

The Untouchable Sinner and the Unstoppable Saviour

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[0 : 00] All right, please take out your Bibles to Mark chapter 1, Mark chapter 1. If you are new or visiting, welcome. My name is BK. I have a pleasure of being one of the pastors here.

And this is kind of an odd Sunday. It's kind of like a hinge Sunday. This weekend being the long weekend, we all know that we're missing some of our family.

Some of our family are away, dropping off kids, whether it be at university or different schools. There's always this time of transition that's happening. And because of that, there's a few different announcements that I have to make. One, if you are a member here or you've been attending long-term, one of the greatest things, the most powerful thing that we need here at our church is those that work in the hospitality, those that meet and greet new people. I think most people would say one of the things that the reasons why they're here is just as Chris said, you always want family to welcome you, people to know you, get to know you, be a part of your life. So next Sunday, Chris is going to be having a meeting. And if you'd like to be a part of that, that kind of hospitality includes a greeting, welcome desk, ushers, coffee bar, all those places that when people first come in before the service, just to kind of get to know us, that's part of that ministry. So we would appreciate you stopping by. If you intend to be there, you can always drop your name off at the welcome desk after the service, let them know. Yeah, the other big thing is we don't live in a big brown building anymore. Praise the Lord, eh? What do you guys think? Is it looking okay?

All right. We give thanks to those who have certainly taken the time both to plan it, organize it, pick the colors, and to fund the painting. Do you guys see the article in Squamish Chief? You know, apparently we're an old landmark that's got a refreshing. So I'm glad they actually featured that in here. And the other news that I want to bring up, if you look in your announcements, there is a announcements for Young Life fundraising. So Glenn Davies over at The Rock may ask me if I could make sure we're all aware on the 13th, they're having this mountain bike Fondo, which I don't know if you're supposed to bring cheese or chocolate to, but it's supposed to be a get together, I don't know, ride the bikes along and do some dipping and sharing after. So if you'd like to give or be a part of that, please see the announcements and there should be contact over at The Rock. So before I go any further,

I just want to pray for some of those things. Next week, we kind of begin our fall program. We're going to be beginning with a short three-part series just to give people an understanding of our church. We're going to have a series that's going to deal with the mission, vision, and values of Squamish Baptist Church just to bring people up to speed what we're about, not only what we do, but why we do it. Maybe you've been here for a long time and you're kind of curious, this is the series for you. And then by October, Lord willing, we're going to be back in Romans. So I'm looking forward to that as well. But before I go any further in today's text, let's just go before our great Lord and Savior and pray. Dear most holy heavenly Father, we just thank you for those that have been a part of the repainting of our building. Yes, it's just a painting, a building, oh Father, but it's where we come to meet you, to worship you, to lift your name up high, both through our singing, our praying, our preaching, our just coming together in fellowship of Father. So we give you thanks to those who gave to the project, those who've been in charge of the project, those who've helped pick the colors and the schemes. And I have been so encouraged by the words of so many of the people that have come to faith here, who have grown in their faith here, how they've been wanting to be a part of beautifying the place so that it represents the beauty of your word that is preached here every

[4 : 38] Sunday, oh Father. That it's a gathering of people who come around your word, long to mind its depths, to search its unsearchable or unending treasures. All so that we can know you, to

grow in you, and to share you with others, oh Lord. There's going to be some changes here, oh Father, and I pray that you bless every single one of those changes, everything from new signage to the new colors to even as we organize our worship service to better reflect you and your glory, oh Lord. So Father, as we come to this text, it is a personally challenging text, I pray that it grips us. I pray that we truly hear what Mark is telling us about our Savior, Jesus Christ. I ask that you would give my voice clarity.

Pray that you would give me just even clarity from my allergies right now, Father, that my voice would not be a distraction to this text and to this sermon. So Father, I ask you to bless every soul that is here.

I ask that you would bless every member of our church that is away dropping off their children at university and in different schools. These are big transition in the life of some of the families here, oh Father. And those type of transitions call on a further leaning in on you, a dependency on you, which is absolutely beautiful because we are unable to plan all things, but we walk trusting you day by day.

So I thank you for these things and I ask for these things for our family. In your most holy and precious name, amen. So please turn in your Bibles to Mark chapter 1. Mark chapter 1. I'm going to begin by reading today's text.

Starting in verse 40. And a leper came to Mark chapter 1.

[7 : 27] And he said, And people were coming to him from every quarter.

So this morning we are stepping into the gospel of Mark at the very beginning of the ministry of Jesus Christ. If you're unfamiliar with this chapter, it is an incredibly busy chapter.

It begins with Jesus Christ being baptized and launching his public ministry. It is followed by 40 days of Jesus enduring temptation in the wilderness by Satan.

It also includes Jesus calling disciples, Jesus preaching in synagogues, Jesus casting out demons, Jesus healing the sick, and Jesus specifically looking for time with his Father in prayer.

Mark begins like a rocket ship. There's no setting of the story. There's very little details.

[9 : 20] Birth of Christ doesn't matter. His parents not mentioned. Mark doesn't care about those things. Mark has this message that he wants to give to his listeners.

And he wants them to know and understand that Jesus Christ is God himself. So Mark presents Jesus in chapter 1 to be in the thick of ministry.

The context is people are buzzing. Crowds are pressing in. People are getting healed by the hundreds, if not by the thousands. And everywhere Jesus goes, there is a question that is being asked.

And that question is, who is this man? And then all of a sudden we find ourselves in Mark 1 verse 40.

And it's almost like the author slows things down. It's like we've been watching this panorama of the life of Jesus. And the cameraman focuses in on this one simple story.

[10 : 28] And what's interesting is the camera doesn't focus in on a disciple. The camera doesn't focus in on a famous Jewish leader. The camera doesn't focus in on a famous Roman leader.

In fact, it focuses in on a leper who has no name. The man is an outsider.

This is a man who exists on the margins of life. This is a man nobody dares to touch. He is a leper. Before I say anything more, it's important for us to understand what it meant to be a leper in that culture. Leprosy wasn't just about being sick or having a disease.

It was ultimately about being called unclean. To be a leper was to be an outcast. To be a leper was to be rejected.

[11 : 34] To be a leper was to be isolated. To be a leper was to be treated like the walking dead. I'll go into some of the finer details in a moment, but I want you to feel the weight of this moment, because Mark wants you to.

The man who the camera of Scripture zooms in on actually has no right to be before Jesus.

Jewish law states that he's not even supposed to come near anyone, let alone a Jewish rabbi. But he does. He throws himself at the feet of Jesus in desperation.

And what happens, some say, is shocking. I say is actually scandalous. Because Jesus does something that nobody expects.

Jesus doesn't recoil. Jesus doesn't step back. Jesus doesn't step away. Jesus doesn't quote the law and tells him why he should not be before him.

[12:50] Jesus, before saying anything else, actually reaches out. Jesus touches the untouchable and says words that change everything.

Be clean. Make no mistake, this is not a healing story in the life of Jesus Christ. This is a confrontation story.

Before, as I've entitled the sermon, it is the untouchable sinner and the unstoppable Savior. And this story matters to us, because spiritually speaking, when we are without Christ, we are unclean. Make no mistake about it. When you are in sin, you are isolated. Sin, shame, sin separates us from one another. It separates us from mother, father, brother, sister, friend.

It damages us. But ultimately, more important, sin separates us from the ultimate eternal love of God.

[14:03] But here's the good news. The same Jesus who touched the leper is the same Jesus who touches us today. So today we're going to look at this story, and we're going to look at three specific parts.

I want us to look at the first, which is the desperate plea of the leper. The second point that I want to look at is the divine touch of the Savior.

The third point I want us to look at today is the difficult command that reveals the mission of Jesus Christ. And at the end of this sermon, I am going to ask you, are you the one still keeping your distance from Jesus?

Or have you fallen at the feet of Jesus and heard him say, be clean? So my first point is derived from Mark 1, verse 40.

It says, And a leper came to him, imploring him, and kneeling, said to him, if you will, you can make me clean.

[15:17] What we're reading here is one of the boldest, most desperate acts in the Gospels. A leper comes to Jesus, and this phrase should make us gasp.

If we understood what was going on in this scenario, when you're reading this first century, you're like, whoa! No way a leper would do that.

It's unheard of. Because if you lived in that world, you knew leopards didn't come to people. They kept away from people. You see, by law, by Jewish law, they were banished.

By custom, they were shunned. By religion, they were judged. And yet, here he is, this leper is throwing himself at the feet of Jesus.

Now, let me explain to you what it meant to be a leper in the first century culture. First, the word leprosy doesn't always mean what we think about it today. Today, the technical word for leprosy is Hansen's disease.

[16:24] But the idea, when we look in the Bible and it says leprosy, it actually covers a whole range of skin conditions. Could be eczema, psoriasis, boils, burns, even ringworm, or even severe dandruff would be enough to declare you unclean.

In fact, there were over 70 possibilities that are mentioned. But they didn't have modern medicine, so the responsibility to look you over, if there was something suspicious, you would actually go see the priest.

And there'd be a priest in every town and city that'd have that responsibility. And if you were found to have leprosy of one of these conditions, you were declared unclean.

What's interesting, it's not a medical label. It was actually a social and spiritual death sentence.

Now, the laws that garnered them come from Leviticus 13 and 14.

Let me just briefly go through the steps. Let's just say one morning you wake up and there's a lesion or something funny on your forearm, a swelling or discoloration.

[17:47] Your first responsibility was to go to the priest. The priest would look at you and if he was unsure, he'd actually quarantine you for a week. He'd say, let's just see what happens in this week.

Now, if you came back and that happened to grow or more appeared, you would be declared unclean. There was no other priest for you to go to.

There was no other judge to overturn the sentence. That priest had the authority. And the fact is you were to accept his judgment as binding regardless of how it made you feel.

Now, now that you've been declared to have leprosy and you're called unclean, Leviticus 14 actually tells them how they were supposed to act. One, they were actually supposed to wear ripped and torn clothes.

That was the first thing you had to do. So you actually had to change your wardrobe. Did not matter what social circles you came from, you had to wear torn clothes. The other thing is you had to mess up your hair.

[18 : 55] You had to mess up your hair. Just had to make sure that you looked messy and then you would wear a cover on the lower part of your face.

And the final thing is when people approached you, you were to yell unclean, unclean, unclean. You were to warn them for people to stay away from you.

So what did it mean to be unclean? One, it means that you were forever to be separated from the presence of God. That meant you were not allowed to go to the temple and give sacrifices.

Because Israel was called to be holy because God is holy and to be unclean meant you could not approach the tabernacle, the temple, or participate in worship until you were cleansed.

You see, to be unclean was a barrier, a reminder that sin and impurity cannot dwell in God's holy presence. So ultimately, when someone cried out unclean, they were saying, I am unfit for fellowship with God.

[20 : 13] God. The second thing, when they declared themselves unclean, they were excluded from normal life.

Leviticus 13, 46 says, he shall live alone. His dwelling shall be outside the camp. Being unclean meant isolation.

It meant cut off from family, friends, and society. Like I said, they had to announce their condition publicly.

And this created a life of shame, stigma, and loneliness. You were in effect banished from the camp. You lived outside the city.

So to be a leper meant you lived outside the camp. You were cut off from family. You were cut off from community. You were cut off from worship. And you weren't just sick. You essentially were dead to the world.

[21 : 21] Josephus, the Jewish historian, said lepers were treated as if they were corpses. Rabbis bragged they wouldn't buy an egg on a street that a leper had walked down.

Imagine the shame. People would see you and turn away. They could smell your rotting flesh and they would turn away.

And I don't know if you know, but leprosy actually affects your vocal cords. And you develop a raspy voice. So just even hearing that voice you would run away.

You see, uncleanliness was not always sinful in itself, but it symbolizes the defilement of sin within God's people.

It reminded Israel that life in a fallen world is constantly tainted and that holiness requires separation from impurity. Dr. Paul Bran, a known leprosy expert, describes how the disease numbs the nerves.

[22 : 48] The people would lose sensation so they injure themselves without realizing it. Fingers wear away and they actually get drawn into the bone.

There's ulcers appear. Faces become distorted to the point that you would look grotesque. You sounded broken and you smelt of decay. Feel the weight of that as this man now comes to Jesus.

This man has not been touched in years. no hug from his wife, no hand from his child, no embrace from a friend.

He's been enduring silence and distance his whole life of having leprosy. This for us is also a gruesome picture of hell.

It is the eternal separation from God. A lot of people say, hey, I'll be happy in hell. I get to be with all my friends and the rest of us hell bound people. No, you will not.

[24 : 00] The Bible talks about you will be separated from everything. It's a place of no peace. There's no relationships or any of that. It's to be robbed of all those things.

things. And here's the thing. If you had leprosy, you had to depend on this priestly mediation.

You could declare your boil gone and declare yourself clean. Didn't matter unless the priest said so. You were dependent upon him to make that decision.

Only the priest could pronounce cleansing after examination and offering a sacrifice. What this did is it showed the need for a mediator between the unclean person and God's holiness.

And yet he dares come to Jesus. In fact, I would imagine he boldly approached. Notice how Mark describes him. He implores.

[25 : 08] He kneels. Gospel of Luke tells us he falls on his face. He begged. Matthew says he worshipped. Different angles, same picture.

But what we see is desperation and reverence. And hear his words. If you will, you can make me clean. Why? Because in those 39 preceding verses, Jesus has been going through Capernaum and Galilee actually, and he's healing everybody and he's seeing miracle after miracle after miracle. So now he knows there's hope. There's someone who seems to be acting with the authority of God himself. And anybody knows from that background, only God heals leprosy.

So he says, if you will, you can make me clean. Notice he doesn't say heal me.

He says, make me clean. Leprosy isn't his worry. The disease isn't his worry. It's being separated from the people of God.

[26 : 23] That is his greatest concern. You see, this just isn't about health. He's asking for restoration. He's asking for acceptance.

He's asking to be brought back in. And notice how he doesn't doubt the power of Jesus. He says, you can. But he wonders about Jesus' mercy.

If you will. What we're seeing here is we are witnessing a man who is both humble, faithful, and ultimately desperate.

You see, this leper is a mirror. That mirror is turned towards us because spiritually this is every one of us when we are outside of Jesus Christ.

We are unclean. You see, leprosy is the sin. Sin is the leprosy of the soul. Our sin cuts us off from God.

[27 : 35] It isolates us. It shames us. It makes us unfit for his presence. Let's be honest. Some of us can clean up really well on the outside, but we know on the inside we still say, or better yet, cry, unclean, unclean.

I'm unclean. I'm unclean. And until we see that, until we see our sin, not as a mistake to manage, but as a disease that makes us unclean before a holy God, we will never fall at the feet of Jesus. We will never fall at the feet of Jesus. Let me repeat that. Sin is not something we mask or manage. Sin is a disease that makes us unclean before a holy God.

And if we don't understand that, we will never cry out in desperation, Jesus, heal me. Jesus, make me clean.

Do you get that thing with our sin as well? It's not just heal me from my sin or the effects of my sin. It's confession before God and it's asking him, God, make me clean.

[29 : 04] Because here's the truth, you don't come to Jesus with pride in your hands. You come on your knees. You come empty, desperate, broken.

And that's where the cleansing begins. I was reading about a pastor who was visiting a leopard colony in India.

And he said the most haunting thing wasn't deformities. He confessed that the most haunting aspect of leprosy was the eyes, the hollowness of the eyes, the aching look of people who had not embraced them.

The pastor writes, one man, when I shook his hand, broke down weeping, not because he was healed, but because I simply touched him. This is the world of this leper in Mark chapter 1.

And that's the world of anyone who knows their sin has cut them off from God. God. So my simple question for you this morning is, have you come to Jesus like this?

[30 : 21] I'm not talking about coming to Jesus in a casual way, not talking about coming to Jesus in a convenient way, but you come to Jesus in a desperate way.

Or, are you still standing back, are you still managing your image, pretending you're fine, when in truth you know, unclean, unclean?

You see, the starting point of cleansing is always desperation until you know and understand you're unclean, you'll never fall at the feet of Jesus. You can tell me all you want, I want to know Jesus, I love Jesus, I love everything about Jesus, but until you're encompassed by that desperate hope that you need to be clean, you truly do not know Jesus.

The fact is, the takeaway from point one here is desperation drives us to Jesus, and until we see our uncleanliness, we will never cry out for his cleansing.

Let's look at point two, what does Jesus do? Verse 41, moved with pity, he stretched out his hand and touched him. The first thing we read is Jesus truly loving this man, touched him and said, I will be clean.

[31 : 53] And immediately the leprosy left him and he was made clean. This is the turning point, this is the man's desperate need, plea, meets the Savior's divine touch.

Mark tells us that Jesus was moved with pity. Some translations render it compassion, but the idea here is more than just sympathy. What Jesus experiences is a gut-wrenching, heart-twisting response to this person's place in life.

Jesus sees his suffering, he understands the suffering, he knows the disease, he knows the shame, he knows the isolation, and his soul is stirred. Think about this for a second.

When everyone else saw a leper, they ran away because he was a problem. When Jesus saw a leper, he feels their pain. He doesn't recoil, he is moved.

And I'm going to be honest with you, I don't know how many of you have ever seen someone has leprosy, but I spent time in southern China, and they actually organized some of the children who have leprosy to do the begging.

[33 : 09] It is overwhelming. Your first instinct is to recoil. Like they're missing half their limbs. It's not anything that we're used to seeing here.

It's not nice and neat type of he doesn't have a hand. It's a nub with the rest of his arm falling off and his face is deformed. It's overwhelming. It's striking.

And your first instinct is to stay away. But not Jesus. He's not disgusted, but he's drawn in.

And this is the heart of our beautiful God. This is the heart that is described in Colossians 3.12 what he tells us to do when he says put on then as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.

So this man comes before Jesus and Jesus reaches out to touch him. Jesus does the thing he's not supposed to do. Because if he touched the leper, guess what?

[34 : 19] He's unclean too now. Leviticus is clear. Touch a leper and you become unclean yourself.

The safe response was distance. The safe response was to step back, but Jesus steps forward. You can imagine the gasp of the onlookers.

You can even picture the leper. Is he going to do something or not? Is he going to run away? Is he going to reject me? But instead, he feels the warmth of a hand on his decaying skin.

And in that single touch, Jesus simply said, I am not afraid of your uncleanness. I am not ashamed of you. I will come near.

this is a man who had not been touched in years, yet Jesus' touch restored more than his health, restored his dignity, his humanity, his belonging.

[35 : 34] And some of you know exactly what I'm talking about. You know that moment when Jesus invaded your life, and he takes all that shame and that guilt the way, and you know at once you are a child of the king.

And you have every right to be there. All that stuff from the past does not matter. Sadly, some people will think it matters, but to those who know Jesus and who've been redeemed by Jesus, knows it doesn't matter.

Amen? Can I get a Baptist amen for crying out loud? Amen? Thank you. Cam, you're a member just for that. We want these.

We want amen these things. And Mark says, the leprosy left him, and he was made clean. The disease didn't spread to Jesus, his purity spread to the man.

Normally, uncleanness is contagious, but here, holiness is contagious. Now, here's a key question that people will ask. Did Jesus Christ actually break the law?

[36 : 49] Because the law said you're not supposed to touch a leper. But our understanding is, and R.C. Sproul uses this great analogy, how many times, and it doesn't happen in Squamish a lot, but when I used to live in downtown Toronto, oftentimes at an intersection, there was a police officer who directed traffic.

traffic. And if I sat there in my car, and the light is red, and the police officer is telling me to go, who do I obey? The police officer, right?

Otherwise, you're going to get a ticket. In normal circumstances, the lights would have mean, and that's what's happening here. In that place, the officer's authority supersedes the signal.

And here is Jesus Christ who supersedes the law, because he is the embodiment of the law. And as God in the flesh, he doesn't abolish it, he fulfills it. And his word carries divine authority.

When he says, be clean, we are made clean. See, Jesus doesn't sidestep the law, he embodies its fulfillment.

[37 : 57] And here he is, he's not contaminated by the leper, he reverses the curse and takes what was unclean and makes it holy. holy. That's what happens when Jesus Christ redeems us.

He takes that broken, miserable corpse that we used to be, and he makes us holy, makes us pure. He makes us his own.

This is bigger than a healing. What we're reading here is a preview of the cross. There's an exchange that's taken place here. And we're going to get to it because it's a little bit of the punch line in the next point.

But now, on that day, the ultimate exchange would take place. Jesus would take our uncleanness, our sin, our shame, and he gives us his righteousness.

Paul would later write about this in 2 Corinthians 5.21. He says, he made him who knew no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

[39 : 06] Amen? Theologians would write that this is the day Jesus switched place with the leper. The clean one becomes unclean, so the unclean can become clean.

There's a wonderful story in the late 1800s. A Belgian Catholic priest named Damien de Voister made the decision to live amongst the lepers and Molokai village in Hawaii.

Nobody was caring for them, so he moved in with them, he cared them, embraced them, ate with them, and eventually after 11 years he actually contracted the leprosy and died.

And people asked him, you're nuts, what are you doing, why would you do that? And he simply responded, because they needed to know they weren't forsaken. that's truly what happened that day when Jesus came down.

The sin that began in Genesis are separated from God when Jesus came down was to let us know we're not forsaken.

[40 : 21] You see, this is the heart of Christ and it ultimately cost him his life. So here's the question. Who are the lepers in your world?

Who are the untouchables, the people you'd rather avoid, the ones who make you uncomfortable, the ones society pushes back to the margins? Could be the addict, it could be the homeless person on the corner, perhaps it's someone who's hurt you and you'd rather keep them at arm's length. or maybe it's the family member who is, sin is so public and messy that it's an embarrassment to you.

You see, compassion isn't just a feeling. Compassion is a choice to reach out. And I'm going to tell you right now, compassion costs.

It costs. It risks your reputation, and it risks our comfort zone. But in case you're wondering, no one did it for you, let me tell you, there's one who did.

[41 : 34] He left heaven to be here on earth for you. Jesus reached out to you when you were untouchable. Jesus bore your shame, your sin, and he took your uncleanness.

So my question is, will you reach out? Will you stretch out your hand even when it's inconvenient, costly, and uncomfortable? You see, Jesus doesn't recoil from the unclean.

He reaches out, takes our place, and makes us clean. All too often, too many have heard growing up that Christians stay away from the people that actually need to hear about Jesus the most.

How backwards we've got that. Let's look at point three. It's a difficult command. Verse 43, And Jesus sternly charged him and sent him away at once and said to him, See that you say nothing to anyone, but go, show yourself to the priests, and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded for proof to them.

So after the miracle comes this command, and this command is surprisingly strong. Mark says Jesus sternly charged him. The Greek word carries the idea of like a horse with its nostrils flaring.

[43 : 04] He is being worn, bristling, almost like he's intense. Don't tell anybody. It's not casual advice.

It's urgent, emphatic, and it's loaded with seriousness. And the ultimate question is, why would Jesus forbid the man to speak?

Isn't testimony good? Wouldn't this be a powerful witness? After all, we're still in chapter one of Mark. But this touches on what scholars call the messianic secret.

spirit. And you remember early in his ministry, Jesus often silenced demons. He discouraged publicity, and he urged silence after healings.

Why? Because people always misunderstood the mission of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ came to die on the cross. Jesus Christ did not come to overthrow Rome.

[44 : 07] Rome. The people wanted a miracle worker, a political deliverer, a king to overthrow Rome. But Jesus came not first to take a throne, but to bear a cross.

The fact is, had the word spread too quickly, the crowds would have tried to force him into kingship. And if that had happened, Rome would have crushed the movement of Jesus Christ immediately. The timing of his death would have been rushed, and everything the prophetic prophecies would not have been accomplished at the right hour. Jesus wasn't hiding his identity forever, but he was controlling the timeline until the appointed hour.

So why send the leper to the priests? You see, when someone announced they were unclean, it meant that they were without hope unless God intervenes.

Jesus, being the master strategist, knows he tells them right away, go to the priest. Because they knew that this type of disease had no natural cure.

[45 : 24] That's why the leper, in Mark 140, cries, if you will, you can make me clean. His plea is not just for health, but a restoration to God, community, and his dignity. Now, when Jesus commands to go to the priest, he's actually following the Mosaic law from Leviticus 14.

Sorry. It involved examinations, sacrifices, rituals.

It involved birds, cedars, scarlet, hyssop, even the anointing of the ear, thumb, and toe. What they were doing is examining to make sure that he was truly unclean.

But what Jesus was doing, it wasn't just a testimony to the man. It was a testimony to the priests. Because the priests knew only God could heal leprosy.

Only God could make one unclean. So here, a priest would have to deal with the reality that a man who was declared unclean is now clean before him.

[46 : 40] And the priest would know only God's work could do this. So when people ask the priest, who is Jesus that made this man clean?

he'd have to say God. The priest might reject Jesus, but they couldn't deny the evidence. See, Jesus wasn't a lawbreaker.

Jesus was the one who fulfilled the law. By sending the man to the temple, he validated Moses while pointing to himself as greater than Moses.

In fact, his miracles weren't random acts of kindness, they were signposts to his authority. But then a tragedy happens.

Verse 45, the leper, but when he went out, 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.

[48 : 00] The man disobeys. Instead of silence, he shouts, instead of going to the priest, he spreads the news. Now I want you to notice what happens. The leper is now accepted in the cities.

Guess who can't go in the cities anymore? Jesus. There's almost this exchange that takes place. Jesus can no longer move freely into the towns and his preaching is restricted to the wilderness. And we read that the leper's excitement chokes the very mission Jesus came to fulfill. And we see in the very end a sobering reminder, our disobedience even when well intention has consequences. consequences. The man thought he was helping Jesus, but in reality, he was hindering him. The leper, once outside, is now brought in and Jesus, once free, is now pushed out into desolate places. This is a shadow of the gospel. This is Jesus taking the outsider's place. He's cast out so the other can be brought in.

[49 : 22] This is an ultimate foreshadowing of the cross, where the perfectly clean son of God was treated as unclean, forsaken, outside the city gates, so sinners could be welcomed into the presence of God.

So what do we make of this? One, obedience matters. Jesus' commands aren't optional. Even enthusiasm can't excuse disobedience.

Partial obedience is still disobedience. Two, our mission must stay clear. The man wanted publicity, Jesus wanted purity.

The man wanted fame, Jesus wanted faith. How often do we substitute our version of helping God for humble obedience?

obedience. And my last applicable point here is gratitude for what Jesus has done must lead us to worship, not willfulness.

[50 : 28] And guess who determines the terms of that worship? God himself. Not us, God. God. The leper received grace, but then ignored the words of Jesus.

How often we do the same. We receive the blessing, then go our own way. So let me conclude. We've walked through one of the most moving encounters in the Gospels.

A desperate man, an untouchable leper, falls at the feet of Jesus. A divine touch restores him. A difficult command reveals both his weakness and Christ's mission. But I don't want you to miss the biggest picture here.

This isn't just his story, this is our story. Spiritually, every one of us is either a leper or was a leper. That sin isolates us, sins, shame, marks us. We may try to cover it up with respectability, but before a holy God, we know we cry the word unclean.

[51 : 41] And the good news of the Gospel is this, Jesus doesn't recoil, Jesus reaches out, Jesus takes our place, and he makes us clean.

So my question, which I posed at the beginning of this sermon, will you let Jesus clean you? Not talking about a mental action, but have you come to him with desperation?

Let's be honest, we all try to fix ourselves, we all try to clean ourselves up, we all try to make ourselves look good, but it doesn't work. The fact is only Jesus can make the unclean clean. the question isn't can he, the leper knew that, the question is will he? And his answer is the same today as it was then.

When we come in desperation, we ask him to make us clean, he says, I will be clean. And if you've never come to Christ, perhaps today is that day.

[52 : 54] Today is the day that you fall at your feet and you ask Jesus to cleanse your heart because he promises that he will.

The second application point is will you stretch out your hand? For those of you who belong in Christ, here's the challenge, compassion costs.

It's easy to feel pity, but it's harder to reach out. Takes up your time. It moves us from our comfort zone. It means being associated with people others avoid, but that's always been the way of Jesus. Think of the priest in Molokai. He chose to live among lepers, touch them, eat with them, love them, until he became one of them. Why? Because they needed to know that they weren't forsaken.

So the question is this, who is the leper in your world, the untouchable, the overlooked, the inconvenient? Will you reach out with the compassion of Christ?

[54 : 04] Because in the end, compassion takes courage, but when you've been made clean by Jesus, you can't help but stretch out your hand and say I will.

Let's pray. Dear most holy heavenly father, we thank you for this story of this man, the story that reflects our story so well.

Father, I can't help but say, but even in the application, we are to always use wisdom. And we are never to be the source of our own wisdom. All too often we have ideas that pop in our head and we think are biblical and right.

But this is why you have given church elders and those that are older, those that are more mature, those that are seasoned Christians to help us understand how to be compassionate towards others. Doesn't mean just go live in the world, means be wise in our interactions, to demonstrate compassion yet still be wise and not giving in to temptation or placing yourself in a place where you could fall back into the old ways of living.

[55 : 22] Father, like Paul, who was redeemed, trained for three years before he went out and taught. Father, I pray that just even through our small group ministry and the teaching that we as pastors and elders offers can help equip us with greater understanding to do these things that you've called us to.

But the one weapon every believer has, whether they're a new believer or one who's been saved for 40, 50 years, is we have a testimony. We have a story where we can explain what it was to live unclean.

We can share with that moment how desperate we were when we came to the Father and we simply ask him, this was the moment I asked Jesus to make me clean and he did.

This is why I love him. This is why I serve him. This is why I attend this church. This is why I give my spiritual gifts to this body because I want others to know him too.

Because I understand that Jesus Christ died for the church to redeem her, to make us right with him. So Father, I ask if there was any questions that need to come from this sermon, I please ask that they would be asked, that no one would refrain and seek to be their own voice of wisdom, but they would seek the counsel of those that perhaps brought them here, a mature believer, or one

of us who are pastors and elders at this church, O Lord.
[57 : 00] I ask these things in your mighty name. Amen. Amen.