

Jesus and the Outcasts

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Mark 1:35-45; 2:1-12

Last Sunday we discussed the authority of Jesus, his teaching, his healing and the casting out of demons.

I wonder how Jesus began his day.

And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed.³⁶ And Simon and those who were with him searched for him,³⁷ and they found him and said to him, “Everyone is looking for you.”³⁸ And he said to them, “Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out.”³⁹ And he went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons. (Mark 1:35-39 ESV)

There was no electricity those days. The day started when there was light.

Here we see Jesus up early while it was still dark. His day started before the light of nature came to remind them that the day had started.

After being with the crowds teaching, healing, caring, and listening to people, he wanted to be alone, at a **desolate place**, which is the same word as the wilderness or desert (*erēmos* in Greek).

In Hebrew “desert” is *midbar*, meaning “a place of revelation.” The desert was the place where David fled from Saul and met God. This was the place Moses heard God’s voice. This was the place where Elijah heard God’s whisper after confronting Baal. Jesus fed the multitudes.

-Jesus needed prayer. Jesus needed to be alone talking to His Father and to do His Father’s will. **Jesus was “charging his batteries.”**

You need a place that is your “wilderness—desolate place”. My mom had that in our home, and I was raised learning from her the discipline of prayer in your private corner. You and God alone...

-Jesus became a celebrity

Jesus was in Capernaum. Mark showed how Jesus confronted the demons and healed the sick. People had not seen such a thing since the days of Elijah. They were astonished, and they started coming to him with their problems. Suddenly Jesus became a celebrity.

I don’t think Jesus wanted to have all those spotlights on him. He delayed his announcement as being the Son of God. He wanted to prepare the ground for the ministry. In the next story we will find that He asked the healed leper to remain

silent. Yet more and more people came because they wanted something from Jesus. They were not necessarily drawn to him; they wanted to use Jesus for their needs.

Jesus did not lose his focus on his ministry:

Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out." (Mark 1:38 ESV)

Jesus' prayer life moves him to another town. Miracles are fine. He does care for people, but physical healing is not his ultimate goal. Jesus is not a magician. He is here for a Messianic mission. His mission is to preach the Good News. He is testifying: **"I am here to preach, I came for this reason."**

Jesus and his compassion toward the outcast

And a leper came to him, imploring him, and kneeling said to him, "If you will, you can make me clean." ⁴¹ Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand and touched him and said to him, "I will; be clean." ⁴² And immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean. ⁴³ And Jesus sternly charged him and sent him away at once, ⁴⁴ and 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, for a proof to them." ⁴⁵ But he went out and began to talk freely about it, and to spread the news, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter a town, but was out in desolate places, and people were coming to him from every quarter. (Mark 1:40-45 ESV)

Leprosy used to be a terrible disease. Lepers had to leave their home, their family and get quarantined. In Leviticus 14, we read all the ceremonial procedures for a leper to enter back into the community. One could turn back to the community after being examined by the priest. This man was an outcast.

-This man had faith: **"If you will, you can make me clean."** He was not saying, "I am not sure if you can heal me or not." He was simply saying, "You can heal me."

Moved with pity, (another translation "**moved with compassion**" or in the literal translation, "**moved to the guts**" (from the deep down inside, the kind of deep compassion coming from his guts),

-Jesus deliberately touches the man. He could heal him without touching, but he touches the untouchable.

Jesus is facing this imperfect world full of sin, disease, and He is ready to penetrate inside this fallen world.

-He heals this man then asks him **not to tell** others, except show to the priest that he was cured.

Jesus does not want people to see him as a magician, a miracle maker.
Jesus does not want to reveal God's power just with miracles.
Jesus wants to keep the news of his miracle quiet so that he will have more time to instruct and teach his disciples and his followers.¹

Jesus put his mission at risk. The healed leper was disobedient. He went all over, and he could not keep silent. The man literally became a preacher in Galilee. This man's preaching was so strong that Mark says:

"Jesus could no longer openly enter a town, but was out in desolate places..." Back to the desert.

Jesus is the incredible God who acts with love and compassion. He risks, the man disobeys, yet Jesus moves accordingly.

Think this way. We may disobey God. God takes our disobedience on His shoulders. He takes this over and over. God does not give up from us. He will find a way to "reroute" us like the GPS does when we do not follow the instructions. -However, **if we decide to ignore it**, we are not certain that we will arrive to the desired destination. If we continue in our disobedience to God, we will alienate ourselves from Him.

Faith of the Five

And when he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. ² And many were gathered together, so that there was no more room, not even at the door. And he was preaching the word to them. ³ And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. ⁴ And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him, and when they had made an opening, they let down the bed on which the paralytic lay. ⁵ And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." ⁶ Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, ⁷ "Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" ⁸ And immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, "Why do you question these things in your hearts? ⁹ Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, take up your bed and walk?' ¹⁰ But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he said to the paralytic— ¹¹ "I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home." ¹² And he rose and immediately picked up his bed and went out before them all, so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw anything like this!" (Mark 2:1-12 ESV)

We find here a strange story. Why strange? When is the last time you saw someone making a hole in the ceiling to bring down a paralyzed person to see Jesus?

A Paralyzed man. I wonder what people were thinking about this man. Someone sinned, that is why he is paralyzed. **Somehow, he is an outcast again.**

Here we have five people; Jesus saw their faith

when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." (5)

These five did the impossible to bring themselves to Jesus. Four of these people who were carrying the bed and the fifth one, their paralyzed friend. There was a large crowd. They could not enter. They had to do something. They could go back. No, they did not give up. **They wanted to see Jesus.**

In Palestine homes had flat roofs made from clay and supported by wooden beams. You can find some of these structures even today. People rested on the roof, especially during the summer nights they slept where it was cool. There were stairs to go up to the roof from the outside. It was possible to make a hole and bring down the paralytic person lying on his bed.

Let us look at this picture from the inside. Jesus is teaching. And suddenly the soil is falling down from the ceiling. Then four people with ropes are lowering down the bed. As if we are in a grave, and they are lowering down a dead man down the grave. It is strange! It is odd! It is funny! It is unusual! It is crazy! Who could do such an act?

Jesus was touched by this unusual act.

And when **Jesus saw their faith**, he said to the paralytic, **"Son, your sins are forgiven." (5)**

Wow, Jesus' first concern was to "heal" this man **from his sins; healing from inside, real healing...**

I don't think the paralyzed man came for forgiveness of sins. He wanted to be healed. But Jesus has his way to penetrate to the heart of the man. Who knows maybe he was full of shame? Maybe people were looking down on him, he is paralyzed, someone sinned, and that is why he is paralyzed....

The Scribes sitting there are not happy. They are the experts of the Law. Who are you to forgive sins?

-It's so easy to sit down and criticize *versus* the other four people who made the impossible possible to bring their friend to Jesus.

The scribes are thinking, "What authority does this man have?"

There is only one place one can receive forgiveness of sins, which is in the Temple.

This was done by a **priest** and not by a **rabbi-carpenter**.

"A priest could pronounce the forgiveness of sins on the basis of **repentance, restitution and sacrifice**" (Lev. 4; 5; 6; 17:11).² This was too much....

-Jesus knew that these people were complaining:

"And immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, '**Why do you question these things in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, take up your bed and walk'?**'" (Mark 2:8-9 ESV)

By looking from outside the event, of course telling a man "Your sins are forgiven" is easier. Why? No one can see if the sins are forgiven or not.

It would be easy also just to say to this man, "Get up and walk."

Jesus did not do that, why?

Forgiving someone's sins is a much harder thing to do. You need authority from God. Only God can do that. Jesus is teaching them an important lesson.

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God (Mark 1:1 ESV)

Jesus was claiming to have divine authority. His crucifixion and resurrection later will indicate how Jesus came to forgive our sins.

For now, he will show his divine presence saying:

"But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he said to the paralytic—"I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home." (Mark 2:10-11 ESV)

Jesus declares He is **the Son of Man**.

The concept comes from the Book of Daniel. In his book, Daniel writes about a vision that the "Son of Man" is coming down through clouds and will have authority over the earth (Daniel 7:13-14). The messianic age is here and has begun with the coming of Jesus. (**The Kingdom of God at hand, Kairos**)

Application on all the events:

1. Prayer: have a "place, a lonely place" for prayer. Surrender your will to God. We need a "desolate place." It could be even in your home, a place where you are

alone with God. We also need a special time of the day. For Jesus it was the morning. I assume morning is a good time when we are not tired yet, we are fresh.

2. Compassion towards the outcasts. Jesus had compassion, and it was costly; He even can take our disobedience and reroute us to be on the right track. Who are the outcasts for you today? Is it the homeless, or those who don't believe like you do? Is it the vaccinated or unvaccinated people?

3. Real healing starts from the inside: "Your sins are forgiven." Jesus is the key person to bring forgiveness of sins. Jesus heals the inside and the outside of the person. Sin is destructive. Sin alienates us from God. We live in a cursed world where disease and sickness exist. Jesus not only healed the heart of the man but also his feet.

4. Blessed are those who lead the "disabled" to Christ. Where is your role leading someone to Jesus?

5. When Christ touches us, we walk differently

It changes our steps and our vision.

The Paralyzed man went back WALKING, not only him but all of them went back running.

He went in like a tomb. Christ gave him new life. He came out of the tomb "resurrected". He was walking; he was walking like a new person.

Oh Lord, we all need this experience.

-Maybe you have heard this message but never opened your life to Jesus. What about today?

-Maybe you did experience Jesus, but now you feel paralyzed. Some kind of sin is paralyzing you. Why not come to Jesus in confession.

-Maybe you are one of the four, bringing others to Jesus. I encourage you to do so. Let us WALK back to our daily life with a renewed mind, body, heart, and vision.

1. David E. Garland, *The NIV Application Commentary*, Mark P 71

2. *ibid* P 94