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Title: The Gospel of Jesus Christ in Galilee – Early Galilean Ministry –
A Picture of Compassion
Text: Mark 1:38-45
Theme: Jesus Christ always spoke of rest and then worked to secure it. He never separated His words from His actions.

THE BIG PICTURE:

- A picture of contrasts (vv. 35-39)
 - Our Lord's private life (vv. 35-37)
 - Our Lord's public life (vv. 38, 39)
- A picture of compassion (vv. 40-45)
 - His desire to heal the unclean (vv. 40-42)
 - His desire to obey the Law (vv. 43-45)

Introduction:

As I work through Mark's Gospel and the life of Jesus Christ, I have been challenged to become more aggressive in emphasizing the role of the local church in mercy ministries. It appears unfortunate but we fail to hold in tension evangelism of soul and ministries of "healing." We must become the cup of cold water to the thirsty, we must become fathers to the fatherless, and we must become a shelter to the homeless.

Our involvement in our community should be a real ministry expression of this local community. Government is already trying to address these issues, but all attempts on their part are one dimensional. We must not deceive ourselves. It is only Christ and His church that can address the souls of these individuals. The church fails when it focuses on only one area and not both. It is never either or. It is always both the soul and the body. It is only in Christ and His church that we can bring hope, healing, and wholeness to the depressed, the diseased, and the dysfunctional.

There is in the good news about Jesus a movement from "Come and See" to "Go and Tell." When we come to Jesus it is not for us to stay, but for us to go. There is a real and distinct order. First, we "come and see," then we "go and tell."

"Jesus set out on a preaching tour of the synagogues of Galilee. In Mark this tour is dismissed in one verse, but it must have taken weeks and even months to do it." It was during this time that we have our healing of the leper. This is a rather lengthy introduction but I believe it is necessary to note three thoughts from William Barclay on how there are three pairs of things which Jesus never separated.

First, He never separated words and actions.

The story is told of a student who bought the best possible books and the best possible equipment and got a special study chair with a special book rest to make study easy, and then sat down in the chair – and went to sleep.

The letters of Paul always place belief before behavior, but the two are never separated. Theology is the bedrock upon which the house of action is built. In the absence of theology, action is unbridled and in the absence of action, theology is sterile.

Second, He never separated soul and body.

“The task of Christianity is to redeem the whole man and not just part of him. It is quite wrong to talk about the social gospel as if it were an extra, or an option, or even a separate part of the Christian message. The Christian message is one and it preaches and works for the good of a man’s body as well as the good of his soul.”

Third, He never separated earth and heaven.

Although we live in a period where the best is still yet to come, we cannot dismiss the present reign of our Lord in a real and immediate kingdom. Our justification, our union, our sanctification, our redemption, and our glorification are present and future realities in which we are to live each moment of every day. There is a real and indivisible connection between the church local and the ministry of mercy to the needs of the community, the nation, and the world. Being a Christian is inseparably verbal and visual. The gospel is a word and a work. It is the proclamation of deliverance and the demonstration of deliverance. The gospel not only declares people free, it sets people free.

To Know: The Holy Spirit desires for us to know the largeness of His heart.

To Choose: The Holy Spirit desires for us to choose His working in us and through us to those around us.

To Feel: The Holy Spirit desires for us to feel the heart of God toward the hurting.

How will they best hear?:

Our text (v. 41) says Jesus was filled with compassion. Let us define compassion. Compassion is the emotional response one has towards a need and the desire to alleviate the need. For example:

- He had compassion toward shepherd-less sheep and He taught them (Matt. 9:36; Mark 6:34).
- He had compassion toward the sick and He healed them (Matt. 14:14).
- He had compassion toward the hungry and He fed them (Matt. 15:32; Mark 8:2).
- He had compassion toward the blind and He gave them sight (Matt. 20:34).

Our Lord responds to the needs of His people and seeks to alleviate the need. There are various elements to this story. The one is our Lord healing the leper. The second is the leper's response to our Lord's instruction. Let us tell the story and see the truth.

I. His desire to heal the unclean (vv. 40-42)

Here, there are two individuals described. The first is the leper and the second is the Lord. Let us begin by noting the leper.

A. The Leper (v. 40)

1. Notice his problem ("leper")

His disease made him religiously unclean and socially unacceptable. He was an outcast. He could not go into the temple for corporate worship. His problem was greater than anything he could fix. He needed a miracle (Lev. 13:45, 46; Num. 5:1-4; 2 Kings 7:3, 4).

2. Notice his posture ("begged him on his knees")

The word "begged" is **parakaleo**. It means, "To ask for something earnestly and with propriety, to request, to plead for." It is a present active participle suggesting a persistent and continuous action. [Falling on his knees] was a gesture of a sincere request. "Not as an act of worship, but as a mark of importunity." "He kneeled, and inclined his face to the ground, in token of deep humiliation."

The sick knew that Jesus had the power and ability to make him whole. The point of interest is to note how the unclean did not make Jesus unclean by contact. Jesus made the unclean clean through touch. The action of our Lord was in direct conflict with Mosaic code. Those whom we most shun and withdraw from are the very ones whom our Lord reached out to and embraced fully.

His sense of helplessness and desperation is like the helplessness you feel when overwhelmed and exhausted by a problem you have no control over. Like when a small child suffers or an adult parent slowly dies.

3. Notice his petition ("If you are willing, you can make me clean")

a. He appealed to the compassion of God ("If you are willing")

"If you are willing," suggests his fear "that Jesus may judge him to be unworthy of so enormous a request. Leprosy was believed to be incurable, except by Him who had inflicted this 'stroke.' The man's faith, therefore, is great." We must never fear that our Lord will turn a deaf ear to the voice of His children. He will never deem us unworthy of His comfort and help in our time of need (Heb. 4:12).

b. He rested in the power of God ("You can make me clean")

Notice the second individual and how He is described.

B. The Lord (v. 41, 42)

1. Notice His tender compassion (“Moved with compassion”).

He saw the need and was internally moved by a desire to meet the need. The text tells us that Jesus was “filled with compassion”, “gripped with compassion.” This was Jesus’ instant reaction to human need. He was deeply moved in His heart at the sight of suffering.”

2. Notice His healing touch (“Jesus stretched out His hand and touched him”).

Think about the situation for just a moment. This leper was a social outcast. No one would touch him. He was devoid of all social interaction except with other outcasts. No one in their right mind would willingly touch a leper. I imagine that Jesus reached out and embraced this individual and when He did there was an enormous sigh on the part of the leper. There was love, acceptance, and forgiveness in that embrace. The burden of his condition was released.

3. Notice His infinite love (“I am willing; be cleansed”) (v. 42).

II. His desire to obey the Law (vv. 43-45)

Our Lord desired for the healed individual to obey the law and show himself cleansed through the proper channels established in the Law of Moses (Lev. 13:3; 14:9, 10). Often our Lord is identified or characterized as being a rebel or promoter of sedition, but our Lord kept the Law properly understood.

Why did Jesus strongly warn individuals from publicizing His actions?

“The law of Moses required that the man who was healed of the leprosy should be pronounced clean by the priest, before he could be admitted again to the privileges of the congregation, Le 19:1, etc. Christ, though he had cleansed him, yet required him to be obedient to the law of the land; to go at once to the priest, and not to make delay by stopping to converse about his being healed. It was also possible, that if he did not go at once, evil-minded men would go before him and prejudice the priest, and prevent his declaring the healing to be thorough because it was done by Jesus. It was further of importance that the priest should pronounce it to be a genuine cure, that there might be no cavils [questioning] among the Jews against its being a real miracle.”

APPLICATION: (Where do we go from here, what is our NEXT ACTION STEP?)

1. If today you are a spiritual, social, emotional leper, God stands ready to embrace you.
2. If you know someone who is a social leper, will you embrace them for healing?
3. The gospel to be complete includes the soul and body of the individual.
4. Let us pray that God would open our eyes to see the needs around us and our hearts to be moved with action towards them.