

JESUS : A TOUCHY GOD

1. THERE'S A POINT IN LIFE WHERE WE HAVE: (*Mark 1:40*)

- a. desperation
- b. humility
- c. the desire to be a "person" again
- d. the need to be whole

2. THIS NEED CAN NEED CAN BE ACTED UPON.

- **Courage:** he *came to* Jesus
- **Self Surrender:** begging on his knees
- **Faith:** his words to Jesus

The priest would declare him clean, but only Jesus could make him clean. "If you are willing" reveals the man's faith in Jesus' authority in this matter of healing; Jesus' ability was never in question. What this man wanted was to be made clean, a huge request. The man wanted to become a person again, to be reunited with his family and community. He knew Jesus could do it. The question was, would he?

3. JESUS RESPONDS TO OUR REQUEST WITH LOVE AND POWER. (*Mark 1:41*)

Jesus' love and power go hand in hand. Jesus has a heart of compassion. While all people shunned lepers, Jesus reached out his hand and touched this man covered with a dreaded, contagious disease. The fact that Jesus' touch precedes his pronouncement of healing indicates that Jesus disregarded the Jewish law not to touch a leper (Leviticus 5:3; 13:1-46; Numbers 5:2). This shows Jesus' compassion and his authority over the law.

There are no less than eight touches recorded in the Gospel of Mark.

1. When Christ healed Peter's mother-in-law, he took her by the hand and raised her up (Mark 1:31).
2. He laid his hand on the leper (Mark 1:41).
3. When he healed Jarius's daughter, he took her by the hand and said, "*Talitha kum!*" (which means, 'Little girl, I say to you, get up!')" (Mark 5:41).
4. Next He "lay his hands on a few sick people and healed them" (Mark 6:5).
5. When he encountered the deaf and dumb man, the Apostle Mark says, "After he took him aside, away from the crowd, Jesus put his fingers into the man's ears. Then he spit and touched the man's tongue. He looked up to heaven and with a deep sigh said to him, '*Ephphatha!*' (which means, 'Be opened!')" (Mark 7:33).
6. Later he did almost the same thing for the blind man at Bethsaida (Mark 8:23).
7. In the midst of his busy ministry, he repeatedly took little children in his arms (Mark 9:36 and Mark 10:16).
8. Finally we see him raising up the formerly demonized boy (Mark 9:27).

Monday, February 16th Read Mark 1:40-45

Here we see Jesus' power over leprosy and its impact: cleansing the most unclean. Leprosy was the most feared disease of the ancient world. The leper was considered the most unclean, revolting, and hideous person imaginable. Leprosy itself was thought to be the result of terrible sin and actually became the most dramatic type of sin in the minds of people. There was no known cure for leprosy; only God was considered powerful enough to cure the disease. Therefore, in cleansing the leper, Jesus was demonstrating His Messiahship. He was demonstrating that He had the power to cleanse the most unclean, no matter how terrible their uncleanness. The lesson has the following organizational structure:

1. He was the great hope of the most unclean (v.40).
2. He was moved with compassion by the most unclean (v.41-42).
3. He charged the most unclean to go—sin no more (v.43).
4. He demanded that the most unclean witness to His Messiahship (v.44).
5. He made a great impact (v.45).

What was leprosy all about? William Barclay points out that leprosy was the most terrible disease in the day of Jesus, greatly feared. It was disfiguring and sometimes fatal. In the Bible leprosy is a type of sin (*The Gospel of Matthew*, Vol.1, p.300).

1. The leper himself was considered utterly unclean—physically and spiritually. He could not approach within six feet of any person including family members. "His clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, 'Unclean, unclean' " (Leviticus 13:45).

2. He was judged dead—the living dead. He had to wear a black garment so he could be recognized as being among the *dead*.

3. He was banished as an outcast, totally ostracized from society—earthly and heavenly. "All the days wherein the plague shall be in him he shall be defiled; he is unclean; he shall dwell alone; without the camp shall his habitation be" (Leviticus 13:46). He could not live within the walls of any city; his dwelling had to be outside the city gates.

4. He was thought to be polluted, incurable by any human means whatsoever. He could be cured by God and His power alone. (Note how Jesus proved His Messiahship and deity by healing the leper.)

Imagine the anguish and heartbreak of the leper, being completely cut off from family and friends and society. Imagine the emotional and mental pain. There are other recorded instances of lepers being healed (cp. Matthew 10:8; Matthew 11:5; Mark 1:40; Luke 7:22; Luke 17:12; and perhaps Matthew 26:6; cp. Mark 14:3).

Christ proved two things when He healed the leper.

1. Jesus proved Himself to be God, to possess the power of God. The people knew no one could cure a leper but God (2 Kings 5:7).

2. Jesus proved Himself to be the Messiah, the Savior of the world. He not only pronounced the leper cured, as the priests did; He *cleansed* the leper. He took the man's leprosy (sin) away; He cleansed the man thoroughly and completely.

Tuesday, February 17th Read Mark 1:40-45

This leper was healed. In looking at miraculous healings the question is often asked, why are all faithful believers not healed when they are sick and ask for healing? Some walk ever so faithfully before God and they believe that God does heal; and they have as much faith, if not more faith, than some who are healed. Why then are they not also healed? **The reason is God.** When God looks at our requests, He considers at least four things

1. God's glory. Would granting the request bring the greatest glory to God's name?

2. Our good, not only physically, but spiritually. What particular spiritual grace or quality do we need to learn: endurance, self-control, trust, dependence?

a. Spiritually, within ourselves: will granting our request strengthen us more spiritually? Which way will our faith and trust in God grow more?

b. Spiritually, without ourselves: how does God now want to use us—as a constant prayer warrior? As an unbelievable testimony to His empowering spiritual strength, no matter the physical condition? Consider something else: What do the people need with whom God wants to use us? What is the best way for God to reach them—by demonstrating His strength in and through our trial? No matter what some may claim, the power of God is often more forcibly seen by manifesting itself through infirmities and weaknesses.

3. God's wisdom. He knows what is needed by whom; when it is needed; for whom it is needed; where it is needed; how it is needed; why it is needed.

4. God's mercy. He wills above all else for us to know His mercy. He does whatever is needed to demonstrate His mercy to us. Sometimes walking through the trials of life reveals His mercy more; sometimes removing the trials reveals His mercy more. He chooses the best way for both the sufferer and those who surround them.

Wednesday, February 18th Read Mark 1:40

Jesus was the great hope of the most unclean. What happened was dramatic. The man was "full of leprosy" (*pleres lepras*—see also [Luke 5:12](#)). Apparently His whole body was full of sores, perhaps some parts even eaten away by the cancerous disease. He was hopeless, for all were powerless to help him. But somewhere, somehow, he heard about Jesus and His Godly power. Hope sprung up in his heart and he began to search for Jesus. When he found out where Jesus was, he made his way to Him. Matthew tells us that he found Jesus on the mount where Jesus was preaching the great *Sermon on the Mount* ([Matthew 8:1-4](#)). He heard Jesus preach, and what Jesus said burned in his heart and turned his hope into enormous faith. As Jesus made His way down the mountain, the leper burst forth and fell at Jesus' feet.

Note three things:

1. The leper (the most unclean) was so desperate and so intent on seeking Jesus' help that he forgot everything else and everyone else. He forgot all about the law requiring him to come no closer than six feet. He forgot all about the thronging crowd that surrounded Jesus. He saw no one and thought of no one except Jesus. It was his desperate need and the enormous hope aroused in him by Jesus that drove him to race through the crowd and fall upon his face begging for help.

2. The leper worshipped Jesus. All three gospel writers throw light upon the *intensity* of the man's act.

- Mark says that he knelt down ([Mark 1:40](#)).
- Luke says that he fell on his face ([Luke 5:12](#)).
- Matthew says that he worshipped Jesus ([Matthew 8:2](#)).

3. The leper saw in Jesus the divine power of God Himself. This was evidenced by his worship of Jesus and the words spoken to Jesus. Note he did not say, "You can ask of God and God will make me clean." He said, "If you are willing you can make me clean." He was saying that Jesus possessed the power of God to cleanse him. The leper is a picture of the sinner. Jesus will heal anyone who approaches Him as the leper did, even if they are the most unclean person on earth.

Thursday, February 19th *Read Mark 1:41-42*

Jesus was moved with compassion by the most unclean. Looking down upon the leper, Jesus knew the man: his miserable condition, his heart, his hope, his faith. And Jesus was moved with compassion. Note what happened.

1. Jesus was moved to reach out and touch the man. He did not ignore the man. Jesus did not push the man back. He could have, for the man had no right to approach Jesus. But Jesus, knowing the man's heart, was moved with compassion; and He reached out and touched the man (the most unclean).

Matthew 9:36 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

Matthew 14:14 When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick.

Psalms 103:13 As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him;

2. Jesus was moved to speak the most wonderful words known: "I am willing, be clean." He spoke His Word of power. Jesus wills to make everyone clean. It is His will that everyone be made whole. But what is so desperately needed is for us to approach Jesus just as this poor sinful leper did.

We need to approach Jesus...

- with an intense hope.
- with an intense faith.
- with an intense worship.

Acts 10:38 how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.

Hebrews 7:25 Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.

Isaiah 66:2 Has not my hand made all these things, and so they came into being?" declares the Lord. "This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word.

3. The result was just as Jesus willed and spoke. His Word of power cleansed and healed the man. In healing the man, Jesus demonstrated three things.

- a. He cares and is moved with compassion by the plight of people, even by the most unclean.
- b. He is most definitely the Son of God who possesses the very power of God to cleanse us of our sin and uncleanness. Leprosy was a type or symbol of sin, so in cleansing the man's leprosy, the man was being cleansed (healed) both physically and spiritually.
- c. He is superior to the law. He reached out and touched the man—which was against the law. Lepers were by law to remain at least six feet away from others, even from family members.

Friday, February 20th *Read Mark 1:41-42*

Jesus charged the most unclean to go and sin no more. This point is missed with a quick, surface reading. It can be seen by noticing two facts.

1. What Jesus charged the man with (Mark 1:43) seems to be different from the directions He gives the man in Mark 1:44. Thoughtful reading of the two verses seems to indicate this.
2. The phrase "He sent him away with a strong warning" (*embrimesamenos*) is a threatening phrase. It is a strong severe warning to the man. It is the same kind of charge Jesus gave to the man who had been bed-ridden for thirty-eight years:

John 5:14 *Later Jesus found him at the temple and said to him, "See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you."*

When we are forgiven and cleansed, Christ expects us to "sin no more."

Read Mark 1:44. Jesus demanded that even the most unclean person must witness to His Messiahship. Jesus gave the cleansed man two different charges.

1. "See that you don't tell this to anyone": "Do not boast in your cleansing. Guard against pride, against feeling that God is partial to you and that you are a favorite of God and more special than *anyone* else." Apparently there was something within this man that would tend toward pride. His attention was not to be upon what had happened to him (his cleansing and healing), but upon Jesus, the compassionate and merciful One.

Think about this: Too often we look at the sinner and say the old saying of my grandmother, "*But for the grace of God, there go I.*" But could this be boastful and prideful? Yes, it's possible. It is true that the grace of God has saved us, but God saved us not because we are favorites of His. We are not saved to compare ourselves with the sinner by going around saying (testifying) and thinking that we are above the sinner. We are saved to proclaim the grace of God to the man walking along the street. Our task is not to stand on this side of the street and testify: "But for the grace of God, there go I." Our task is to cross over the street and declare to the man: "The grace of God saves and cleanses from all sin. God has cleansed me, the sinner of sinners; His grace will cleanse you. There is cleansing and forgiveness for everyone."

2. "Go...show yourself to the priest..." Jesus demands this for three reasons.

- a. The man needed to obey the law,** for he was not above the law. He was to live righteously just as the law demanded. Jesus did not annul or do away with the law. He fulfilled the law; therefore, He is more than the law. The man was being taught to obey the law and more: he was being taught to obey Jesus who includes the law and more. His righteous act was to be his primary witness, his final act of obedience.
- b. The man must be acknowledged as *cleansed* by everyone.** People would not accept him until they knew he was cleansed. The priest had to *pronounce* him clean.
- c. The priest needed to testify to the divine power of Jesus.** All the people knew that only God could cure leprosy. By declaring the man cleansed, the priest would be declaring Jesus to be the Son of God, the Messiah (cp. Leviticus 14:2-20).

Every time you are truly cleansed from sin, Jesus is proclaimed to be the Messiah, the Son of God. A cleansed person becomes a living testimony and witness to the power of Jesus.

2 Corinthians 5:17-21 ¹⁷ *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!* ¹⁸ *All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: ¹⁹ that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰ We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. ²¹ God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

Jesus made a great impact. His fame was now promoted by the man. The man disobeyed Jesus (just as many of us so often do). Because of the man's disobedience, Jesus was forced to withdraw from the area. In this particular case, He had to leave because the crowds were just too large. Note: there is also a spiritual application here. When we disobey Christ, Christ is forced to withdraw. His presence is no longer sensed by us or seen by our associates. It is as though He is forced into a *desert place*. It is interesting that nothing more is said about the disobedient leper. Imagine the people who were never helped because Jesus was forced out into a desert place! We may not understand the command of our Lord, but we must obey. The consequences of disobedience are too terrible, destroying lives through our lost witness.