

**JESUS AND A LEPER**

Mark 1:36-45

**Intro:** In my text for this evening we come to the last ten verses of Mark

1. It is hard for me to leave verse 35 behind because prayer had such a very important place in the life and ministry of our Lord. As I have said a number of times recently, I believe it is more difficult for us to understand the Deity of our Lord than His humanity. It is true that when our Lord became a Man there was a blending together of His Deity and His humanity which is illustrated by the blending together of the oil and the meal in the Meal Offering. When our Lord ascended into heaven after His death and resurrection, it was in His human body that He departed. And we have it from an angel that when the Lord returns, He will be this same Jesus. We must not go beyond what is written in Scripture in our attempt to understand our Lord's humanity, but it is especially evident in His prayer life. It is interesting that our Lord Who was followed unmercifully from place to place, found it necessary to "get up a great while before day" and to go out to "a solitary place" to pray. And even then His disciples looked for Him because the crowds were coming to them asking about Him! As far as I remember, there is no record that our Lord ever prayed with His disciples. The Garden of Gethsemane was probably the time when that became a possibility, but even taking His disciples, Peter, James, and John with Him into the inner part of the Garden, He got to a certain point, left those three, and went a short distance on where He prayed to His Father.

The incident recorded here was early in the public ministry of the Lord. It probably was what Luke referred to in Luke 4:42 and 43, which says that He "went into a desert place," but nothing is said about prayer. However, we can assume that that is why He went into that "desert place." Luke does mention that the crowds were seeking the Lord, and that they wanted Him to stay with them instead of going on like He did.

But I go back to verse 35 in Mark 1 again tonight to link it with what followed. When we read in verse 36 that "Simon and they that were with Him followed after Him," it sounds like He probably had little or no time for prayer. But that is not necessarily the case. What is important for us to understand is the important place that the Lord gave to prayer in connection with His ministry. The Lord was preparing for an extensive ministry throughout Galilee, and this was how He sought to prepare for it. It is safe to say that none of us has ever been as busy as our Lord was.

And yet He deliberately took time out to go to the Father to receive through prayer, strength, guidance, and blessing upon His ministry in the days immediately before Him.

We need to take the lesson to heart even though preaching may not be what we are going to be doing. We all are the Lord's servants, and serve the Lord in different ways. And, as it is often said, if the Lord needed those times of prayer as He went to His heavenly Father, how much more do we need to make time for prayer in our daily lives. And if it is such that we aren't out among people, yet we can take the time to pray for those who do. Much of the time that Spurgeon was preaching, there were people in his church who were praying for God's blessing upon His ministry. We need prayer before we minister, while we are ministering, and after the ministry is over. It is probably true that one reason we are not seeing greater blessing today than we are, is because we have allowed our *busyness* to keep us from praying. Just think of how much time you have given to prayer today, or yesterday. The effectiveness of our praying is not dependent upon much long we pray, but upon our faithfulness in prayer. If such thoughts are a rebuke to us, we need to give serious thought as to how and when we can pray more than we do. God is pleased when we come to Him acknowledging our dependence upon Him. All that we do is not enough if we do not have God's blessing upon us. The Lord in His humanity illustrates this truth.

Now these ten verses emphasize three things concerning our Lord Jesus Christ.

First, his preaching ministry. Second, the synagogue. Third, the healing of the leper.

## **I. HIS PREACHING MINISTRY (Mark 1:36-39).**

Now we all know that the Lord had a twofold ministry: a ministry of preaching and a ministry of healing. While we read in our text for tonight about His preaching ministry, we know that it was His healing ministry that brought the crowds. I think that it would have been very difficult for us to come out of our way of life today, and go back to conditions that prevailed when our Lord was here on earth. Sick people and dying people were everywhere. There were lame people, blind people, deaf people, people afflicted in many, many ways. Our text gives us one of many incidents in the life of our Lord when He healed a leper. It would have

been very difficult for us to take, to look upon so many people with deep, deep needs. Our Lord was moved with divine compassion upon them, and of ten spend whole days healing people of their various diseases.

And yet, having said that, notice what He told His disciples when they told him that everybody was looking for Him. It was not unkind of Him. The Lord could not be unkind. But it showed that His priority was preaching. (Read verse 38.) On one occasion when our Lord was in the synagogue in His home town of Nazareth, the book of Isaiah was given to Him. He turned to what is the sixty-first chapter of Isaiah in our Bible, and began to read, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor,” and then he read on. But the first place was given to preaching.

But now let me turn to a second emphasis in what we have in our text. This has to do with the place where He usually went when He entered a city to ministry:

## **II. THE SYNAGOGUE (Mark 1:39).**

Nobody really knows the origin of the synagogue, but it was a place that would compare with our church buildings. It was the place where the people went. Synagogues arose probably as a matter of convenience for the people because getting to the temple was impossible for many people because of the distance involved. Nobody thought of synagogues and the temple as in competition with each other. But the temple, although some teaching was done there, was primarily a place of worship. The synagogue was primarily a place of teaching. This is where the people were. Later on Paul, in his ministry, usually went to the synagogue when he entered a city.

But it was not only because the people were there, that our Lord went to the synagogue, but it was because the teaching in the synagogues had deteriorated so much, that the Lord went there to bring the truth to the people. And this is what made the people marvel at His teaching. The Lord went preaching the Gospel. The Jews, most of them, thought that they were the people of God because they were Jews, because of their history, because to them had been committed the Scriptures. And yet just as the Bible was being misused and misinterpreted in our Lord’s day, He went preaching the Gospel, calling upon Jews to repent of their sins, and to believe the Gospel. See Mark 1:15. So these Jews who thought that

they were right with God, were learning from our Lord's ministry, and as time went on, from the ministry of the apostles, that they were not right, that they were under the judgment of God, and that the Gospel was their only hope. Of course there were some Jews who knew the truth and who knew the Lord, but they were definitely in the minority. So that is where the Lord would begin His ministry when He went to a new place.

In one city (and Mark does not tell us where except we know that it was in Galilee) as our Lord was preaching, and casting out demons (v. 39), He suddenly was confronted by:

### **III. A LEPER (Mark 1:39-45).**

We can tell that this man was really desperate because he never should have been in the synagogue in the first place. Lepers were required by the law to keep their distance from people who were not lepers. There have been many who have raised questions about the nature of this disease, that it was something different from what we know of today as leprosy. I am not going to get involved in that discussion tonight because that is outside of what I know about the disease. But I feel we are safe in calling it leprosy. Whatever it was, it was a hopeless disease. It was a living death. The man did not need to tell the Lord what his problem was; the Lord was able to see that just by looking at the man.

It sounds like the man interrupted the Lord as He was preaching. But he came to the Lord, not laying hold of the Lord, but "beseeching Him, and kneeling down to Him, and saying unto Him, Lord, If Thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." Note the leper's frantic appeal, and yet his evident humility as he came to the Lord. He knew that the Lord could heal him. What he didn't know was, would He.

Although the leper was careful not to touch the Lord, we read that the Lord stretched out His hand, and touched the leper, saying to Him, "I will; be thou clean."

What happened? Verse 42 tells us that when the Lord had spoken those words, "immediately," not gradually, but "immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed." He wasn't told that he would gradually get better, as some of our present-day healers say when it is obvious that they have not been able to do what they professed to do. The change took place in the leper immediately. He was healed. And it had to

be apparent to everyone in the synagogue.

But what did the Lord tell him to do? (Read verses 43 and 44.) So our Lord told Him what he was not to do, but what he was to do.

He was not to tell any man what had happened, but he was to go directly to the priest, and he was to offer for his cleansing what Moses had commanded the people to do.

Where do you find that? I am sure that was the first thing that popped into the priest's mind. How many times do you think that priest had been confronted with that request? Most likely NEVER! Where would he find out what to do? He probably didn't know. Well, where would he look? Look at Leviticus 14, beginning with verse 1. (Read.)

But why did the Lord want the cleansed leper to go to the priest? The first reason would be that they were still under the Law, and our Lord was teaching the former leper to be obedient to the Word of God.

But there was another reason. It is stated at the very end of verse 44: "For a testimony unto them." Others were evidently involved in the cleansing, so the Lord said "them." What did this mean? It meant that this miracle might serve the purpose of all of our Lord's miracles, to show that He was the Son of God. And then the next step would be that the priest himself would be saved. You see, the Lord knows a lot of things that we don't know. But evidently our Lord knew that that priest was one of the elect, and that this incident would result in his salvation.

Did the cleansed man do what the Lord told him to do? No, he didn't. He just started to tell everyone what had happened to him. As a result the Lord had to change what He had been doing before.

We can understand why the former leper did what he did. His life had been given back to him. His joy was uncontrollable.

But what about the priest and his associates? Let us be sure that if I am right in saying that that priest was one of the elect, the Lord reached him in another way and at another time.

It is regrettable that the leper did not obey the Lord. I don't know what to say about his salvation. I hope when we get to heaven that we will meet both this leper, and the priest to whom he should have gone. Let us learn from this how important it is for us to do what the Lord tells us to do first. If we do, then other blessings are sure to follow.