with leprosy. Luke 5 gives us a little more insight into this man but realize it took Luke 5 chapters to get this story of the man with leprosy. In Luke 5 we see that this man was 'full' of leprosy which means he wasn't at the beginning but he was in bad shape – full blown leprosy. Leprosy was a skin disease that affected the nerves, skin, and the eyes. It resulted in a crippling effect in your hands and feet – a paralysis type of thing. It caused blindness and such nerve damage that someone in the later stages didn't have feeling in their hands and feet which could be dangerous because they wouldn't know if they hurt them in any way unless they looked at them. This could cause infections and many would often lose their limbs as a result of this. Because of poor living conditions some slept outside and rodents would even come and gnaw on their hands and feet and they wouldn't even know it as they were sleeping. It was a bad and sad disease. People who had this were known as the walking dead. The only thing more unclean than a leper was a corpse. That is how they were viewed and eventually the disease would kill them due to all the complications.

Not only was this a painful gross disease, but it was a very lonely disease. They were considered unclean and in the Old Testament lepers would be put outside of the camp. The priest would determine this and if they had it, they would be put outside of the covenant family in the community of God. That was a big deal. They were lonely and isolated if they had this disease. In the New Testament they were put out of the city and weren't allowed to live among others. Lepers lived in isolation and were very lonely. That is where this man with leprosy in this passage is – isolated, lonely and in lots of pain.

This man also had lots of faith. Mark 1:40 says [40] *And a leper came to Him (Jesus), imploring Him, and kneeling said to Him, "If You will, You can make me clean."* First of all, the fact that this leper even came to Jesus shows his faith. This leper knew that Jesus had something to offer. Think about the ordeal he would have had to go through just to get to Jesus. On his way to Jesus, he would have been shunned, mocked, and some would have run from him. This leper would also have to be proclaiming that he was unclean, just so people wouldn't get near him. When this leper got to Jesus, he kneels before him and gives a beautiful statement of faith – if You will, You can make me clean. He didn't say 'if You can...' because he knew that Jesus could. He knew this was the King of Kings, the One who had authority over sickness.

We can learn a lot from that faith. There are many times that I know I doubt that Jesus can do things in situations. Can Jesus really give me complete victory over this sin? Through Christ the answer is 'yes.' That person seems way too far gone, can Jesus really save that

person? Jesus can. Our country has rapidly declined, can God bring about a revival in our country? It seems impossible but what would this man with leprosy say? He will, He can. We are to come to Christ, believing that He can as we seek His will.

We also see that this man was full of humility. He didn't come demanding from Jesus, He came kneeling at His feet and asking. This man knew his place. That posture of humility in kneeling shows his humility. God loves a humble spirit. God loves it when we realize that we are nothing without Him. I am dead in my sins. I love Psalm 51 a Psalm of David – a psalm of repentance. What does God desire from us? Psalm 51:17 says *[17] The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.* A broken and contrite heart was evidenced in this leper for he understood his uncleanness and desperate need for Jesus. This is a great example for us to learn from.

Now, let's take a closer look at the King. How would Jesus respond to this man, this leper who was broken, deemed unclean, physically ill and that no one else would even get close to? Mark 1:41 says *[41] Moved with pity, He stretched out His hand and touched him and said to him, "I will; be clean."* Jesus sat with him, ministered him and loved him. Jesus had compassion on him. What does that mean for us? It means He is approachable and accessible. Many times, we don't believe that when we are in our sin but we believe the lie of Satan that our sin is greater than God's grace. Once we're saved, we live for Christ and His glory but not to earn the love and forgiveness of Christ, for we live for Christ because we are forgiven. We know we're still going to struggle with sin but God's grace is bigger than our sin. We need to remember that and that even in our darkest moments this King is approachable and accessible.

I have only had one experience, almost encounter with royalty in my life. We probably don't get all this idea of kingship because in our country we have a president but we can look over the pond – so to speak – at England and see their Queen, royalty and how they act and perhaps see a little bit of what royalty does/is. I went on a mission trip to London in early 2000 with 25 high school students and the subway station was the biggest challenge but we actually ministered an hour outside of London in a small community. We were able to VBS, a teenage outreach each night and evangelism in the community, but on the last day we did a sightseeing day in London. Yet for me in all the places we went that day I was all consumed with making sure I didn't lose any of the students so I don't remember anything about London that day. We ended up being there a day that the Queen was being celebrated and it seemed the whole city was out and about just to get a glimpse of this Queen. People were basically waiting for her to come out on her balcony and wave for like a minute or two to the crowd. She wasn't accessible yet she was royalty and stuck in her castle. Very rarely does she go out with the commoners.

Our King is much different. Jesus didn't just come and make an appearance so that some may see a glimpse of Him from afar, but He came and dwelt with us. Jesus came and sat with leper, this man who was broken and sick. I think this passage is a beautiful picture of how our King sat and spent time with this broken man. We can approach our King in our helplessness, hopelessness and our filth for our King brings help, hope and healing to those who are in need.

There was a young man I had while he was in high school who I was pretty close to and he went off to college, got involved in drugs and had to drop out. I tried to stay in touch while he was in college but he was living for the world and caught in sin. He wasn't answering any of my calls so we lost touch for about a year and a half. I was in my office one day and get this phone call and the guy said 'is this Jay?' I said 'yes' and he said 'I'm driving around and I'm at the lowest point of my life. I've been living in darkness and I'm on drugs. My life is out of control and I don't have anywhere to go. The one thing I remember is the youth barn was the one place

where I heard about hope. Briarwood was a place I heard that I could be helped and there was hope.' I said 'Praise the Lord, you have come to the right place and it's not me but Jesus.' I cleared out my schedule and we met together and then met for several weeks after that. I was able to take him through the book of Mark and I couldn't wait to get to the story of the leper to tell him this was him and it was me.

Look how Jesus ministered to this man for this man was so ashamed and he asked if God could forgive him for what he had done. The young man asked God to forgive him for he had done and then Max Bunn took him into the college ministry to disciple him and he became a Christian and started living for the Lord. He has been off of drugs for a long time and is doing great – praise the Lord! Our God, our King is accessible and He is also willing.

Jesus was willing to sit down – He didn't run from this leper. Why was Jesus willing to heal this man? Mark 1:41 says Jesus was moved with pity. Jesus has compassion. In Matthew 15 we see that Jesus has compassion on the multitude. He looks at the crowd and sees these people without a shepherd. Why is this so powerful? It is because Jesus just didn't have pity but He demonstrated His pity by stretching out His hands and touched the leper. That is a big deal! There was not a spot on this man's body that wasn't covered with leprosy because he was full of leprosy. Jesus could have not even touched him and said 'be healed' and the man could have been healed but He touched this man. Jesus wanted to show and demonstrate His compassion for this man. This man had not been touched in who knows how long and the King above all Kings touches him with a touch of love and mercy.

Don't miss this because this is a foreshadowing of the cross. Jesus would not just touch our sin but He would take our sin. It doesn't get any more personal than that for He was willing to go to the cross and die for us. So, if Jesus is willing, then we also see that He's able. It's one thing to be willing but it's another thing to be willing and able.

My daughter was riding her bike when one day and she had the handlebars backwards. Please don't try that for the bike's not going to work like that yet it doesn't immediately throw you off until you're going about 12 miles per hour and then it goes wrong. She is riding as she picks up speed and tumbles over and it looked like she'd been in a motorcycle accident as she scraped the right side of her body. She was crying as we were holding her and we felt so bad. I remember thinking, I wish I could take this from her. I know as a parent there's a lot harder stories than that, but that's what we tend to say when our child is in pain – I wish I could take this from you, but we're not able to.

We're willing, but not able, but Jesus was able to work in this man's life. Jesus was not only willing to heal, but He was able, why? It is because He is deity – He's God. That's what makes Him so powerful. That's why we looked in the first verses of Mark 1, because we have to establish that Jesus is King and because He is the Divine King, not only does He have kingly compassion, heavenly compassion, compassion and love that we can't even measure, but He has the ability to heal this man with the authority over sicknesses. His touch and His words healed this man and his whole body would have been restored. This man was pronounced clean.

Now let's take a closer look at the Gospel, because every time Jesus does a physical act, there's spiritual truths that we can draw from it. Jesus came not just to heal the sick, but to heal the spiritually sick and that's the Good News. That's why Mark 1:1 says 'In the beginning...the Good News of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.'

Where there is good news, there is bad news. The bad news is that we have leprosy of the soul and that like this man outside of Christ, we were born full of leprosy, full of sin. The Bible paints that picture very clear. Ephesians 2:1 says 'we are all dead in our trespasses and sins' and

Romans 3:23 says that ‘all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.’ Romans 3:10-11 says, ‘there are none righteous, no not one and no one seeks for God.’ So, we are full of sin and just like the leprous man, the sickness made him unclean so our sin makes us unclean. We are unclean because of our sin and our Holy God cannot be in our presence because He is pure. Just like this man was put outside the camp, we are outside of the camp of God, the family of God, because of our sin. Ephesians 2:3 says that ‘we’re children of wrath.’

The leper asked if Jesus was willing but on this side of the cross, we know that He was willing. We know that He demonstrated his love for us. I love Romans 5:8 which says [8] *but God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.* He was willing to heal us of our sin, and He was able, because He was the only One that could live a perfect life, that could satisfy God’s justice. Jesus’ death on the cross made a way for us sinners to be forgiven. I John 1:9 says [9] *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

On the cross the Father would have to turn His face away and Jesus would say, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’ Jesus would be put outside of the camp for us and His Father would have to look away from Him because He took on our sins and Jesus would be declared unclean so that we who have faith in Christ might be clean. One of my favorite verses is Isaiah 1:18 which says [18] *“Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool.”* There is no sin too gross for Jesus – no sin too big that the cross didn’t cover.

Does it get any more personal than that, that our King would be so full of love and compassion that He would give His own life? Here’s the best news of all. When Jesus enters our lives, He not only cleanses us, but He makes us healthy. He restored the health of the leper and that’s what Jesus does to us. In our salvation, we’re delivered from the penalty of sin, we’re declared righteous and clean and now, in our life, we’re being delivered from the power of sin in our sanctification. He’s restoring us. He’s working out our salvation and one day will be delivered from the presence and practice of sin.

It’s interesting to note that the Romans were forced to hear Caesar as Lord. Where was Caesar with this man in his leprosy? He wasn’t there and he couldn’t do anything about it. Where is Caesar now? He is the grave. Where’s the mighty Roman Empire? It’s not here. Where’s Jesus? Jesus rose from the grave. Jesus is in heaven on His throne but He hasn’t left us because He gave us the Holy Spirit. He’s living, working and ministering to us, showing compassion on us and leading us to repentance every day. Although He is on His throne, through the Holy Spirit we have access to Him at any time. That is amazing and that is the King that I want to serve. That’s the King of Kings.

Here is my takeaway for this study. It is to simply do what this man did. Now, if you want to know what Jesus’ thoughts were about this man, because Jesus told him not to go share about what Jesus has done, but he did it anyways, that’s a great question for Pastor Reeder. But what we do see is this man’s reaction to the grace of God. He can’t contain it. He goes and tells everyone what Jesus had done. He proclaims what Jesus had done in his life in a place where if he proclaimed Jesus as Lord, he was risking a lot because he was in Rome. He proclaims this is the King, this is who saved me.

So, if you’re a believer, you have a great King. Go and be an ambassador for Him. If you’re not a believer, Jesus the King has died for you and He is able to make you clean. Come to Him. Learn from this leprous man, come to the King for He is not only willing to save you from your sins but He is able to save you from your sins. Let’s pray.

Prayer:

Father, I'm just humbled by Your Word and what You show us about Yourself in Your Word. Lord, You are holy, holy, holy. You are Almighty. You are the Lord of Lords and King of Kings. Who is man that You are mindful of Him, but You are. You have created us in Your image. You have made a way for us sinners, to be forgiven of our sins, to be cleansed, to have a relationship with You, and to have the hope of heaven where we will be with You forever. Lord, thank You for this beautiful story of this man that was full of leprosy. Help us as believers to know that, that is where we were, but because of Your grace, we have now been cleaned. But also, Lord, help us remember that sin still creeps up on us and that the Law of sin is that when we desire to do good, evil is right at hand every time. And that we have an enemy and just like leprosy can come and spread very quickly that's what sin can do in our own life. So, although we're clean and we're justified, Lord, we want to continue to fight and kill the sin in our life. We can only do that through your Holy Spirit, by equipping ourselves to know who You are, have a relationship with You, and to be in community with You, so that we may live a life that glorifies You. We love you, Lord, and we thank You that You first loved us. We pray these things in Jesus' Name, Amen.