

Lesson 2: *Can You Keep a Secret*

Thursday, July 11, 2024

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Read Mark 1:40–45. What does this teach us about Jesus and how He related to the marginalized in society?

⁴⁰ Now a leper came to Him, imploring Him, kneeling down to Him and saying to Him, “If You are willing, You can make me clean.”

⁴¹ Then Jesus, moved with compassion, stretched out *His* hand and touched him, and said to him, “I am willing; be cleansed.” ⁴² As soon as He had spoken, immediately the leprosy left him, and he was cleansed. ⁴³ And He strictly warned him and sent him away at once, ⁴⁴ and said to him, “See that you say nothing to anyone; but go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing those things which Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.”

⁴⁵ However, he went out and began to proclaim *it* freely, and to spread the matter, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter the city, but was outside in deserted places; and they came to Him from every direction.—**Mark 1:40-45**

Leprosy as described in this passage, and throughout the Old Testament as well, did not refer only to what is known today as Hansen’s disease (bona fide leprosy). The biblical terminology would be better translated as a “dreaded skin disease” and could include other epidermic ailments, as well. Hansen’s disease may have come to the Ancient Near East about the third century B.C. (see David P. Wright and Richard N. Jones, “Leprosy,” *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 4 [New York: Doubleday, 1992], pp. 277–282). Hence, the leper referred to in this passage could well have had Hansen’s disease, though we don’t know for sure exactly what the man suffered from, only that it was bad.

The leper places faith in Jesus that He can cleanse him. According to Leviticus 13, a leper was ritually unclean and had to avoid contact with *others* (see *Lev. 13:45, 46*).

Jesus, however, is moved with compassion toward the man and touches him. “Then Jesus, moved with compassion, stretched out His hand and touched him, and said to him, ‘I am willing; be cleansed’” (*Mark 1:41, NKJV*). This action should have defiled Jesus until the evening, when He would be required to bathe to become ritually pure again (*compare with Leviticus 13–15*). But Mark is clear that Jesus’ action of touching the sick man cleanses him of his leprosy. Thus, Jesus was not defiled by touching the man.

Jesus sends the man to a priest with the instruction to offer the sacrifice Moses commanded for such cases in Leviticus 14. Throughout the Gospel of Mark, Jesus stands as a defender and supporter of what Moses taught (*see Mark 7:10; Mark 10:3, 4; Mark 12:26, 29–31*). This view stands in sharp contrast to the religious leaders, who in the passages in Mark 7, 10, and 12 are subverting the original intent of the teachings given through Moses. These details explain Jesus’ command to silence the man, in Mark 1:44. If he were to tell of his cure by Jesus, it might prejudice the decision of the priest in bias against Jesus.

But the cleansed leper does not seem to understand this, and in disobedience to Jesus’ command, he spreads the news far and wide, making it impossible for Jesus to enter towns openly for His ministry.

- Jesus looked beyond peoples faults and saw their need.
- He did not show any prejudice or disdain for those of an unpleasant or off-putting appearance.
- He did not hold to the popular and common belief of the day that this man’s ailment must have been brought on due to his sin, or being shunned by God.
- He was moved with compassion, and simply treated the leper as He would want to be treated.

³⁷ Jesus said to him, “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ ³⁸ This is *the* first and great commandment. ³⁹ And *the* second *is* like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ ⁴⁰ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.” —**Matthew 22:37-40**

¹⁶ By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down *our* lives for the brethren. ¹⁷ But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? ¹⁸ My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.—**1 John 3:16-18**

Prejudice— preconceived opinion that is not based on reason or actual experience.

- The Jews, and especially its leaders were an extremely prejudice people.
- Jesus knew that His bold and politically-incorrect actions, if made known too soon, would lead to greater challenges in His mission.
- There's a lesson to be learned here.

¹² “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear *them* now. ¹³ However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own *authority*, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.—**John 16:12, 13**

“In laboring in a new field, do not think it your duty to say at once to the people, We are Seventh-day Adventists; we believe that the seventh day is the Sabbath; we believe in the non- immortality of the soul. This would often erect a formidable barrier between you and those you wish to reach.”—Evangelism Pg. 446

ILL: Be balanced...Evangelistic series