

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.

2 And again He entered Capernaum after *some* days, and it was heard that He was in the house. ² Immediately many gathered together, so that there was no longer room to receive *them*, not even near the door. And He preached the word to them. ³ Then they came to Him, bringing a paralytic who was carried by four *men*. ⁴ And when they could not come near Him because of the crowd, they uncovered the roof where He was. So when they had broken through, they let down the bed on which the paralytic was lying. ⁵ When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven you.” ⁶ And some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, ⁷ “Why does this *Man* speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?” ⁸ But immediately, when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they reasoned thus within themselves, He said to them, “Why do you reason about these things in your hearts? ⁹ Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Arise, take up your bed and walk?’ ¹⁰ But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins”—He said to the paralytic, ¹¹ “I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.” ¹² Immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went out in the presence of them all, so that all were amazed and glorified God, saying, “We never saw *anything* like this!” ¹³ Then He went out again by the sea; and all the multitude came to Him, and He taught them. ¹⁴ As He passed by, He saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, “Follow Me.” So he arose and followed Him. ¹⁵ Now it happened, as He was dining in *Levi’s* house, that many tax collectors and sinners also sat together with Jesus and His disciples; for there were many, and they followed Him. ¹⁶ And when the scribes and Pharisees saw Him eating with the tax collectors and sinners, they said to His disciples, “How *is it* that He eats and drinks with tax collectors and sinners?” ¹⁷ When Jesus heard *it*, He said to them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call *the* righteous, but sinners, to repentance.”

Introduction:

Last month in our communion series we studied Mark Chapter 1: v. 16-39.

We discovered that Jesus was a man who had authority. He had authority over men, authority over evil spirits and authority over sickness.

Mark continues the theme of Jesus' authority.

However we begin to see that Jesus is teaching about something far more important than physical healing.

The teaching here in the passage that we read (1:40 - 2:17) is that Jesus has come for the religiously unacceptable. By this I mean people who were not accepted by the religious leaders of that day.

Mark also teaches us what He has come to do for them.

Jesus, v. 38 of chapter 1, establishes himself as a preacher / teacher but actually goes on to heal more people. Why is this? Well it is very clear that from now on when Jesus heals somebody He uses it to teach something about who he is and why he came. It is not just healing for the sake of healing, but healing that teaches us a message. It is the message behind the healing that we will focus upon today.

Mark makes three main points here. He begins in v. 40-45 of chapter 1 with the cleansing of the leper.

1. Jesus came for the unclean - v. 40-45.

The specific issue here is cleansing.

It is mentioned in v. 40, 41, and v. 42.

Leprosy was a term used for various infectious skin diseases.
A Leper was declared unclean and an outcast from the community and from God.

(Lev. 13: v. 45-46 - in the N.K.J.)

⁴⁵ “Now the leper on whom the sore is, his clothes shall be torn and his head bare; and he shall cover his mustache, and cry, ‘Unclean! Unclean!’ ⁴⁶ He shall be unclean. All the days he has the sore he shall be unclean. He is unclean, and he shall dwell alone; his dwelling shall be outside the camp.

Moses gave detailed instructions about how priests should verify a cure and pronounce the cured person, “clean”. Sacrifices had to be made which enabled the cleansed person to renew their fellowship with God and His people.

When ordinary people touched a leper they were defiled and became "unclean". However the leper was unchanged. When Jesus deliberately touches the leper, He doesn't become "unclean" , the leper is healed and becomes clean, and Jesus is not defiled. Jesus could have healed him from a distance; He was capable of that (see Mark 2:5) however He chose to touch him. (v. 41)

By Jesus touching and healing the leper He was saying that the man was no longer an outcast from the community and from God.

Jesus makes it clear here (v. 43-44) that He doesn't want the healed leper to publicise the fact of his healing. However He does want to show its significance (44b) that He can make the unclean, clean. Jesus never went against the Jewish Old Testament Law and Teachings.

Application - In the sight of God, each one of us is born into this world unclean. Our sin separates us from a Holy God. Jesus can make us clean from our sin and acceptable in God's sight. He did that by dying on a cross and receiving God's Punishment on our behalf. He was a substitute sacrifice for all those who believe in Him.

Testimony

I used to play golf in England with a man who was considered to be like a leper. He used to be an armed robber. He robbed post offices at gun point and made a lot of money. However one day he was caught and put into prison. His probation officer was a Christian. In the U.K. people in prison have visits from a probation officer when they are soon to be released. They help them to make positive plans to be good in the future. The last probation officer shared the gospel with this man and later he became a Christian. In the view of people in the world this man was still like a leper, but God had forgiven him. Only his changed life could show the world that God had done a wonderful thing in his heart. He eventually became a missionary and went to Africa. God blessed him and many Muslims became Christians. He was arrested and put in prison and tortured. God rescued him eventually and He wrote a book called “Time to Tell”. God is using that book to reach many more people considered to be like lepers and some are becoming Christians.

What a wonderful Saviour we have in Jesus who touches people even today who are like lepers and uses them to extend His kingdom. God can do that here in Japan today. All it takes is to share the gospel to those we meet.

2. Jesus has authority to forgive sin - 2: v. 1-12.

In Chapter 2: v. 1-12 Mark explains how Jesus can make the unclean, clean.

It is interesting to note that in v. 5 Jesus reacted in an unusual way.

The Paralytic obviously wanted healing, but Jesus was only concerned initially about the healing of His soul.

Jesus was demonstrating that forgiveness was an even greater need than physical healing. This was primarily why Jesus was a teacher and not a healer. The Scribes understood what Jesus was doing in the situation. (v. 7) Their logic was very clear. All sin is against God alone (Psalm 51: v. 4)

⁴ **Against** You, You only, have I sinned, And done *this* evil in Your sight— That You may be found just when You speak, *And* blameless when You judge.

Therefore it figures that God alone can forgive sin.
So Jesus is either God or He is blaspheming and telling lies?

In Chapter 2: v. 8b - 11 we have Jesus speaking to the scribes.

“Why do you reason about these things in your hearts? ⁹ Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Arise, take up your bed and walk?’ ¹⁰ But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins”—He said to the paralytic, ¹¹ “I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.”

The statement "your sins are forgiven" is easier to say because although harder to do, is unverifiable. (In other words you can't check it out to see if it is real)

The forgiven man looks like the unforgiven man. (He is still a paralytic)

" Arise take up your bed and walk, although easier to do, is harder to say, because it is instantly verifiable and therefore if Jesus was blaspheming (v. 7) it would be immediately obvious. If the man could not take up his bed and walk then the authority and power of Jesus would be challenged.

Jesus therefore does the thing that is harder to say but instantly verifiable to prove. It was 100% clear to everybody at the time. They saw it with their own eyes.

Jesus also did the thing that is easier to say yet unverifiable.

Jesus did the visible to prove that He also does the invisible and the only conclusion at the end of v. 12 must be that Jesus is God.

¹² **Im**mediately he arose, took up the bed, and went out in the presence of them all, so that all were amazed and glorified God, saying, “We never saw *anything* like this!”

Application - Some people say to me “Show me Jesus and I will believe”.

I say to them, yes you can see Jesus, living through people who believe in Him.

When we become a Christian the Holy Spirit gives us a down payment of our full Salvation. That part of our life is the only Jesus that people will see.

(Ephesian 1 : v. 13-14)

¹³ **In** Him you also *trusted*, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

Therefore by living a life that reflects God’s love and forgiveness in our lives it adds to the testimony that Jesus does in fact have the authority to forgive sin. It was the physical change in the man’s condition that pointed to the person of Jesus. He must be God, because only God has the right to forgive sin.

3. Jesus came for sinners, not the righteous - v. 13-17.

The Pharisees did not consider everyone a sinner. It was only those whose way of life was openly sinful. Tax collectors were an example of people who were particularly despised. They were like the leper, you could be defiled if you eat with them. In the minds of the Scribes and Pharisees raised a question. Does Jesus take sin seriously? If Jesus eats with sinners, surely He will become unclean. So is Jesus really who He claims to be?

Well !!! Jesus answers the question that was inside the hearts of the Religious leaders.

¹⁷ **Wh**en Jesus heard *it*, He said to them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call *the* righteous, but sinners, to repentance.”

What does Jesus mean by his statement in v. 17?

It is very clear from Chapter 7: v. 1- 23 that God sees no one as righteous and therefore Jesus has come to rescue everybody, because we all need saving.

Mark 7: v. 1-23 in the N.L.T.

One day some Pharisees and teachers of religious law arrived from Jerusalem to see Jesus. ² They noticed that some of his disciples failed to follow the Jewish ritual of hand washing before eating. ³ (The Jews, especially the Pharisees, do not eat until they have poured water over their cupped hands, as required by their ancient traditions. ⁴ Similarly, they don't eat anything from the market until they immerse their hands in water. This is but one of many traditions they have clung to—such as their ceremonial washing of cups, pitchers, and kettles.) ⁵ So the Pharisees and teachers of religious law asked him, “Why don't your disciples follow our age-old tradition? They eat without first performing the hand-washing ceremony.” ⁶ Jesus replied, “You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you, for he wrote, ‘These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. ⁷ Their worship is a farce, for they teach man-made ideas as commands from God.’ ⁸ For you ignore God's law and substitute your own tradition.” ⁹ Then he said, “You skillfully sidestep God's law in order to hold on to your own tradition. ¹⁰ For instance, Moses gave you this law from God: ‘Honor your father and mother,’ and ‘Anyone who speaks disrespectfully of father or mother must be put to death.’ ¹¹ But you say it is all right for people to say to their parents, ‘Sorry, I can't help you. For I have vowed to give to God what I would have given to you.’ ¹² In this way, you let them disregard their needy parents. ¹³ And so you cancel the word of God in order to hand down your own tradition. And this is only one example among many others.” ¹⁴ Then Jesus called to the crowd to come and hear. “All of you listen,” he said, “and try to understand. ¹⁵ It's not what goes into your body that defiles you; you are defiled by what comes from your heart.” ¹⁷ Then Jesus went into a house to get away from the crowd, and his disciples asked him what he meant by the parable he had just used. ¹⁸ “Don't you understand either?” he asked. “Can't you see that the food you put into your body cannot defile you? ¹⁹ Food doesn't go into your heart, but only passes through the stomach and then goes into the sewer.” (By saying this, he declared that every kind of food is acceptable in God's eyes.) ²⁰ And then he added, “It is what comes from inside that defiles you. ²¹ For from within, out of a person's heart, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, ²² adultery, greed, wickedness, deceit, lustful desires, envy, slander, pride, and foolishness. ²³ All these vile things come from within; they are what defile you.”

However on another level Jesus is saying that He has not come for those who are righteous in their own eyes and see no need of forgiveness of sin.

2,000 years later, nothing has changed. Most people judge their lives by other people and not by a 100% Holy God. My golfing partner in the U.K. is still judged by people as being a reformed criminal and still despised. However in God's eyes He is accepted, forgiven and dearly loved by God. You can't judge God and the teaching of the Bible by other Christians, but you can look to Jesus and He will show you your sin and your need of forgiveness.

Before we take the bread and the wine to remember the death of the Lord Jesus we can know the forgiveness of our sins and the cleansing power of God in our lives.

If you are not a Christian today, in God's eyes you are like a leper in need of cleansing. Let us all close our eyes and pray, except for those who would like to become a Christian today. They can read the prayer on the screen and know God's forgiveness and cleansing today.

(Put up a slide in English and Japanese and I will read in English and perhaps Yuko you could read the prayer in Japanese. People can repeat the words in their hearts.)

Father God, the God of the Bible, I admit that I am not 100% Holy and that I have done things to offend you.

Please forgive me for those things today because of what your Son Jesus Christ has done to take the punishment for my sin.

Please come into my life to be my Lord and Saviour.

I promise to follow you as you help me each day.

Amen.