

# Scrolls

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## Meeting the Messiah Good, Better, Best

Week 5  
February 2, 2025

Mark 1:35-45

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### WORD STUDY

#### *Leprosy:*

There were at least 57 skin diseases that would have been considered leprosy back in biblical times. Today though, I do not want to focus on what it was so much as what it represents. Leprosy is a clear picture of sin and its results on us and those around us. Our sin does not just affect us but those in our family, church and community. The problem is that the whole community is infected with the disease of sin. We may try to avoid those with obvious sin in their lives but deep down we know that we struggle with it as well. All of us need to go to Jesus Who is the only One that can heal and cleanse our disease of sin as He did on the cross. As we are saved from sin and we see how God is cleaning our lives up, we must not just focus on the work but on the One Who did the work for us by taking our sin on Himself and nailing it to the cross.

### I. V. 35

Mark uses a double term here to describe a “wilderness place.” The wilderness brings back thoughts of when Jesus faced temptation in solitude. Now however, we see Jesus pulling back from the crowds and all that they wanted from Him and saw in Him. The people were loud and asking a lot of Jesus and even though He had compassion on them, He knew that He had to get alone with the Father to pray. This leads us to ask the question, “Why would Jesus want to be alone when there are so many people who want to follow Him because of their being impressed with the work He was doing?” We will see the answer to this question in the next section.

Mark only records Jesus praying three times. Once here where His ministry is beginning to be defined, again in the middle of the letter after feeding the five thousand, and finally in the garden of Gethsemane. Each time we see Jesus praying in this gospel it is a time when a critical event is taking place and the time in verse 35 is not different. Jesus seeks a place of solitude and quietness even though many are desiring His attention. Jesus’ power is in prayer where we see Him making it the priority of His ministry which is to carry out the will of His Father.

Long before the wilderness was seen as the place of Jesus being tempted or John the Baptist preaching, it was remembered as the place where God dealt with Israel in a time of repentance, restoration, and had fellowship with them. It was in the wilderness where God demonstrated that He could overcome their doubts and fears of what they would eat and drink. It was there that they learned that God would lead them if they would listen and follow. So now Jesus is in the place where no matter how many distractions were clawing for His

## LIFE LESSON

**No matter how much our ego is stroked by people wanting our attention, it is vitally important for us to get away and spend time with God to seek His will so that we will know the proper way to minister to those around us and give what they need and not necessarily what they want.**

attention, He could be alone and rest in the presence and fellowship of His Father. What a scene it is in our mind of what that time must have looked like. Jesus, knowing that He was facing desperate people in even more desperate circumstances that they didn't even understand, was calling out to His Father for strength and in submission to His will. For Jesus to do His outward work of ministry, He always finds His inner strength from His Father.

We don't have to be too imaginative to see the application to our lives. We too are around people who are in desperate circumstances, at times ourselves included, and we can find strength and direction from the One Who has called us to this great mission that we are on. There is much work to be done for the Kingdom of God where we are to go and tell others about the gospel and minister to those in need. But for our outward ministries to be anointed we must find time to allow God to do a work inside us so that we stay focused on why we are here and have the right mindset for the labor. Our relationship to mankind is important but for it to be right our relationship with God must be nurtured.

### II. VV. 36-39

As Jesus is praying, Simon and the other were looking for Him. When they find Him, they begin to remind Jesus that everyone is looking for Him. There is a sense of reproach when they confront Jesus almost as if Jesus did not know what He was supposed to be doing. This is only one of the times that Peter is named as one that is unknowingly trying to keep Jesus from fulfilling His purpose for being here.

This brings us back to the question that we asked in the first section, "Why would Jesus want to be alone when there are so many people who want to follow Him because of their being impressed with the work He was doing?" Jesus' answer to Peter and the others shows that they did not understand Him or His mission. Jesus tells them that they are going to the neighboring villages to preach. We must not be too hard on the disciples for not understanding what Jesus was doing. After all, there was much work to be done in Capernaum where they were. All the people were seeking Him and wanted to be near Him. But seeking implies control not repentance. They were looking for Jesus for what they wanted them to do not what He would have them do. William Lane writes, "The crowds that gathered in Capernaum had made their decision, but it could not be the appropriate one because it involved not repentance but attraction to Jesus as a performer of miracles." James Edwards reminds us that these crowds are not "a sign of success or aid to ministry." Sometimes "enthusiasm is not to be confused with faith; indeed, it can oppose faith."

It seems that the disciples wanted to capitalize on the “success” and popularity of Jesus where they were. But we must be reminded that even though healing and other miracles showed that Jesus had supernatural power, that was not His only or primary work. Jesus proclaimed His priority in Mark 1:14-15 which was to preach the gospel and announce that the Kingdom of God had come. When people become more concerned with the miracles of Jesus than the message of Jesus you know that there is a consequential misunderstanding of His mission.

Jesus goes into Galilee to preach in the synagogues where He is carrying out what has been prophesied and that is to carry the gospel to the Jews. The gospel is not to be carried about in a euphoric and aimless direction. God has a plan for the gospel and that is to deliver to the Jews first then to the gentiles. We too must look to the Bible to make sure that what we are doing lines up with God’s will. God has a plan for how His work is to be done and we do not have the authority to go willy-nilly about doing whatever we want and calling it Christianity. The end only justifies the means if the means are God’s methods.

### **III. VV. 40-45**

To have leprosy was about as bad as it got for a person in first century Palestine. His impurity was described in detail in Leviticus 13:45-46 <sup>45</sup>“The person who has a case of serious skin disease is to have his clothes torn and his hair hanging loose, and he must cover his mouth and cry out, ‘Unclean, unclean!’ <sup>46</sup>He will remain unclean as long as he has the disease; he is unclean. He must live alone in a place outside the camp.” Even if someone accidentally encountered a leper, they too would be unclean. Lepers were allowed to attend synagogue however, if they stayed behind a screen that was in place just for that reason.

Leprosy brought much physical as well as mental anguish to those who were afflicted with it, not only to the person who had it but also to the whole community. One can only imagine the humiliation and isolation that the victim must have felt from the consequences of such dreadful disease. We can safely assume that the man had went to priests for their rituals with no affect. Now he is going to Jesus where he is not looking for a ritual but for reality in healing which can come only from the One who has power over sickness and death. He was looking to Jesus to do what no ordinary man could do. Other diseases had to be healed but leprosy had to be cleansed and only Jesus can truly cleanse us.

William Lane points out that there are two sides to this encounter. First, we see the side from the afflicted man. The man saw a compassion which he had never seen before

## **PERSONAL REFLECTION**

- 1. How much time do you spend alone with God in order to strengthen your inward life in order to be more productive for the Kingdom in your outward life?**
- 2. Are you willing to put in the time to learn what the will of God is and follow it instead of trying to get God to go along with your agenda?**
- 3. Have you ever come to a place to where you were so desperate for a work of God in your life that you were willing to lay aside all traditions and call on Him?**
- 4. Not matter how bad you are or have been, do you believe that there is a compassion offered by Jesus that you have never experienced before? If so, when?**
- 5. When Jesus does a great work in you or around you do you only relish in the work or do you stop and thank the One who performed it?**

when Jesus touched him and healed him. On the other hand, we see that Jesus is willing to go against cultural norms when it comes to putting people before processes and procedures. H. Van der Loos said, “the ceremonial law gives place to the law of love when the two come into collision.” Traditions have been trying to hold the work of God back for years, but Jesus can and will overcome our cultural norms if we ask Him with a sincere heart. Desperation sometimes is the only thing that will break the traditions and pride in our lives.

When Jesus tells him not to tell anyone He uses the word “sternly” in the CSB which literally means snorting or the flaring of the nostrils. Jesus is serious about veiling His messianic identity so that it won’t be misunderstood. Jesus also tells the man to go show himself to the priest which was the Mosaic Law. This shows that Jesus honored the Law and was going to fulfill it. But if he did go to the priests and they saw the healing but did not healer then it would be condemnation for them on the day of judgment.

At the beginning of this story Jesus was on the inside and the leper was on the outside. But now we see Jesus on the outside because the people misunderstood Him. It is our sin and misunderstanding that caused Jesus to have to swap places with us. He went to the cross alone so that we could be accepted inside the Kingdom of God. My hope is that we do not misunderstand Who Jesus is and what He came to do. I hope we can understand that it is not what He offers but Who He is that intrigues us the most. Just like the leper in our passage today, each of us are in need to go to Jesus Who can do what no man can do and that is forgive sin and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

## **COMMENTARIES USED:**

1. Edwards, James R. 2002. *The Gospel according to Mark*. Grand Rapids; Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
2. Lane, William L. 2010. *The Gospel according to Mark*. Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans.

