

Miracle 7: JESUS CLEANSSES THE FIRST LEPER

Mark 1:40-45; Luke 5:12-16

Mark 1:40-45--40 And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. 41 And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth *his* hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean. 42 And as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed. 43 And he straitly charged him, and forthwith sent him away; 44 And saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man: but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them. 45 But he went out, and began to publish *it* much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places: and they came to him from every quarter.

Luke 5:12-16- 12 And it came to pass, when he was in a certain city, behold a man full of leprosy: who seeing Jesus fell on *his* face, and besought him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. 13 And he put forth *his* hand, and touched him, saying, I will: be thou clean. And immediately the leprosy departed from him. 14 And he charged him to tell no man: but go, and shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing, according as Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them. 15 But so much the more went there a fame abroad of him: and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by him of their infirmities. 16 And he withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed.

The Context: (1:40; 5:12): Following the first miraculous catch of fish on the Sea of Galilee, Jesus continued preaching in the Galilean synagogues. Four contextual observations:

- 1) Luke tells us He (Jesus) was in a certain unnamed city (possibly Bethsaida),
- 2) “Behold” (an exclamatory word meaning Look! Behold!) a man “full of leprosy” (medical description by Dr. Luke of a leper thoroughly covered with that loathsome disease) approached Jesus. Behold, because this was a violation of the rules and regulations concerning lepers. They were not allowed to enter most cities, were to shout “Unclean! Unclean” when approaching anyone, and were not to be within six feet of anyone (social distancing of Covid-19?).
- 3) This leper “beseeches” (urges to take action) and “begs” (entreats) Jesus by kneeling down and falling on his face. This leper’s request is a desperate, reverent, submissive, believing acknowledgement of personal need. The leper says, “Lord” (not mentioned by Mark; but showing submissiveness) “If” (a request, not a demand) “Thou wilt, thou can cleanse me.” He demonstrated faith in Jesus’ power to cleanse him, but he was unsure of Jesus’ willingness to cleanse him (perhaps doubting his worthiness).
- 4) He believed in Jesus’ omnipotent power (“can” Greek present tense *dunamai* meaning continuously able; to have the power) to cleanse from the extremist severity of this disease. Do we believe in Jesus’ power to cleanse us from the extreme severity of the total depravity of sin of which everyone of us needs cleansing by the blood of Jesus Christ?

Jesus’ Response (1:41a; 5:13a): Four observations concerning Jesus’ response:

- 1) Jesus was “moved with compassion” (it means to sympathize with, to pity) concerning the sad and deplorable case of this man’s disease.
- 2) Jesus allowed the leper to approach Him, heard the man’s faith, and was not repulsed by the scaly leprosy.

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- 3) Instead, He reached out His hand and touched him. Jesus touched the untouchable; and this touch brought cleansing not ceremonial defilement (touching lepers was prohibited by Jewish law because it defiled the person touching the leper (Lev. 5:3). This leper had not felt the touch of another person in years, even isolated from his own family. But Jesus touched him; not because He had to touch him to heal him (He healed others by words only), He chose to touch him.
- 4) When reading this miracle in 1963, Bill Gaither wrote the song, “He Touched Me” applying this miracle to the love and compassion of Jesus in choosing to touch us through His death and resurrection by which we obtain eternal life.

The miracle 1:41b-42; 5:13b): Observe the following:

- 1) Jesus says to the leper, “I am (continually) willing; be thou clean” (imperative command). “Immediately the leprosy departed from him and he was cleansed.”
- 2) The suddenness of this cure and its completeness can be reproduced in anyone who by faith calls upon Jesus to save them from the dreadful disease of sin (Rom. 10:13). Jesus is always willing to cleanse anyone defiled by Adam’s fall and personal sin (Rom. 5:12; 6:23). We are all spiritual lepers in God’s sight; and Jesus Christ became sin for us that we might be made clean (2 Cor. 5:21; I Pet. 2:24).

Jesus’ Requests (1:43-44; 5:14): There were two requests by Jesus:

- 1) Jesus sternly forbid (straightly charged- military word requiring unhesitating and unqualified obedience) the man to tell anyone.
- 2) He was to go and show himself as a testimony. The cleansed man would be walking, living proof of the miracle. The man was to immediately (forthwith) go to the priest and show himself (as a visual demonstration), plus offer for his cleansing those things which Moses commanded (Lev. 14:4, 10, 21-22, 30-32- an eight-day process).

The man’s response (1:45a; 5:15): Observe four things about the man’s responses:

- 1) “But” (term of contrast), the man disobeyed Jesus.
- 2) The man went out and “began” (Aorist tense—started and continued) to “publish” (to herald; town-crier concept) it much and to “blaze abroad” (to spread the news) the matter (word-logos).
- 3) Sadly, one of the best ways to spread something is to tell people not to tell. Some say the man was so thrilled he could not contain himself, but never make excuses for those doing what Christ asked them not to do. The Scriptures never tell us if he even went to the priest; and he certainly did not immediately.
- 4) Why did Jesus command him not to tell? Seven potential reasons are: 1) it made His miracles overshadow His teaching; 2) it made the priests, Pharisees, and scribes envious; 3) it made it so He could not openly enter into some cities; 4) it caused the crowds to not be content with miracles, but to demand more miracles; 5) it forced Jesus and His disciples to seek for solitude in the desert places; 6) it caused some to want and attempt to make Him King; and 7) it hindered Christ’s overall ministry because His time had not yet come (John 2:4; 7:30).

The results (1:45b; 5:16): Many of the reasons Jesus said not to tell happened:

- 1) Jesus was withdrawing (slipping away) into the deserts (uninhabited places) and was praying (present tense of proseuchomai—general word for prayer). No crowds, no miracles, just communing with the Father.
- 2) Jesus regularly, vigorously, pursued prayerful solitude; always depending on His Father (John 5:19) and submitting to His Father’s will (John 5:30).
- 3) If Jesus needed private prayer in the busiest times as the God-man; how much more do we need “re-fuel” with private prayer as we walk in the same manner as Jesus walked (I John 2:6)?
- 4) Jesus balanced service (teaching, preaching, discipling, miracles), and prayerful solitude (to restore His soul for further ministry). Does our prayer life resemble Jesus’?