

EPIC

A journey through the Gospel of Mark

WEEK 3 **STUDY GUIDE**



CENTRAL
CHRISTIAN CHURCH

MONDAY, MARCH 14, 2022

Read: Mark 1:40–45

Scripture Verse: “A man who had a skin disease came to Jesus. On his knees he begged Jesus. He said, “If you are willing to make me ‘clean,’ you can do it.” –Mark 1:40

Today’s Thought:

"Shortly after the first edition of the *Miami Herald* had gone to press on Sunday night, December 29, 1946, Timothy Sullivan answered the telephone on the city desk. "Please help me," a woman's voice pleaded. "My husband is bleeding to death." Sullivan got the entire story. The man's name was Rudy Kovarik, from Dearborn, Michigan. They were on vacation, but he was sick and in the Biscayne Hospital. The AB Rh-negative blood he needed was unavailable at the hospital or other sources. Without a transfusion, the doctors thought he might not live until morning. What could the city editor do? A man was dying. A woman's heart was breaking. Then he got an idea—WCBS, fourteen blocks away, where it was almost time for Walter Winchell to go on air in a nationwide broadcast. The operator at the radio station refused to let him talk to Winchell, but, after some insistence and pleading, she put an assistant of Winchell on the phone. He took a memo of the situation, and Sullivan sat back to wait. Soon the telephones began to go mad. The *Herald* office, the police station, the hospital was all swamped with calls nationwide. People as far away as New York City began to board planes for Miami, the corridors of the Biscayne Hospital were crowded, and traffic jammed the nearby streets as would-be donors tried to get to the hospital. The actual donor was a tourist from New York who heard the broadcast on his car radio, checked his Army dog tags for blood type, and drove two blocks to the hospital. In a few minutes, his life-giving blood was flowing into the veins of the stricken man. A few weeks later, a healthy-looking man walked up to the *Herald's* city desk to thank Timothy Sullivan."

—Selected

Rudy Kovarik was in desperate need of blood while hospitalized on vacation, and because two men were willing to come to his aid, Rudy is

alive today. These men showed great compassion for a man they didn't even know. They took time out of their busy schedules and made time for a dying man.

The above illustration of two strangers helping a dying man provides us a good seg-way into Mark's story regarding a man dying from leprosy, a terrible skin disease. Up to this point, Mark has described the large crowds attracted to Jesus and how Jesus took the time to meet every need and heal every illness. In today's text, Mark speaks of how Jesus also took time for individuals with his story concerning a leper He came across as he walked the countryside. Leprosy was a terrible chronic skin affliction for anyone, but especially a Jew. It was severe in Israel, not just because it was painful but because it made a Jew ceremonially unclean. A Jew that was considered unclean could not participate in worship and had to be isolated from the Hebrew community. This man has probably suffered for years, not only from the disease but from the lack of human touch and interaction. Lepers were repulsive to the community and remained alone until they were healed or died.

Although this man probably had heard his disease was humanly incurable, somehow, someone or some event had convinced him that Jesus could cleanse him. Had the man heard of Jesus' healing ministry from others who were part of the large groups who surrounded Jesus in town? Had he followed Jesus from a distance to see for himself if what he had heard was true? The text doesn't tell us how this man knew about Jesus, but he did, and he was so convinced He could help him that he took the chance to step out in public to ask him. It was without presumption the Leper stopped Jesus along the road and, in humility on his knees without a doubt in his mind, said to Jesus, *"if You are willing, You CAN make me clean."*

There is no question that Jesus has the power to heal every illness, including our sin. It is in our state of separation from God that we may question Jesus' willingness to heal and forgive us. In the same way as the Leper, we too must present ourselves to Christ in humility, with repentance, asking Him to heal us from the deadly disease of sin. Like the Leper, we all yearn for the loving touch from the One who can and wants to bring us healing.

- How are we like the man in the illustration who needed someone to supply life-saving blood?
- How had Jesus been meeting with people before the encounter with the Leper?

- Why was leprosy so much more problematic for a Jew?
- How do you think the man came to know about Jesus?
- Why does the man say to Jesus, "if You are willing, You can make me clean?"
- What is the disease that separates up from God? Who can make us clean?

Further Reading: 2 Kings 5:1-14

TUESDAY, MARCH 15, 2022

Read: Mark 1:40-45

Scripture Verse: *"Jesus was filled with deep concern. He reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing to do it," he said. "Be 'clean!'" - Mark 1:41*

Today's Thought:

Mark tells of a man with leprosy who stopped Jesus and his disciples on a countryside road. He is blocking the path not to let anyone pass without an encounter. The day's custom was not to go near, encounter, or reach out to touch a person with leprosy. The Leper was on his knees, humbly begging that Jesus stop and heal him. In verse 40, the man had said to Jesus, "if You are willing, I know You can heal me." There was no doubt in this man's mind that Jesus could heal him and believed He would. What incredible faith!

Today, we read in verse 41, "the rest of the story." Upon seeing the man humbly kneeling on the path, Mark writes that Jesus became emotionally moved to deep pity and compassion for him. At this point, we don't know what is going through the disciples' minds, but you have to believe they're terrified. They all knew the consequences of becoming afflicted with such a disease and most likely, took a step back behind Jesus and were shouting "unclean, unclean!" But Jesus, with eyes locked with those of the Leper, lovingly moves forward, reaches out His hand, and touches him! He tells him, "I am willing," and with a word, removed this man's incurable death sentence and cured his illness!

I have to believe the man, along with Jesus' disciples, are bewildered and amazed! Jesus met his physical need and healed the psychological pain and loneliness that was associated with leprosy. With Jesus' touch, He answered any doubts about whether or not God cares about people. As I close today's thought concerning how much God cares for us, the words of John 3:16-17 come to mind, *"God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son. Anyone who believes in him will not die but will have eternal life. "God did not send his Son into the world to judge the world. He sent his Son to save the world through him."* Jesus, by his very actions with the Leper (plus all the other miracles) and on the cross, provides all the proof we need. Jesus, by His death, burial, and resurrection, heals and removes our disease of sin. Do you believe it? Have you repented of your sin and asked Jesus to be the Lord of your life? He stands at the door of your heart and knocks; all you must do is let Him in. I know He's willing. Will you open the door to your heart?

- Had you been there that day, how would you have responded to seeing the Leper blocking your path?
- Describe how you think the interaction went between Jesus and the man with leprosy.
- Why do you think Jesus' wanted his disciples to experience this encounter?
- What do you think the disciples learned? What do you learn?
- Do you think Jesus used this moment to foreshadow an even greater healing yet to come? Why or why not?

Further Reading: Exodus 34:1-9

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 16, 2022

Read: Mark 1:40–45

Scripture Verse: *“Don’t tell this to anyone,” he said. “Go and show yourself to the priest. Offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded. It will be a witness to the priest and the people that you are ‘clean.’”* – Mark 1:44

Today’s Thought:

Jesus has just healed a man with leprosy. He has removed the stigma, the isolation, and the loneliness that came with it. Yet, what happens next probably causes most of us to scratch our heads a bit. The man has got to be overwhelmed with joy and gratitude, right? People are probably going to notice something different about him. I mean, his skin is no longer pale, white, and falling off his body. It seems to me people are going to notice that. And what happens next is what has us all scratching our heads and asking the “why” question.

In verses 43–44, Jesus sends the man away with what we are told are forceful words and a strong warning. The warning Jesus sends him away with is, I know you’re healed, but don’t tell anyone. Why would Jesus do this? Maybe He wants to minimize the attention on His true identity and miracles. Maybe He wants the man to wait until after the priest sees him and declares him clean. However, a better answer might be that Jesus wanted to avoid any misunderstandings that might lead to an early or erroneous response to unwanted popularity. It was essential to Jesus at this stage of His ministry not to declare who He was until His mission was clearly in view. No unnecessary distractions. He would announce his true identity as Messiah soon enough.

Jesus, as he sends the healed man away, gives him several directives:

1. As we have already mentioned, he was not to tell anyone about his cure.
2. He was to show himself to the priest because only the priest could declare him ritually clean.
3. Upon being ritually clean, he was to offer the appropriate sacrifices at the Temple as prescribed by Moses.

And his sacrifice would become a testimony or a witness to all that he was leprosy free.

You see, had the priests declared the Leper clean but rejected the One who cleansed him, it would be incriminating evidence against them of their disbelief that Jesus was the Messiah. After his lengthy, eight-day cleansing process, no one could deny that this man had been afflicted with leprosy. He had been healed and was now able to return restored to community life. And for us, cleansing of the Leper becomes an undeniable sign of the Messiah and shows that God is working in a new way. Jesus came to fulfill the Law and bring us true salvation, to cleanse us from our all sins!

- How would you feel if you had just been healed from leprosy?
- Why does Jesus send the man away instructing not to tell anyone you've been healed?
- What do you think was the overall purpose of Jesus' directives to the man? Do you think it had anything to do with his future interactions with the Pharisees?
- How is the man's healing and restoration to society like our reconciliation to God through Jesus?

Further Reading: Luke 7:22

THURSDAY, MARCH 17, 2022

Read: Mark 1:40–45

Scripture Verse: *“But the man went out and started talking right away. He spread the news to everyone. So Jesus could no longer enter a town openly. He stayed outside in lonely places. But people still came to him from everywhere.”*

– Mark 1:45

Today’s Thought:

We have just witnessed the incredible compassion of Jesus as he broke with the legal custom of the day to reach out and touch a man with leprosy, curing him of the fatal illness. Then Jesus gave him specific instructions to show himself to the priest, go through the ritual cleansing and offer the necessary sacrifices commanded by Moses at the Temple. As onlookers, we seek to question why Jesus would tell this man not to tell anyone of his cure? Why was he permitted to share his treatment with the priest but no one else?

Immediately, the man went out and began to spread the news and speak freely of what had happened to him. Generally, when we think of “spreading the news,” we think of it in favorable terms because it usually refers to the good news of the Gospel. And I can’t help but think I would have done the same thing. If I was struck with a disease that separated me from my family and all of society and someone cured and restored me to public life, I would be shouting it from the rooftops, and so would you! But it was detrimental when we think of it in terms of Jesus’ ministry. The man’s testimony was most likely seen by the Pharisees and Scribes as Jesus condoning the breaking of the law. By his disobedience to Christ, the man initiated the start of many confrontations with the religious establishment. The other problem caused by “spreading the word” of his healing, Jesus was no longer able to enter a town or city openly because of the crowds or religious authorities. So He went back to the countryside where many people came to Him.

Although it looks as if the circumstances of Jesus’ healing would slow or hinder his ministry to the people, the opposite is true. Were people only coming to see miracles and receive what they could get from Him? Or were they genuinely interested in His message? Jesus did have to, at times, take caution when demonstrating His power and authority due to the immense crowds and their motives for coming. But don’t we sometimes do the same thing? We find ourselves in trouble or hurting and

in need, we run to the church for help, but once our need is met, we go right back to the world from where we came. Jesus wants to help us just like He helped the Leper. Even though He expects nothing in return, there are conditions to be met for God's salvation and to receive the gift of eternal life. All we must do is repent of our sins and pledge our faith and allegiance to Jesus, and then as our testimony of new life in Christ, we are baptized. Are you coming to Jesus just for what you can get, or are you truly ready to be healed? Remember, He is always willing.

- What legal custom did Jesus break that was causing a stir?
- What were the reasons Jesus asks the man not to tell anyone?
- Do you think the man's disobedience hindered Jesus' mission or ministry? Why or why not?
- Have you ever used the church or Jesus to get what you wanted then to only turn away? Explain.
- Have you been truly healed? Share your story.
- If not, are you ready to be healed today?

Further Reading: Psalm 38

FRIDAY, MARCH 18, 2022

Read: Mark 2:1-12

Scripture Verse: *"I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." Then Jesus spoke to the man who could not walk. "I tell you," he said, "get up. Take your mat and go home."* – Mark 2:10-11

Today's Thought:

Jesus and the disciples had returned to Capernaum after healing a Leper just a few days before. Most likely, resting from their journey and preparing for the next, while hanging out at Peter's house, a large crowd of uninvited folks began to push their way into and around the house. It became so crowded there was no way in or out for anyone. Never willing to miss an opportunity to teach, Jesus began speaking to the crowd.

Meanwhile, some men, having seen and heard what Jesus had been doing all over the area, carried a paralyzed friend on a mat to Capernaum, hoping to see Jesus. Unfortunately, the crowd gathered was so large they could not get the man into the house, let alone close to Jesus. But the men, filled with great faith, were determined to get their friend to Jesus.

After looking over the dwelling, they realized that most Palestinian homes had outside stairways that led to a flat roof. Determined they would get to Jesus; the men located the stairs and made their way to the top of the house where Jesus was teaching. Working their way across the roof, they came to what looked like a small opening like a skylight today. Not large enough to lower the man through, they began to dismantle the framing and digging through, soon creating an opening large enough to drop (slowly) their friend down right in front of where Jesus was teaching. Jesus, calmly, not bothered at all by the thunderous interruption of his teaching, unexpectedly tells the man his sins are forgiven.

In the Old Testament, disease and death were viewed as the result of a man's sinful condition; thus, healing was predicated on God's forgiveness of sin. Don't misunderstand. There is not a corresponding sickness for every sin. Jesus told them that this man's physical issue resulted from a simple spiritual problem. Of course, the teachers of the Law went ballistic, accusing Jesus of blasphemy. Only God could forgive a man's sins. Jesus knowing what was in their hearts and minds, countered their attack with a question, asking, "Which is easier, to say a man's sins are forgiven or to get up, take your mat and walk?"

Jesus saw the great faith of these men who had brought their friend to him. Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralyzed man, "Son, your sins are forgiven." Surprise, surprise! Jesus doesn't say a word about his illness but declares his sins forgiven. A notable hush must have fallen over the crowd because Jews knew the intimate link between sin and disease. Jesus had just connected the authority of His word with the offering of forgiveness. Hearing His words, there must have been smoke coming out of the Scribes' ears. Jesus' words were bold and above their written Law, meaning Jesus was either a blasphemer or the kingdom of God had come.

Mark has set the tone for us in chapter one to know the answer to who Jesus is. Mark 1:1 announces Jesus as the Son of God. John, the Baptist, declared from the wilderness that "One more powerful" than me has arrived, and God, the Father, confirmed the Sonship of Jesus at his baptism. We can be sure that the kingdom of God has come, and Jesus has the authority to speak for God. Mark has told us from the start that the goal of writing his Gospel was to proclaim and authenticate that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the Messiah.

Finally, hearing no response from the Scribes or the crowd, Jesus commanded the paralytic man to get up, take his mat, and go home. His faith now tested in front of his friends and Christ with a demand to obey, the man immediately, in full view of all, got up fully (spiritually and physically) healed. Everyone who saw this was forced to recognize that this man had received the forgiveness of God! We can now see that the character of God's salvation through Christ brings a healing that is whole and complete. The crowd was out of their minds with amazement, and all the people praised God due to Jesus' supernatural display of power. The world would no longer function under the Law but under the grace of Jesus, who knows what's in the heart!

- What were Jesus and the disciples doing in Capernaum?
- Describe the seen Mark shares as you picture it in your mind.
- Why do you think these men were bringing their friend to Jesus? How might they know where Jesus is and what He can do?
- Why were the Pharisees up in arms about what Jesus said?
- What in your mind is the result of Jesus' teaching in this narrative? What does it teach you about salvation?

Further Reading: Matthew 9:6; Luke 5:24

NOTES



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