

A Wonderfully Willing Heart

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[0 : 0 0] And so I'll ask you to turn to the Gospel of Mark. And let's see if we can pull that up. I'm clicking and not. Did it go to sleep on me?

Try again. There we go, brother. Thank you. All good. A wonderfully willing heart is the title of my message. You see that we're in Mark chapter 1. Now I'll go ahead and tell you before we read the passage that I'm zeroing in this morning on the theme of Jesus' compassion, even as I did last Sunday.

Now that has been your pastor's focus over the last few weeks as I've read the Scriptures, as I've prayed, got on my face before the Lord, just rejoicing in the compassion and mercy of Almighty God on my life.

I don't deserve the grace, the mercy, the tenderness, the love and the forgiveness of God in my life. I do not deserve that. I don't deserve to be your pastor. There's nothing about me that sets me apart from you that makes me more worthy to do this than you doing this.

I'm called to do it, and so I must do it. I must answer the Lord in faithfulness. But like you, I am in need of forgiveness of sin, mercy, grace, and love for me to be the husband and father and pastor and friend that I need to be in my life.

[1 : 2 4] So as we come to this passage, I want to make an especially big deal and focused effort on the compassion that Jesus is showing in this account.

And I chose it like I did last week because Mark actually mentions that theme by name. He actually identifies the compassion of Jesus in this story.

Look with me, if you would, at Mark chapter 1, verse 40, as we jump right into the middle of a very, very busy public day in the ministry of our Lord.

And a leper came to Jesus, beseeching him and falling on his knees before him and saying, If you are willing, you can make me clean.

Well, moved with compassion, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him and said to him, I am willing.

[2 : 2 3] Be cleansed. Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed. And Jesus sternly warned him and immediately sent him away.

And he 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 as a testimony to them.

But he went out and began to proclaim it freely and to spread the news around to such an extent that Jesus can no longer publicly enter a city, but stayed out in unpopulated areas and they were coming to him from everywhere.

Now, interestingly, our passage opens with this horribly, horribly diseased and disfigured man coming to Jesus and asking for healing so that right away we're introduced to the only two characters in Mark's account of what happened here.

We have the leper and we have the Lord. That's it. But this is high drama. This is written in a fashion by Mark, which is his custom, to keep the story moving rapidly in one dramatic event after the other.

[3 : 41] And it's easy for us who are familiar with stories like this in the Bible, particularly the Gospels, to read this and kind of move through it and go to the next thing. And as my brother Greg mentioned to you earlier, we're trying to help us all slow down in terms of our Bible reading plan this year.

That's just the approach and emphasis we want to take. We take that same emphasis now as we look at this story. We need to slow down and take slowly, word for word, the account that Mark's given us because every word is important and every word helps us better understand what's going on.

Now, for those of you who've been here for a while, you know that your pastor, when I read in the Gospels or the stories of the Old Testament that offer these true accounts and the happenings and circumstances of human beings, I love to put myself or insert myself right into the drama that's happening.

I want to smell the dust and the sweat. I want to feel the atmosphere charged with the electricity of Jesus Christ doing these crazy, crazy things in the minds of men.

Doing things that blow, as we would say, blow people's minds and leave people standing there arrested and without words to even describe what they've just seen.

[4 : 55] I want us to be right in the thick of all of it, to feel the press of the crowd, to hear the gasps that come as Jesus does things that are astonishing and even outrageous.

We need to be there and we need to understand what Mark's trying to do and drawing us into the drama. We don't always do that. When Paul writes in the epistles and gives us line upon line of truth, he's not trying to draw us into the drama as such.

He's trying to impress on our minds the weight of the truth that's coming to bear from what he's saying. Here, Mark is trying to get us to come into the story.

Come into the moment. Feel what's happening. Understand the context and the history of what these people would have been feeling and experiencing as they stood there and watched this interchange between this upstart rabbi who's just come on to the scene and announced his public ministry.

And now this is happening and they're watching this happening and they're realizing this guy's like no other rabbi we've ever seen in our lives. We've never heard things like this come out of any rabbi's mouth.

[6 : 05] We've never seen any rabbi do what this man does. What does it mean that he can say and do these things in the ways that he does? What does it mean? What does it tell us about who he is?

This is what Mark's trying to convey to us through this particular story. I can tell you this devout Jews were scandalized. Gentiles were horrified at this encounter.

Nobody was standing there going oh bless his heart look at that. Nobody was doing that. They were horrified and scandalized at what Jesus is saying and doing with this man.

They want to run up and say are you out of your mind? Rabbi, please. You're breaking every convention of the day. Why?

Why? What does the label leper mean for this man in our passage and at this particular time in this culture in history?

[7 : 18] What does it mean? Well, there's a ton of background on leprosy in the scriptures. I'm going to take you to one place in particular and we're just going to look at it really quickly because I just don't have the time.

Bless you. I don't have the time to camp out here but I think I can give you a flavor for those of you who might not be familiar with how the Bible speaks to this issue in the context of this time and culture.

So we're in Leviticus chapter 13. So hold on to Mark chapter 1 and I'll put this up here for your reference for your notes. This is where we'll be. Now I can't read all of 13 and all of chapter 14.

I'll just give you a few verses in 13 to show you what's being said. Then the Lord spoke to Moses and to Aaron chapter 13 verse 1 saying when a man has on the skin of his body a swelling or a scab or a bright spot and it becomes an infection of leprosy on the skin of his body then he shall be brought to Aaron the priest or to one of his sons the priest.

So in other words whenever you find out you've got leprosy you have to go to the priest. That's just period. That's what they have to do. The priest shall look at the mark on the skin of the body and if the hair in the infection has turned white and the infection appears to be deeper than the skin of his body it is an infection of leprosy.

[8 : 49] When the priest has looked at him he shall pronounce him unclean. Now how about that? How would you like to go to your priest and leave under the pronouncement of unclean?

There you go. See you later. Unclean. And that's what you live with now. Listen to me now. That's not just what is going on with you.

That's who you are. That's how you'll be known in society now. The unclean one. You know most of us spend a good bit of time worrying about what other people think about us.

Hoping to put our best foot forward. Walking into a room and hoping that we come off looking pretty cool and collected. How would you like to walk around with the moniker and label unclean all the time?

Well it gets better. Listen to this. Verse 4. But if the bright spot is white on the skin of his body and it does not appear to be deeper than the skin and the hair on it has not turned white then the priest shall isolate him who has the infection for seven days.

[9 : 56] So quarantine. The priest shall look at him on the seventh day and if in his eyes the infection is not changed and the infection is not spread on the skin then the priest shall isolate him for seven more days.

So seven more days of quarantine. The priest shall look at him again on the seventh day and if the infection has faded and the mark is not spread on the skin then the priest shall pronounce him clean.

It is only a scab and he shall wash his clothes and he shall be clean. Okay now it goes on and it says a lot more about leprosy and what to do with it and how to handle it but I want to take you to verse 45.

Would you look at verse 45 of chapter 13? As for the leper who has the infection so now we have a guy who was quarantined and it's been determined by the priest it is leprosy and so now he's been pronounced unclean.

What does it say? His clothes shall be torn. That is a sign of disgrace and mourning and the hair of his head shall be uncovered and he shall cover his mustache and cry unclean!

[11 : 08] Unclean! He shall remain unclean all the days during which he has the infection. He is unclean. He is unclean.

Not he has leprosy. He is unclean. He shall live alone. His dwelling shall be outside the camp.

Then you go to Leviticus 14 and you read another full chapter about all that's going on with dealing with people who have leprosy and by the time you finish chapters 13 and 14 in the book of Leviticus you will have read 116 verses on how to deal with leprosy.

The main point of this is to show you from scripture that this is a matter of you personally being unclean in the sight of God and in the sight of the people of God and you are ostracized quarantined from society for life or at least as long as you have this disease which at this time was incurable.

there was no cure for this. So you live alone and isolated from everybody and anytime you do have to be anywhere in the proximity of the public you are required to cover your face and holler unclean unclean as you go through so that everybody can disperse and get out of the way.

[12 : 44] that's your life. You're alone and when you're having to be around people you have to declare what the priests have declared you to be.

Is this cruel of God? Is this cruel of the priests? No, there's a purpose behind it all and you're about to see some of that purpose. Today in our time this condition is known as Hansen's disease.

We still have it among us today. It is treatable. It is treatable. It could have been treatable then. In antiquity though there was no cure.

Lepers were isolated from community life. They were cut off from all human contact. No touching, no hugging, no handshaking, nothing. For as long as they had the disease.

They suffered and died alone as filthy outcasts. That's how people looked at them. If you were a leper your life was a living death. Your inner and outer flesh left you with no reason to hope.

[13 : 54] None whatsoever. Now the Jewish word or the Hebrew word for unclean is tame. Tame.

Tame is often translated defiled. Defiled. Now that's a word that we rarely hear or use in the English vernacular today. In Jesus' time anyone with leprosy was tame.

That is they were unclean. They were defiled. They were foul. They were polluted or impure. In the Old Testament there were five categories that you could be pronounced defiled or unclean or polluted in regards to.

Here they are. Physically, sexually, morally, ceremonially, and religiously. So defilement in this case applies to lepers both morally and physically.

There's a reason those two emphases come to the fore. It's obvious to everybody that they are physically diseased. But what the Hebrews would then do is translate that physical disease into the obvious idea or proof of an inner spiritual disease, sin.

[15 : 16] They're lepers because of sin in their lives. So this is the outward expression of an inward filth. And that's how they have to live their lives.

With what you and I would want to hide in the way of our sin in public, I'm sure that not many of us would want to stand up right now at the behest of the pastor and say, please would you stand up and rehearse all of your sins from last week for us, Melody?

Or let me go first and be the example. How many of us would want to do that? And I mean total honesty so that the Holy Spirit would be on you in a way where you couldn't lie one bit about it and you had to give us the gory details.

Well, first of all, you wouldn't want to do that. Second of all, we don't want to hear it. Right? I wouldn't want to stay in this room and listen to that. And I certainly wouldn't want to be the first one to lead by example and hold all of that up.

It's enough and it's hard enough to go to the Lord and deal with it. Much less look you in the eye and have to confess it. This guy had to live his entire life wearing his sin out in the public domain.

[16 : 29] At least that's how the Jews thought of it. That's how they interpret it. Leprosy then was a sign of sin in your life. It was viewed as an outward sign of an inner sinful defilement or pollution.

So you wore that mark of your inner spiritual foulness on your body for everybody to see and everybody to scorn. Now how would you like to be looked on as something foul?

How would you like to go through your life with everybody looking at you and the first thing they think of when they see you from a distance is foul, filthy, unclean, stay away from me, move, move, move, go over there.

This is his life. We need to understand culturally and historically what it was like for people like this to live under this disease. rabbis and religious leaders in particular would become ceremonially unclean by coming into contact with a leper or coming into contact with something a leper has touched.

So rabbis feared and avoided lepers at all costs. It wasn't just the disease itself they were afraid of catching as it were which you can't.

[17 : 54] They were also afraid of what the disease would do to them spiritually. Your inner filth if it gets on me will make me filthy and now I've got to ceremonially go and deal with all of that for sometimes weeks at a time.

But there was one rabbi just one led by love he defied that convention.

Not only did he step out of the way or run away when this man came up and fell literally into the dirt in front of him. Jesus didn't jump back like a rattlesnake had just landed in front of him.

Jesus stood his ground and looked down at this man and did not move an inch. quite the opposite. At one point Jesus moved toward him and I can imagine Mark the gasps as they saw Jesus step forward and begin to move toward this diseased filthy foul polluted corrupt piece of trash in everybody's mind that everybody went what is he doing?

has he lost his mind? He really is crazy. Everybody's saying he's crazy. He's crazy. He is crazy. Isn't it something that because of the sin that we have to deal with in our lives we don't recognize love when we should and call it something else?

[19 : 45] that's what sin does. It makes us call black white white black night day day night well there's this one rabbi and against all convention of the day he loves this man.

That's just astounding. So what we'll deal with as we move into this we'll deal with a leper's wretched life. And a leper came to him.

Boy I tell you those are some of the most powerful and beautiful words in the Bible. When you understand who this man is and what this man risked in doing it and a leper came to not just anybody you see that capital H to him to him his need made him desperate.

will this is what was at stake. It was a matter of what would define this man. Will this disease dictate his life or something else or maybe someone else.

Maybe this guy that I've heard about maybe he will be the difference for me. will defilement go on dominating and debilitating and disgracing this man.

[21 : 13] Well the scripture says in an economy of words and a leper came to Jesus. A leper came to Jesus.

What if it had said and a leper came to Jeff. You know the best I can do. let me introduce you to Jesus.

Let's get you past me and let me introduce you to the one who can heal your soul and make you whole. Because I'm just like you brother.

I've got leprosy too. And it's all in my heart. And I had to come to him and here's what I found. That's what we do.

That's why we celebrate. This is why we're in this room singing and praying and believing. Because Jesus Christ is the difference. Luke the physician described this leper as full of leprosy.

[22 : 25] That's Luke's description. Very vivid. Full. Complete. With leprosy. That's in chapter 5 of Luke verses 12 through 16.

This man's condition was so serious because his disease was very advanced. And that's Dr. Luke. Luke was a physician. And so Luke is weighing in from a doctor's perspective and he's telling us this was a very advanced life threatening case of leprosy.

It was clear to everyone that this man from head to toe was eaten with this disease. Now when you consider Leviticus 13 45 and 46 unclean unclean it is remarkable that this man would come to Jesus.

He was commanded to remain removed and isolated from society whatever he did move about whenever that happened he had to shout that warning of unclean unclean as he went but even so isolated from society the news had finally reached this guy about Jesus he had heard there is a man unlike any other man a rabbi even who makes people whole and I can only imagine what it was like for him in the moments that he heard that first whispered in the leper colony what wait just a minute come wait a minute say that again what did you say yeah no no no it's buzzing everywhere we're hearing about this guy this man and he's even a rabbi and he makes people whole what did he do what do you mean makes them whole oh there was a guy who was demon possessed and they were in the synagogue and and he drove the demons out we we saw it with our own eyes he teaches like nobody we've ever heard there was another man with a withered arm didn't even have a complete limb and we watched him touch him and it grew another arm whole and complete what yes yes we have seen him do these things people with fevers heal people with diseases he started this ministry where this is what he's doing can you imagine what this guy thought in those moments could this be my hope but then in his mind he probably thought no wait a minute now

I can't even get close to him how how will I ever find hope in this man when I can't even get near him he's so foul he's so far gone he's so disgusting to himself and to anyone who sees him isn't it asking too much to think that even this rabbi would help a wretch like me you ever thought that you ever been there God I keep doing this sin over and over why would you even listen to me anymore well I'll tell you what drove him hope God is drawing him to a moment in time where he's going to encounter the God of the universe in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ the

[26 : 08] God who made him and made his soul and created him for this moment he had to come into town to come to Jesus and in this one act he risked being stoned to death that was the penalty for what he did caught exposed the people would stone him to death I'm sure that he thought probably like I would what do I have to lose so they put me out of my misery finally he had a desperate desire to be healed and he knew just enough about Jesus to know that Jesus Christ was not like the other rabbis he wasn't like the other religious leaders something very different about this guy so here's the point he knew who to go to he knew who to go to so he brought his desperate hope to the only person who could fulfill that hope everybody else would have let him down but not

Jesus it was all or nothing and in his mind it was worth the risk so notice what the text tells us in verse 40 and a leper came to Jesus now notice beseeching him that's a powerful word and falling on his knees before him beseeching him and falling on his knees before him what do you see here you see humility you see brokenness his need not only made him desperate it made him humble it humbled him the reality of a repentant contrite or broken heart is reflected in the posture and demeanor of a humble person now why do I say this because the scripture is making a big deal of this man's posture this man's attitude this man's willingness to literally risk his life to come and fall down in public before this rabbi any other rabbi would have said stone him stone him but not

Jesus I have in my 30 years of ministry to this point encountered many many people who have been weighed down with sin in their lives and it has always kind of arrested me to sit down with them at a point where they're seeking help only to hear them reflect anger and pride and a desire for the problem to go away and I see very little humility if anything very little brokenness very little contriteness or repentance in their life they're just mad they feel slighted they're feeling sorry for themselves well this man is broken people have asked me before I remember one time talking with a parent who had an adult child grown up and this person was struggling with enslavement to alcohol and they asked me does a person have to hit rock bottom before they turned to

God and I said no that's up to God your question asked the question like it was up to us it's not it's up to God not everybody has to get to their absolute worst in order to turn to Jesus even when they're struggling against something that's dominating their life all of us at one time were dominated by sin maybe it wasn't alcohol or drugs maybe it was something so no not everybody has to crash and burn and lose everything before they turn to Christ that's up to God the timing in this man's life we see him coming before the Lord in a posture of brokenness and utter humility he is undone and at the end of his rope and so what does he do well the text tells us in very strong terms he pleads with Jesus that's sobbing his eyes out perhaps barely understandable scared to death on the verge of knowing that he could be killed at any moment throwing himself down in the dirt before

Jesus falling to his knees Luke adds that he put his face to the ground do you understand what the picture is here the man has fallen down on the ground and he has bent over on the ground and he has put his face in the dirt he is talking into the dirt he won't even look up at Jesus he himself feels I am unworthy to look at you now I don't know about you but there have been times in my life where I was on the ground looking in to the floor and didn't even feel like I could lift my head to heaven if you haven't felt that you haven't encountered Jesus in his holiness and purity and love and the only reason that we can look up from that posture is because we come to the place to know that he does love us and that he is willing what is

[32 : 02] Jesus going to tell him oh I am willing I'm willing I'm willing I'm willing you need to see the emotion of the moment because it's very emotional this man knows that he shouldn't be doing what he's doing so he throws himself down completely at the mercy of Jesus he speaks into the dirt and the dust and says if you are willing if you are willing and the reason that he's saying that is because he's never found anybody able to help him much less willing to help him nobody in all of his life and so we come to the place where his very life rests on the willingness of this rabbi this man's life hangs in the balance in Jesus hand one word from the

Lord and he's done and so that brings us to this man's faith how can we ignore that his faith helped him hope and trust in Jesus now notice what the man wanted and asked for notice what the you emphasis here you can make me clean this man is saying you can do this nobody else can do this but you can do it I know you can do it everything about this man's request suggests that he not only was humbled by his disease but he was hopeful toward the Lord so he was humble and he was hopeful that's the work of God in the human soul is it not to make us hopeful and humble in that humility we have hope see this is so important people because people look at your life and they say this they say

I just found out my five year old daughter has leukemia and I can't cure her I can't heal her I can't give her something from me that would cost me so that she could live I can't do it and you come face to face with your weakness your humanity your inability and you find in one person the hope to go forward and people see it in you and they say how can you have this happen and be so sad and grieve so deeply and yet have the hope that you have and this is your response every time Jesus Christ Jesus Christ lives in me and he gives me that hope or everything that we believe is for nothing if we can't get to the hardest places of our lives and have hope in Jesus Christ beyond ourselves beyond disease and sickness and sin beyond constantly having to fight against the things that drag us down and want to shame us we are people who live by the truth and here's the truth you can make me clean that's the truth you can make me clean clean here has both a physical and spiritual meaning physically it simply means what you would think it's to be cleaned from the physical stains the dirt as in you would wash a utensil or wash something up after you eat spiritually though it means to be free from defilement of sin and from faults to purify from wickedness and we all have that we don't have leprosy in our skin but we have leprosy in our hearts

I'll speak to that in a moment the context of the passage is going to make clear which meaning is to be applied here as you might have guessed it's both the leper seems to be saying this you can heal me of the leprosy and take away the defilement as well one of the commentators that I consulted Sinclair Ferguson said it so well here's what Sinclair said I'll put it up here for you to see the leper wanted to be free from the disease but perhaps even more he longed to be free from the stigma that is the isolation and rejection which belonged to it oh absolutely without a doubt the leper bowed his heart before Jesus in humility he believed that Jesus could physically heal him and he believed that Jesus could remove the shame and disgrace of him being an outcast in society you can take away the filth of my soul you can change this from you are unclean to you are clean you as a human being so when he asked to be cleansed he was asking

Jesus please please please make me whole don't just heal my leprosy make me whole make my soul whole why did he pray that because this man knew something about the shame and disgrace of sin he felt it and lived it we sing a song that has these lyrics I will arise and go to Jesus he will embrace me in his arms in the arms of my dear savior oh there are ten thousand charms and so why would we not run to him especially when we sin well this is what we see Jesus do next in the way of these charms it's the Lord's willing love we move from that wretch to the

[38 : 14] Lord's willing love and we see here in verse 41 is compassion only Mark mentions the compassion of Jesus toward this man so the other gospel writers have have something to say about this incident but only Mark steps back and actually uses compassion as an expression of what was going on in Jesus Christ at this moment only Mark last week in chapter if you were here last week in Mark chapter 6 I brought a different story to you where Jesus fed the 5,000 by the miracle of the loaves and fishes and in that account Mark also used the word compassion but he used a different word for compassion then that he's using now a very different word and so the question is this

Mark why are you using in one context of Jesus compassion one word and in another context a different word but you're conveying very similar sentiments from Jesus life and heart that Jesus felt a deep empathy concern and care for this man it was as if Jesus were himself living in this leprous state that's what we're talking about why would he use two different words the same author within a few chapters of each other to describe what's going on in Jesus well here's the answer listen one of our oldest and most important Greek manuscripts where we take this story from depicts Mark using the word and here it is I'm going to put it up here for you right in the middle of the screen or gist or gist it is a word that means angry enraged or exasperated so what's

Mark saying well the word that's actually used here that's literally rendered would read this way then moved with anger moved with enragement moved with exasperation Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him was he angry with this man was he exasperated with this guy is Jesus standing there cop in an attitude with the hip and the hands you people constantly bringing me this nonsense don't you know I'm the messiah I've got bigger and better things to do no so what is it then is he mad at the guy fed up impatient how are we supposed to understand Mark's point here because he is making an important point and you know I'm going to slow down here because my whole message is built around the theme of the compassion of Jesus as it's how does this translate to compassion in

Mark's gospel if the word is literally rendered from the Greek angry enraged or exasperated how does it come over this way all right I'm going to give you now a principle of using scripture to interpret scripture and talk to you about far context and near context so these are principles of Bible interpretation that you learn to use and make use of as you try to come to terms with things like this tensions particularly in verses and so in the far context that is in a context of this something similar that's further away from or further removed from in scripture than say something right in the same chapter or in the same book let me just mention I'll put it up here on the screen so don't turn there in Judges chapter 10 verse 16 we have a similar expression in the Hebrew not the Greek the Hebrew as it refers to God's heart toward the repentant

Israelites in other words in this passage I'm about to put on the screen we're talking about Israelites who have suffered greatly due to their sins and how God is now responding to them as they repent as they are broken and contrite similar to the way this leper is coming to Jesus what did God say and do in regard to these repentant Israelites in the book of Judges where they are repeatedly coming and sinning before the Lord and the Lord forgives them and then a little time goes by and now they do it again and find themselves right back there pleading with God to forgive them well here's the verse so they put away the foreign gods the idols from among them the Israelites did and what did they do serve the Lord and he God could bear the misery of

[43 : 32] Israel no longer do you see that he could bear the misery of his people no longer had grown short with the misery of this man in other words he could bear no longer the misery of this man's soul and condition it was on Jesus so hard that he just couldn't bear it for the guy anymore you see that depth of that the depth of Jesus is caring I don't want you to miss that because it's precious to you as a

Christian that's Jesus his heart let me put this up here this is the way one commentator explain some of this he could bear the misery of Israel no longer here's how one guy said it and I thought it was very appropriate God became indignant over the misery of Israel much as Jesus does here with the leper if anger was the original reading and I believe it was it must clearly mean then that Jesus was indignant at the misery of the leper see also John 11 for Jesus willingly healed him there's our clue that Jesus isn't mad at this guy Jesus is having mercy on this guy Jesus is indignant or upset with the misery that this leper is having to endure because of sin and disease so as though the leprosy were dispelled by holy wrath

Mark declares immediately the leprosy left him and was cured how did Jesus react to this guy respond to this guy coming and falling down face in the dirt and speaking into the dirt well Jesus dispelled this man's disease and sin by holy wrath Jesus is holy anger against what sin was doing to this man and how it had made him such a wretch it angered Jesus to see that happening to one of his people that he made and so Jesus healed him and had mercy on him now let me go a little further again you know I'm camping out here just a little bit to give you the force of this closer than that's the far context that might help a little bit for us to understand God's heart in this the heart of our God but now come over into a closer or nearer context of a similar kind of issue and we go to the

Gospels we have passages in the Gospels showing that Jesus is angry at forces that oppose God. God opposes sin and death and disease; those are our enemies, aren't we? We're told in the scripture that one day we will have those things conquered for all eternity as we go to heaven where there's no tears, no disease, no sadness, no death, right? And this is our celebration so that we know that all that we're enduring here is just for a little while, but eternity is for eternity, it's forever, and this is a good, good thing. Jesus then is angry at forces that oppose God, and we see examples of this in the Gospels. In fact, we see three examples of this in our chapter in Mark alone. In chapter one, let me put it up here and show you how it breaks down. Jesus is angry at forces that oppose God in Mark chapter one where we are in verse 25, he is angry at demons; then here's our leprosy in verse 41; then in verse 43, he's angry at the disobedient who stand against obedience to

God, the father, to bring him glory in their obedience. He's angry against the force of Satan working in these people's lives. He's angry at the wicked and hypocritical and people who judge and look down their nose while at the same time living in their own secret sin, and then the unbelieving people who refuse to believe in God, believe in Christ, and seek the forgiveness for their sins in Jesus alone. These are forces that Jesus is angry about because these are forces that oppose God, and that's what we have in this leprosy man coming before the Lord. Jesus is angry at the leprosy, the leprosy that opposes the will of God and purpose of God for this human being, and Jesus is going to set him free from it. The man's deep misery made a deep impression on the Lord Jesus, and so from his deep compassion, Jesus dispelled the illness and the sin by his holy wrath. He took away what was diseased and disfiguring about this man's poor soul. His compassion moves him to do a most astonishing and even outrageous thing that I mentioned to you earlier, especially for a rabbi, not only did

[49 : 24] Jesus say what he said, but what does the text tell us? Moved with compassion, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, and then he said to him, "I am willing, be cleansed." But he touched him first. Before he said a word, he reached out. As he looked down at this man, this man apparently with his face in the dirt, didn't know it was coming. Can you imagine the surprise and shock when he felt the warmth of a human hand on him for the first time? In God knows how long, and what that must have been like, the power that he felt surged through his soul because immediately Mark says immediately the man felt the energy of being healed. It left him like that, one minute he's disfigured and advanced with leprosy, he's eaten him alive, and the next minute it is gone, and he's laying in the dirt, completely cleansed. Jesus touched him before he ever said anything, boy, that's a hallelujah moment.

I hope in your soul right now you're saying, "I'm so glad I know Jesus, I'm so glad he's my Lord, I'm so glad he touched me that way, he's worthy, I can have joy in Jesus, and I can be sad at the same time because Jesus is Lord and King, and once he forgives a soul, it's forgiveness for eternity, it can't go away as down as you might get as hard as life might get. Life can't take Jesus away from you, beloved, your Lord loves you and owns you, and will bring you to heaven. His compassion is greater than your sin. Run to Jesus, people, run to Jesus and find in him the love, forgiveness, and mercy that he extends to sinners. It's the greatest message humanity's ever heard, it is indeed the gospel, the good news of almighty

God. Jesus is indignant with what is holding this man down, and so he chose to touch him. What an outrageous thing for a rabbi to do, separation, that is the baneful, deadly reality of sin. Sin separates us from each other and from God, it destroys, disgraces, and decays us. Jesus destroys sin, Jesus destroys the destroyer, he brings wholeness of life where others were repelled and fearful by the mere sight of this leper. Jesus reaches out and touches him with the touch of life, he gave life to this man, it was a touch that transformed his very soul, not just his disease on the outside where other people could not and would not help the leper.

Jesus willingly did what only Jesus could do he made the man whole whole a whole soul not a separated soul instead of the leper making Jesus impure with his disease Jesus made the leper pure from the disease what a miracle anybody else who would have touched him would have been polluted and made unclean not Jesus instead of Jesus becoming unclean he made the leper clean this is what Jesus does with our spiritual leprosy don't miss this now the spiritual leprosy that all of us have as a disease of our soul is called sin and by God's grace grace is God's undeserved favor whenever you hear Christians talk about grace they're talking about God shedding his favor on people who don't deserve it his love his kindness his patience his goodness

God shows each of us that we too are full of leprosy that's Luke's account full of leprosy we're full of sin and one of the worst aspects about you having sin and me having sin is that sin separates I'll put it up here sin separates how does it do that it separates you from health love it separates you from yourself you see these people running around here with all these gender identity issues and all this kind of thing boys trying to become girls girls that is the expression of sin splitting a human soul that's what that is think of it biblically folks think of it theologically there's nothing about that that they were born with other than sin they were born in sin sin separates the human soul it just tears it to pieces it imprisons it it separates you from the wisdom of God the hope of God the peace of God and from knowing God in Christ

[54 : 51] Jesus but God opens our spiritual eyes he reveals to each of us the defilement and deep need of our leprous hearts say Jeff can God touch my heart yeah he does it all the time by touching your heart with his gift of saving faith Jesus is saying I am willing friend I am willing to take on your leprosy and become unclean for you and in place of your uncleanness I willingly give you my cleanness now listen I have got to make a comment or two about what I just said because there is aberrant theology there is false teaching out there about what I just said and it can easily be misconstrued misunderstood and misapplied in your life I am going to say the phrase again and then

I am going to explain to you why it is important for you to distinguish between what I am saying and what false teachers are saying and I will show you how I do it Jesus is saying in effect I am willing to take on your leprosy and become unclean for you and in place of your uncleanness I willingly give you my cleanness in exchange I trade you your sin for my sinlessness so I get your bad and you get my perfect but now let me explain this becoming unclean for you Joel Osteen false teacher that he is actually says that on the cross Jesus Christ in his nature became a sinner false no he did not if Jesus became a sinner in his nature on the cross that puts him in the same place you and

I am in with the same dilemma now he's in need of a savior that is not what happened on the cross say now wait a minute Jeff the apostle Paul says that's exactly what happened on the cross really where does it say that 2nd Corinthians 5:21 alright let's go to 2nd Corinthians 5:21 he made him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf the righteousness of God in him well obviously we're talking about God the father doing something in God the son and so the idea here is Jeff doesn't he say he made him that is God made Jesus who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf well there it is right there Joel's right no he's not because that's not what Paul's trying to convey here he is using language of what happened on the cross the depth of what happened on the cross what happened on the cross was

Jesus substituted himself and allowed the Lord God to lay your sins on his son as if his son had actually committed them and not you Jesus did not become sin in his nature he had your sin laid on him as if I would walk up with a giant bundle of thorns and filth and smelly junky yuck which is my sin and I put it on his back and then I step back away and there he is on the cross bearing that for Jeff Jackson it hasn't changed his nature he is just weighing it by his nature he is supporting it by who he is only he can do that why because he didn't have any sin of his own and so all of the sins that he died for were the sins of the people that he's dying for that's why that's a very different thing than saying that Jesus in his own nature became sin no he did not he bore your sin as a sinless

God that's the truth that's what the scripture teaches us from Genesis to Revelation as God prepared his son to come and be the one and only forever sacrifice for sin only he could do that because only he was righteous and where that becomes so important is what happened next as Jesus died on the cross with your sins bearing on him he's standing in your place he's dying the death your sins demand on that cross as Jesus died and gave himself up and then was resurrected to new life he was given a new life that new life was the testimony that he died in righteousness he died as God clean from sin but bearing yours that's what the resurrection says because God received the son to himself and so now what happens when you come to faith in

[60:10] Jesus Christ you're saying I believe you died for my sins bearing my guilt and the penalty which is death you did that for me and then God by your faith comes to say not only do I forgive that guilt in my son but now I give I give I give my son life here is the gift of a perfect life so that when I see you now I see you in the holiness of my son come to me in my son you can live with me because my son's righteousness lives in you you can be a citizen of heaven because you now have the righteousness of my son in you and that's the only thing that qualifies you to be in my presence that's what you get he gets death because he gets your sin and you get life because you get his righteousness his perfection that's the gospel that's what Christians get all excited about that's why preachers veins pop and they sweat up here telling you about this this is the beauty of what we see in this leprous man

Jesus just cleansed him his sin and gave his soul life because Jesus is going to go to the cross for him Jesus then is not made unclean or sinful he willingly bears your sin on your behalf key in on the willingness I am willing what did he tell the disciples no man no man takes my life from me I willingly lay it down they didn't have to send soldiers to arrest him he to walk to the cross that's our Lord so Joel Osteen read your Bible and go back to seminary bro we use terms like regeneration reconciliation justification justification fancy big sounding words but all of those words express the willingness of

Jesus to exchange his righteousness for our sin our uncleanness for his cleanness and we often refer to this great exchange as salvation that's what it means to be saved you're saved from your sin through the righteousness of Jesus Christ Jesus saves us from sin and he gives us his cleanness as his gift to make us right with God let me put a couple of verses up here just to put a finer point on it righteousness is right with godness so whenever you hear me up here talking about you get Jesus righteousness you get a right with godness from Jesus he makes you right with God your sins are forgiven the brought near as an adopted child surely our grief that is our sickness is Jesus he himself bore and our sorrows or pains he carried and

Jesus himself bore our sins bore in his body on the cross that we might die to sin and live to righteousness for by his wounds you were healed and we can know that same compassion that Jesus had for the leper we come trusting in faith only Jesus can heal our spiritual leprosy only he can make us right with God now I hasten to add stay with me look at verses 43 and 44 then Jesus I gotta say something about this before I quit Jesus sternly warned this man now that's interesting isn't it the the leprosy left him he was cleansed and now Jesus warns him he probably stood the man now he's looking into his eyes and talking to him and then he sent the man away after the warning and verse 44 gives us the warning see that you say nothing to anyone about this but go show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what

Moses commanded as a testimony to them and so the man did exactly what Jesus said no he did not did he so what's going do whatever you say I got it I'll do it but he's so overcome with joy he's so he's so released and free and astounded that he can't he can't he can't make himself be quiet but this is a special concern expressed by Jesus in this warning it's a concern first of all for the man don't miss who it is that was able to do this for you don't be so taken by the physical healing that you're going to go out and be all excited about this but do you know who did this for you do you know I'm the Messiah so he tells him go and show the priests that you've been healed you remember that from Genesis Leviticus 13 and 14 go show the priests you've been healed and cleansed do all this in keeping with the law of

[65 : 37] God provide a witness to them of the authenticity of the healing and the healer you see if they authenticate the healing then they've got to do something about the healer don't they if the priest pronounced the leper clean then they're going to be forced to acknowledge the legitimacy of Jesus as the healer because they're already plotting to kill Jesus Jesus also is giving a warning out of concern for the law of God Jesus told Jesus didn't come to abolish the law but to fulfill it he's honoring God's law and then he has a concern for his ministry and the multitude why now just a quick explanation Jesus knew that this kind of healing was going to bring a flood of people down on him and what happened it did so he told the man look don't say anything yet don't go out there and talk in his kingdom work the miracles he performed in healing people were meant to support and authenticate his gospel message as the

Messiah not be the show but they became kind of the show people want show us more miracles do some more stuff man watch this dude watch this he's going to make this guy's arm grow out this is so cool I saw him do this the other day it's incredible you won't believe it that's not no Jesus saying don't miss who I am I can do this because of who I am he wasn't a side show and that the final response of the leper to Jesus is here in verse 45 he went out and freely so that it was so many people were overwhelmed by this story and the truth of it and what happened the rest of the gospels this is why this leprous account is why this happened but the crowds came and became so huge so demanding he was forced to stay on the outskirts not because they were coming to worship messiah they were coming for the miracles and they missed messiah in the process

Jeff how do we know that because they crucified him that's how we know and so folks we need to remember that Jesus himself is the gift Christmas celebrates the baby born to bless it's a wonderful life remember that one it's a wonderful life that's touched by the wonderfully willing heart of Jesus and that's what we want to take away God willing if you can come Tuesday evening to our candlelight Christmas service I'm going to just give a brief devotional on more of this compassion from the Lord as it relates to Christmas time let's pray together well dear father it has been a great joy of my heart through the weeks in December to rehearse the compassion of Jesus for my own life and to reflect on your goodness and mercy that you forgive sinners and give us hope in Christ

I pray that we will not miss the reason for the season as Christians we're celebrating a manger we're celebrating a time where you sent Jesus to be a human being God in human form born as a baby born to die on a cruel cross so I pray that in this time and season of celebration and gift giving we will remember the greatest gift ever given to humanity in the form of your son thank you for his righteousness and sinlessness and thank you for his willingness to touch our souls and make us whole in Jesus name we pray amen