

Proclaimed

Jesus is worthy of us telling others about Him.

MARK 1:35-45

While topics of conversation vary among adults, it is always true that people in groups talk about what is interesting to them. Even the quietest person will on occasion speak about things that are important to him or her. Some like to talk about ordinary events while others enjoy discussing controversial issues. One thing is certain: what we say reflects what is on our mind. Subjects or experiences that captivate us will eventually find their way out in our conversation.

- What topics of discussion most interest you, and how do those topics relate to who you are as a person?

UNDERSTAND **THE CONTEXT**

MARK 1:14–3:6

After His baptism, temptation, and the arrest of John, Jesus began His earthly ministry. His message called for repentance and faith, through which hearers could enter the kingdom of God. Yet this was not a task Jesus was content to pursue by Himself. Immediately after He began proclaiming the gospel, He invited four fishermen to leave their vocation and join Him in the pursuit of a divine mission. This mission was characterized by both word and deed. Interspersed with authoritative teaching and preaching, Jesus healed the sick and delivered the demon possessed.

Beginning in Mark 2:1, we read about a series of conflicts in which the religious leaders castigated Jesus. Joining Jesus in His mission of kingdom proclamation inevitably results in conflict. Obstacles must be overcome to witness to the supremacy of Jesus.

The first incident involved the authority of Jesus to both heal on the Sabbath and forgive sin. Following His call of Levi, the tax collector, the religious leaders criticized Jesus for socializing with sinful people. A third conflict was about fasting and the joyful nature of the ministry of Jesus. The observance of the Sabbath was the focus of the final two conflicts between Jesus and the religious leaders. When Jesus's disciples were censured for plucking grain on the Sabbath, He used the occasion to clarify the true purpose of this ancient practice. Its purpose was to serve the needs of people. This higher purpose was affirmed by Jesus when He restored the withered hand of a man in the synagogue on the Sabbath. The hardness of heart displayed by the Pharisees at this healing revealed a preference for ritual over renewal. This both grieved and righteously angered Jesus.

- **As you read Mark 1:35-45, note the ways in which Jesus exercised authority, by either word or action. Compare the calling of His disciples (1:16-20) with the casting out of demons (1:21-28). Which is the greatest display of authority? How do they relate to each other?**

EXPLORE **THE TEXT**

FOCUSED (MARK 1:35-39)

³⁵ Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he got up, went out, and made his way to a deserted place; and there he was praying. ³⁶ Simon and his companions searched for him, ³⁷ and when they found him they said, “Everyone is looking for you.” ³⁸ And he said to them, “Let’s go on to the neighboring villages so that I may preach there too. This is why I have come.” ³⁹ He went into all of Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.

VERSE 35

Spending time in prayer was characteristic of Jesus (see also 6:46; 14:32). The ***deserted place*** to which He retreated for prayer is translated from the same word used for “wilderness” previously (1:3,4,12,13). It was ***there he was praying***.

As a wilderness, the place of prayer is both the place of utter dependence on God as well as where spiritual testing occurs. While not the same location as earlier, Mark’s word selection communicated something spiritually significant. Participation in prayer is proportionate to the depth of dependence felt by the follower of Jesus. Its presence or absence in our lives is revealing.

No doubt teaching and healing was draining to Jesus (see 5:30). So it is noteworthy to read that Jesus went to His place of prayer ***very early in the morning***, expressing its priority in His life. This description should drive us to examine our own commitment to communion with God the Father.

VERSES 36-37

It appears that ***Simon and his companions*** were up early that morning as well, but with a different motive than Jesus. They ***searched for him*** but with a different agenda. This verb for “search” can convey a sense of anxiety or even impatience.

The concern expressed to Jesus by His disciples was that ***everyone is looking for you***. News about Jesus’s teaching and miracles had spread throughout the whole area (1:28). In a short time, the fame of Jesus would restrict His travel movements (1:45). His followers were caught up in the rising popularity of Jesus. They saw it as a marketing opportunity to be seized, but Jesus did not share their perspective. Verse 37 would not be the last time the disciples of Jesus failed to recognize His true mission.

In many organizations and even many lives, “mission drift” is a persistent danger. The true purpose of an endeavor grows hazy and vague, allowing other priorities to gain equal footing. Peter and the other disciples were not opposed to Jesus’s mission to proclaim the kingdom. They did, however, allow a “shadow mission” to also capture their focus.

In our endeavors, it is easy to develop a case of “double vision,” holding two separate and distinct objectives for a particular cause. Invariably, a dual focus will create confusion in the pursuit of the objective. Jesus had a singular vision for the task given to Him by God. He pursued it with a pure heart and mind. Can we say that about our own lives and churches?

● How did the focus of the disciples differ from the focus of Jesus?

VERSES 38-39

The prayer life of Jesus demonstrated His resolute focus on the mission given to Him by God. He prayed because He was absolutely clear on the focus of His mission. He told the disciples: ***This is why I have come.*** Jesus defined His mission in terms of proclamation to a broad-based audience. Therefore, He wanted to ***go on to the neighboring villages*** that He might ***preach there too***. The disciples wanted to stay where the crowds were growing, but Jesus wanted to expand His preaching ministry to other places where His message hadn’t been yet heard.

Followers of Jesus are called to share the good news everywhere. The question has been posed: why should some people get the opportunity to hear the gospel multiple times, while others haven’t heard about Jesus even once? It is a compelling question, one that every Christ-follower needs to consider.

● Why might a person get confused about the mission of Jesus?

COMPASSIONATE (MARK 1:40-42)

⁴⁰ Then a man with leprosy came to him and, on his knees, begged him, “If you are willing, you can make me clean.” ⁴¹ Moved with compassion,

Jesus reached out his hand and touched him. “I am willing,” he told him. “Be made clean.” ⁴² **Immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean.**

VERSE 40

As He pursued His Galilean preaching and healing ministry, Jesus was approached by **a man with leprosy**. The word *leprosy* was used to denote a wide variety of skin diseases. Leviticus 13 lists seven different types of leprosy. Beyond the physical pain and incapacitation that it brought, there was a social stigma attached to the disease. Leprosy was no doubt feared among the general population. The result was that lepers were outcasts in society, isolated and alone in their affliction.

One might make the case that leprosy was more of a condition than merely a disease. Physically, your body was literally coming apart. Socially, you were considered a pariah, rejected by your peers. Spiritually, you were thought to be cursed by God. Lepers were prohibited from participating in Old Testament worship. No doubt this was prompted by basic contagion protections, but there was still a sense in which a leper would have felt abandoned by God. His state of mind and his self value echoed in the condition of his request: ***If you are willing***.

This particular leper approached Jesus—a bold act in itself—in humility and with great sincerity ***begged him*** to make him ***clean***. Jesus didn't recoil from this man in the least, although onlookers may have done so. Instead, He received him in his desperate and risky action. It is interesting that he didn't ask to be healed but instead requested cleansing. Commentators point out that leprosy was and is considered to be a metaphor for sin, which requires absolution and forgiveness.

VERSE 41

Jesus responded to the leper with ***compassion***. Both in word and action, this man received affirmation from Jesus. He assured him with the words, ***I am willing***, and then commanded, ***Be made clean***.

Perhaps the most striking aspect of this verse is the fact that Jesus ***reached out his hand and touched him***. This would have shocked anyone witnessing this encounter. Touching a leper was both a social taboo and a religious violation. There's no telling how long it had been since this man had any physical encounter with another person.

Touching a leper rendered a person ceremonially unclean. But Jesus did not shrink back from inserting Himself into human need. In the same way, He would later throw Himself into the very wrath of God on our behalf (Gal. 3:13), taking upon Himself our sin.

VERSE 42

Beyond the fact of a wonderful and instant work of power in which **the leprosy left him** and the man **was made clean**, something else amazing took place in this miracle. Prior to the arrival of Jesus, whenever something clean encountered something unclean, the clean then became unclean and had to be renewed to its previous condition. The whole sacrificial system assumed this dynamic.

What we see here and elsewhere in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ is a radically different situation. Here we see the clean encountering the unclean in such a way that the unclean then becomes clean. For something dirty to become clean requires something else to become dirty and to assume that contamination. This is an accurate summary of the gospel.

This also testifies to the greatness of the Lord Jesus Christ. His holiness and purity were great enough to withstand and overcome the stain of human sinfulness and uncleanness. His compassion prompted Him to become sin for us, even though He possessed no sin within Himself (2 Cor. 5:21). How wonderfully amazing this is, and how worthy Christ is of our eternal adoration!

○ What might keep a person from showing compassion to others?

○ What types of compassionate behavior would reinforce a verbal proclamation about Jesus?

KEY DOCTRINE: *Missions*

It is the duty of every child of God to seek constantly to win the lost to Christ by verbal witness undergirded by a Christian lifestyle, and by other methods in harmony with the gospel of Christ. (See Matthew 9:37-38; Acts 1:8.)

PROCLAIMED (MARK 1:43-45)

⁴³ Then he sternly warned him and sent him away at once, ⁴⁴ telling him, “See that you say nothing to anyone; but go and show yourself to the priest, and offer what Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them.” ⁴⁵ Yet he went out and began to proclaim it widely and to spread the news, with the result that Jesus could no longer enter a town openly. But he was out in deserted places, and they came to him from everywhere.

VERSES 43-44

Once again, this story takes an unexpected turn. We might imagine that Jesus would welcome the publicity that could come from a miraculous healing. However, He ***sternly warned him and sent him away at once***. The word translated *sternly warned* is a strong verb and could be translated “scold.” This is a reminder that in Jesus there was and is a perfect harmony of attributes and virtues. He was gentle but could also be stern. His tenderness never came from weakness.

Jesus commanded the restored leper, ***See that you say nothing to anyone***. Instead, he was to seek out a priest to offer the sacrifices prescribed in Leviticus 14 after the leprous affliction had disappeared. The background to that chapter and this imperative is that priests functioned somewhat as public health officials in those times. An appearance before them was to be done immediately and without delay. By issuing this instruction to the healed man, Jesus honored the Old Testament law and what ***Moses commanded***.

“Spiritual redemption was the reason Jesus came to this world.”

Why would Jesus strongly forbid this healed man from telling anyone about it? The answer lies in His focus on the mission of proclamation. Healing was not the primary object of His work here on earth. Spiritual redemption was the reason Jesus came to this world. Large crowds drawn by publicity and fueled by possible wrong motives might hinder the accomplishment of His mission.

Another question may arise regarding Jesus’s view of this healing as ***a testimony***. It would have been likely that any attending priest would not have recognized any healing done by this Galilean named Jesus as coming from the power of God. But to stand before the priest was both a proof of his healing and the person of Jesus Christ.

BIBLE SKILL: Dig deeper into the background and usage of key words or phrases.

Focusing on the phrase “show yourself to the priest” (Mark 1:44), do a background study of the requirements that would have been necessary for someone who had leprosy to have been declared clean. Start in Leviticus 13-14. Use a concordance to discover other passages where leprosy is mentioned. Consult a Bible dictionary to help you better understand what leprosy was and what a leper would have faced if they had not been cured.

VERSE 45

While not excusable, it is understandable that the man disregarded Jesus’s command when ***he went out and began to proclaim it widely and to spread the news***. No doubt he was ecstatic over his restoration to health. His motives might have been good, but it resulted in Jesus being unable to ***enter a town openly***. The ministry of Jesus was curtailed because of his disobedience. Yet people still ***came to him from everywhere***.

Don’t miss the ironic twist in the story’s conclusion. The formerly leprous man once lived in isolation from others. His failure to follow Jesus’s instructions resulted in Jesus having to remain outside cities ***in deserted places***. The man was liberated from his social separation, but Jesus was somewhat condemned to it. Some have described the gospel as the Great Exchange, whereby Jesus took our judgment upon Himself and to us His righteousness. This is the essence of our proclamation of Jesus Christ.

- Since people talk about the things that interest and captivate them, why do believers talk so sparingly about Jesus?

APPLY THE TEXT

- + Believers must share the gospel in places that have not yet heard about Jesus.
- + Believers show compassion by helping others in Jesus's name.
- + Believers demonstrate thankfulness by telling about the work of Jesus.

○ Discuss the importance the group plays in encouraging one another to give witness to Jesus. What practice could your group build into its weekly schedule that might inspire each member to be a witness for Jesus? What are some practical ways in which the group can remind itself of the purpose for its existence?

○ List some acts of compassion you could regularly perform for the sake of the gospel. Determine a time in which you will complete them. How can you use the ones you already do as an introduction to sharing a witness for Jesus? What would be the outcome if you do good works but fail to share the gospel?

PRAYER NEEDS
