

Message #6

“Lord Willing And The Creek Don't Rise”

Mark 1:40-45

**Introduction**

Toad baked some cookies. “These cookies smell very good,” said Toad. He ate one. “And they taste even better,” he said. Toad ran to Frog’s house. “Frog, Frog,” cried Toad, “taste these cookies that I have made.”

Frog ate one of the cookies, “These are the best cookies I have ever eaten!” said Frog.

Frog and Toad ate many cookies, one after another. “You know, Toad,” said Frog, with his mouth full, “I think we should stop eating. We will soon be sick.”

“You are right,” said Toad. “Let us eat one last cookie, and then we will stop.” Frog and Toad ate one last cookie. There were many cookies left in the bowl.

Frog,” said Toad, “let us eat one very last cookie, and then we will stop.” Frog and Toad ate one very last cookie. “We must stop eating!” cried Toad as he ate another.

“Yes,” said Frog, reaching for a cookie, “we need willpower.”

“What is willpower?” asked Toad.

“Willpower is trying hard not to do something you really want to do,” said Frog.

“You mean like trying hard not to eat all these cookies?” asked Toad.

“Right,” said Frog.

Frog put the cookies in a box. “There,” he said. “Now we will not eat any more cookies.”

“But we can open the box,” said Toad.

“That is true,” said Frog.

Frog tied some string around the box. “There,” he said. “Now we will not eat any more cookies.”

“But we can cut the string and open the box.” said Toad.

That is true,” said Frog.

Frog got a ladder. He put the box up on a high shelf. “There,” said Frog. “Now we will not eat any more cookies.”

“But we can climb the ladder and take the box down from the shelf and cut the string and open the box,” said Toad.

“That is true,” said Frog.

Frog climbed the ladder and took the box down from the shelf. He cut the string and opened the box.

Frog took the box outside. He shouted in a loud voice.

“Hey, birds, here are cookies!” Birds came from everywhere. They picked up all the cookies in their beaks and flew away.

“Now we have no more cookies to eat,” said Toad sadly.

“Not even one.”

“Yes,” said Frog, “but we have lots and lots of willpower.”

“You may keep it all, Frog,” said Toad. “I am going home now to bake a cake.”

All of us think we have amazing willpower, the ability to do things all on our own until we make a list of things we want or know we need to change about ourselves. We all have amazing willpower until the alarm clock goes off in the morning. Until we drive past a store that is having a sale. Until we walk into the grocery store and buy 20 things that were not on the list. I could go on but you get the picture. Often by trying to do everything on our own the exact opposite happens from what the world promises. Our lives become a wreck. People say that misery loves company but I have found the more miserable I am the truth is the less people I found around me.

It is not too long after having tried doing everything on my own that I find myself alone and a wreck. I chose not to listen and trust God and I am now paying the price. Have you been there? When I choose to live a life all for myself quickly I discover I am living a life all by myself. Living a life apart from the glory of God is a life that is even difficult to describe if you have been there. The thoughts, the emotions, even our daily routine when we get to that point seems appalling and disgusting. That was a lonely time. But sometimes when life is at the bottom and we have tried everything else, by the grace of God faith is planted into our heart by the Spirit of God.

Let's look at a man who knew exactly what it was like to be at the bottom of the world,

who had to shout 'unclean' wherever he walked and who knew what it was like to have rocks thrown at him because people feared him. But then he meets Jesus.

Let's read together our text as we continue our study through the gospel of Mark.

Mark 1:40-45

A man with leprosy came and knelt in front of Jesus, begging to be healed. "If you are willing, you can heal me and make me clean," he said.

Moved with compassion, Jesus reached out and touched him. "I am willing," he said. "Be healed!" Instantly the leprosy disappeared, and the man was healed. Then Jesus sent him on his way with a stern warning: "Don't tell anyone about this. Instead, go to the priest and let him examine you. Take along the offering required in the law of Moses for those who have been healed of leprosy. This will be a public testimony that you have been cleansed."

But the man went and spread the word, proclaiming to everyone what had happened. As a result, large crowds soon surrounded Jesus, and he couldn't publicly enter a town anywhere. He had to stay out in the secluded places, but people from everywhere kept coming to him.

**While we do not know this man's name let's take a moment and better understand..**

### **I. His Misery**

A man with leprosy came and knelt in front of Jesus, begging to be healed. “If you are willing, you can heal me and make me clean,” he said.

To be honest this scene with Jesus and this Leper is one of the most touching scenes in all of Scripture. No disease during this time carried with it the same stigma and social out-casting as leprosy. This social outcast throws himself at Jesus.

The word 'leprosy' comes from 'lepo' meaning to peel off like scales. This disease is described only two times in scripture and both times it is describes to look as white as snow. A detailed description is given in Leviticus 13. The leper came to Jesus, knelt before him and fell at the feet of Jesus. This action was illegal because lepers were required to keep away at least six feet away from people. Think about that, never allowed to be within six feet of anyone.

Lepers were required to wear what was known as mourners clothing. They were required to say 'unclean' as they walked around for two reasons. To help others avoid him but also it was to incite others to pray for him. The law required nobody was allowed to glance at the person, his bed had to be on the ground, even by laying his head in a place that place became unclean. Six feet away unless there was a breeze and then the law required 100 feet. Jewish Traditions even held that Rabbis were not allowed to

purchase their food on a street that a Leper had been on. High Society would throw rocks to keep lepers at a safe distance.

Do you want to talk about a bad day? Don't tell me you've had socially as bad as a day as this miserable man in our text? This is the ultimate form of social rejection. This man has a deadly disease, kids scream in horror at his appearance and run the other way. Not a single person has touched this man in years. He is miserable.

But what about Christ's Mercy?

## **II. Christ's Mercy**

Moved with compassion, Jesus reached out and touched him. "I am willing," he said. "Be healed!" Instantly the leprosy disappeared, and the man was healed.

Normally he has to announce and warn, Unclean, but at the feet of Jesus as Jesus is continuing His early Galilean tour, this outcast says nothing, falls at the feet of Jesus, not six feet away but at His feet and says, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean". We say jokingly Lord Willing and the Creek Don't rise, we talk about God's Will as somewhat of a joke, filled with sarcasm, doubt, and acceptance that things cannot change.

This man is at the feet of Jesus not because of sarcasm, not because of doubt, not because he has accepted the way things are, this man is at the feet of Jesus because after years of rejections, loud cries of horror, of rocks hitting his flesh, this man is here because there is no other place to be. The words of Jesus make sense to him. First shall be last and the last first, those who humble themselves will be lifted up.....this man has lived in that reality for decades and now he has met the one whom he knows can deliver those promises. At the feet of Jesus, Lord if you are willing!

There is no precedent for this man's request. Other Rabbi's throw stones. Nowhere else in Scripture is there any example of cleansing or healing of leprosy like this. With Elijah and Naaman, there was no physical touch. There is no logical reason for this man to be so confident that Jesus could or would heal him of this disease. There is no evidence anywhere of healing of leprosy outside the direct agency of God. This man knew more about Jesus over everyone else gathered around.

This man is miserable and Jesus is filled with compassion and that makes for a powerful combination in Scripture. The text says that Jesus is moved with compassion and literally reaches out and grabs the guy, almost a full embrace. Jesus has his arms on this man's shoulders and is looking this guy square in the eye. Touching a leper would have defiled any other person but instead of Jesus becoming unclean, this man became clean.

Jesus could have healed him from 20 miles away like the nobleman's son but he doesn't. Instead Jesus realizes this man has 3 needs and Jesus meets all 3. Jesus, out of His great mercy and compassion, as a response to our faith will meet all of our deepest needs.

Jesus heals this man physically, emotionally, and socially. This man was at the bottom of a lonely barrel and Jesus lifts him out completely. Jesus heals him of leprosy. Jesus heals him just by the physical touch of another human hand. There was emotional healing just because Jesus touched him. Through that act Jesus also healed him socially. The social stigma of having leprosy was something we could not imagine. By Jesus accepting him so would the rest of the crowd and community.

His Misery, Christ's Mercy, reveals God's Glory.

### **III. God's Glory**

Then Jesus sent him on his way with a stern warning: “Don’t tell anyone about this. Instead, go to the priest and let him examine you. Take along the offering required in the law of Moses for those who have been healed of leprosy. This will be a public testimony that you have been cleansed.”

But the man went and spread the word, proclaiming to everyone what had happened. As a result, large crowds soon surrounded Jesus, and he couldn’t publicly enter a town anywhere. He had to stay out in the secluded places, but people from everywhere kept coming to him.

Jesus commands the healed Leper to obey Scripture. Moses had commanded an

offering as evidence for cleansing of leprosy. The offering was meant to be a public sign of both healing but also social acceptance of the priests and thus of God for the leper having been healed. Thus he was allowed back into society. Jesus also commands him to be silent. Jesus tells him to be silent for two reasons: Jesus is growing in popularity. The religious leaders are not liking Jesus and as a result the healings of Jesus are called into question. Jesus wanted this man to be fully accepted back into society and perhaps the priest if he knew this man was connected to Jesus would not accept the offering the man made. But he commands this man to be silent for another reason. Jesus and the crowds are already getting to be too much. Jesus wants people to follow him for His teaching and does not want to be known as a circus healer. Jesus wasn't interested in becoming a celebrity healer. There are preachers on Television who enjoy the celebrity status associated with their ministries. But Jesus wasn't like that. Jesus did not want the big crowds. Isn't that interesting?

Also Jesus doesn't want to wow people into belief. He knows that real faith happens when people hear the Word, hear Christ's teaching. Not by the spectacle of seeing someone get healed. Romans 10:17 says "Faith comes by hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ." Jesus knows real faith comes through hearing not from seeing a miracle. The power of a miracle is meant for only one but the power of preaching is meant for all who would hear.

Instead of going first to the priest, this man blabs to everyone he could find. While disobedient to Jesus this is the standard reaction to a miracle of Jesus. This is how

people respond when the realization is made of who Jesus is and what He has done. Whether this man goes to the priest or to the town, the glory all goes to God. In fact, in a sense the glory is strong that Jesus withdraws to a solitary place to pray. The crowds become so large that Jesus needs time in prayer. For God to be fully glorified it comes with both thanksgiving and supplication. Jesus needed to seek the face of the One who deserved all the glory. Glory for the healing but also glory for the ability to continue ministering and preaching the Word.

### **Conclusion**

Glory for the healing but also glory for the ability to continue ministering and preaching the Word.

Jesus came to preach and moved with compassion He ministered and healed those who believed His message. When we are filled with misery and Christ is filled with compassion, God will get all the glory.

I will not even begin to admit that I can understand what it must be like to be in constant pain, to be a constant outcast, to have rocks thrown, to have kids runaway from me in horror, and to not know the touch of another human being in years...to be that alone and that miserable...but I do know what it is like to receive the mercy and compassion of Jesus Christ.

Romans 3

But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

May we come to the feet of Jesus just like the Leper but may we never ever ask the question the Leper asked, he asked, Lord if you are willing!

May there never be any doubt in your mind if the Lord is willing because we know and have one thing the leper did not.

Why did Jesus require the Leper to go to a priest as commanded by Moses? if a leper was miraculously cleansed, there was an offering to be made. The one healed was examined by the priest, who would take 2 pigeons, kill 1 over a bowl of water, and let the blood drip into the water. Then he would take the living pigeon, and take a brush made of a hyssop bush and dip it into the blood and the water, and sprinkle it upon the living pigeon. Then he would take that pigeon to an open field and release it, and as it flew away, the priest would sprinkle that blood and water over the leper.

This sacrifice required in the Old Testament Law was meant to be a shadow of the

things to come through Jesus Christ. Lord, if you are willing....may there be no doubt that the cross answers that question every time we ask or wonder if Jesus is willing!

## Romans 5

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Right now as we close may we be like the Leper and fall at the feet of Jesus in prayer.

**Lord, are you willing...the answer is the CROSS.**