

Mark 1:40-45

- the good testimony -

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Introduction

- ❖ This narrative raises a lot of questions. At first sight, Mark 1:40-45 “shows that Jesus has the power to deal with apparently incurable diseases and the compassion to restore desperate human beings struggling with social stigma, isolation, and loneliness.”¹
 - “Many human beings in all societies have bodily defects that cause them to suffer exclusion, isolation and sometimes worse. In Buddhist cultures and some African cultures, disability of any kind is seen as a punishment for evil deeds or misdemeanors in a previous life and as a reason for rejection. Orphanages are full of disabled children who have been abandoned. The millions of people in Africa who suffer from HIV/AIDS are often treated as outcasts.”²
- ❖ This narrative is not just a 'miracle story'. It is also a story about "anger" or "compassion," "a strong warning," "sending away," the Law, "testimony," and disobedience, which resulted in Jesus staying in lonely places. It is also about the coming of the Kingdom of God (Mk 1:15; Mt 11:5; Lk 7:22).
 - There are three “testimonies” contained in this narrative:
 1. The “testimony” the man had to give (verse 43), commanded by Jesus.
 2. Spreading the news by the man after he has been cleansed by Jesus (verse 44), is forbidden by Jesus. It seems that spreading the news was premature at that

¹ Adeyemo, T. (2006, p. 1152) commenting on Matthew 8:2-4, the parallel narrative.

² Adeyemo, T. (2006, p. 1151). Idem.

time and that it needed the first testimony. It is probably also premature in light of the appointing of the Twelve (Mk 3:13-19).

3. The testimony of Mark as Gospel, when the Gospel was written, was based on the oral tradition **after the resurrection of Jesus**.

- The first and the second are subordinate to the testimony given by Mark.

❖ The context, form, and structure as well as the theological, technical and hermeneutical notes given in this sermon outline overlap somewhat with other sermon outlines taken from the Gospel of Mark. This makes it possible to use this outline as a “stand alone” or as part of a series.

Context – controversial aspects of Jesus' ministry (Mk 1:40-3:6)³

Theme	“Result”
<i>Cleansing (touching) a man with leprosy</i> (Mk 1:40-45)	A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, "If you are willing, you can make me clean." Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" (1:40, 41) As a result, Jesus could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside in lonely places (1:45).
<i>Healing a Paralytic and forgiveness of sins</i> (Mk 2:1-12)	“Why does this fellow talk like that? He’s blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?” (2:6).
<i>Calling of Levi</i> (Mk 2:13-17)	When the teachers of the law who were Pharisees saw him eating with the “sinners” and tax collectors, they asked his disciples: “Why does he eat with tax collectors and ‘sinners?’” (2:16).
<i>Jesus on fasting</i> (Mk 2:18-22)	Now John’s disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. Some people came and asked Jesus, “How is it that John’s disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees are fasting, but yours are not?” (2:18).
<i>Disciples picking grain on the Sabbath</i>	The Pharisees said to him, “Look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?” (2:24).

³ France, R. T. (2002, p. 114).

(Mk 2:23-27)	
Healing on the Sabbath (Mk 3:1-6)	Some of them were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath (3:2).
	Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus (3:6).

- ❖ The following controversies can be noted:
 - Touching a man with leprosy (unclean; Mk 1:40-45);
 - Who can forgive sins but God alone (Mk 2:1-12)
 - Eating with sinners (Mk 2:13-16);
 - Not fasting (Mk 2:18-22);
 - Doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath (Mk 2:23-27);
 - Healing on the Sabbath (Mk 3:1-6).

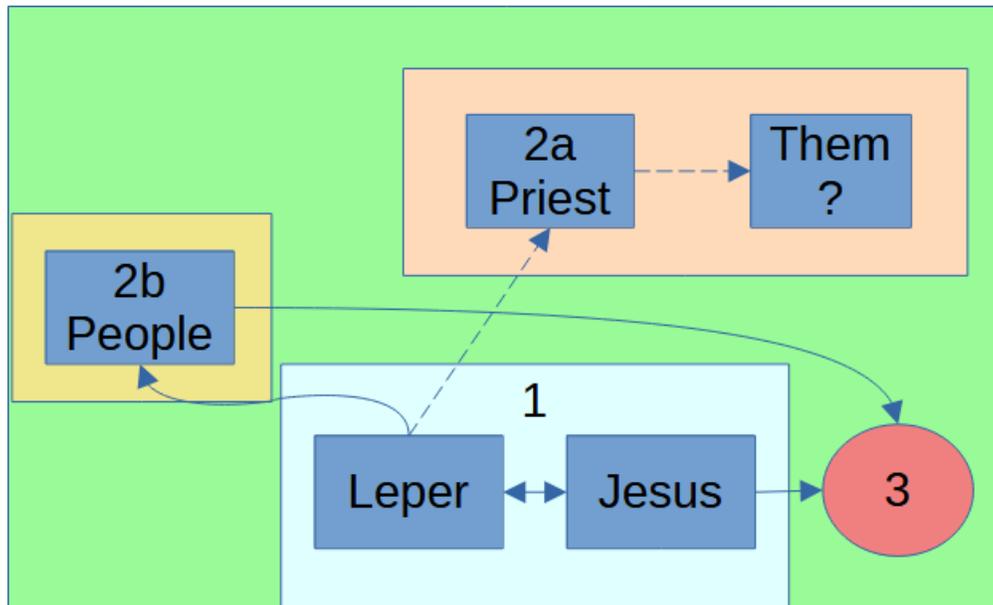
Form and structure

- ❖ See also the image below. The highlighted colours refer to the different scenes:
 - Scene 1: A man with leprosy came to Jesus;
 - Scene 2a: The man doesn't obey Jesus to show himself to the priest;
 - Scene 2b: Instead, he is talking freely to the people;
 - Scene 3: As a result Jesus had to stay in lonely places.

Mark 1:39	So he travelled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.
Scene 1 (verses 40-44)	<p>A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, "If you are willing, you can make me clean."</p> <p>Filled with compassion (anger),⁴ Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man.</p> <p>"I am willing," he said. "Be clean!"</p> <p>Immediately leprosy left him and he was cured. Jesus sent him away at once</p>

⁴ For anger or compassion see below Exposition.

<p>(Scene 2a – see below)</p>	<p>with a strong warning:</p> <p>“See that you don’t tell this to anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them.”</p>
<p>Scene 2b (verse 45)</p>	<p>Instead, he went out and began to talk freely, spreading the news.</p>
<p>Scene 3 (verse 45)</p>	<p>As a result, Jesus could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside in lonely places. Yet the people still came to him from everywhere.</p>



Technical and hermeneutical notes

A comparison: Matthew 8:2-20 and Mark 1:40-45

- ❖ A comparison between Matthew 8:2-4 and Mark 1:40-45 reveals the following:
- ❖

Matthew 8:2-4 (NA28 GBS / NIV84)	Mark 1:40-45 (NA28 GBS / NIV84)
<p>καὶ ἰδοὺ λεπρὸς προσελθὼν προσεκύνει αὐτῷ λέγων·</p> <p>κύριε, ἐὰν θέλῃς δύνασαί με καθαρίσαι.</p> <p>καὶ ἐκτείνας τὴν χεῖρα ἤψατο αὐτοῦ λέγων·</p> <p>θέλω, καθαρίσθητι.</p> <p>καὶ εὐθέως ἐκαθαρίσθη αὐτοῦ ἡ λέπρα. καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς·</p> <p>ὄρα μηδενὶ εἴπηρς, ἀλλ' ὕπαγε σεαυτὸν δεῖξον τῷ ἱερεῖ καὶ προσένεγκον τὸ δῶρον ὃ προσέταξεν Μωϋσῆς, εἰς μαρτύριον αὐτοῖς.</p>	<p>Καὶ ἔρχεται πρὸς αὐτὸν λεπρὸς παρακαλῶν αὐτὸν [καὶ γονυπετῶν] καὶ λέγων αὐτῷ ὅτι</p> <p>ἐὰν θέλῃς δύνασαί με καθαρίσαι.</p> <p>καὶ σπλαγχνισθεὶς (οργισθεὶς)⁵ ἐκτείνας τὴν χεῖρα αὐτοῦ ἤψατο καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ·</p> <p>θέλω, καθαρίσθητι.</p> <p>καὶ εὐθὺς ἀπήλθεν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ ἡ λέπρα, καὶ ἐκαθαρίσθη. καὶ ἐμβριμησάμενος αὐτῷ εὐθὺς ἐξέβαλεν αὐτὸν καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ·</p> <p>ὄρα μηδενὶ μηδὲν εἴπηρς, ἀλλ' ὕπαγε σεαυτὸν δεῖξον τῷ ἱερεῖ καὶ προσένεγκε περι τοῦ καθαρισμοῦ σου ἃ προσέταξεν Μωϋσῆς, εἰς μαρτύριον αὐτοῖς.</p> <p>Ὁ δὲ ἐξελθὼν ἤρξατο κηρύσσειν πολλὰ καὶ διαφημίζειν τὸν λόγον, ὥστε μηκέτι αὐτὸν δύνασθαι φανερῶς εἰς πόλιν εἰσελθεῖν, ἀλλ' ἔξω ἐπ' ἐρήμοις τόποις ἦν· καὶ ἤρχοντο πρὸς αὐτὸν πάντοθεν.</p>
<p>A man with leprosy came and knelt before him and said,</p> <p>“Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.”</p> <p>Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man.</p>	<p>A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees,</p> <p>“If you are willing, you can make me clean.”</p> <p>Filled with compassion (anger), Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man.</p>

⁵ Textual variant (anger), see below Exposition.

"I am willing," he said. "Be clean!"

Immediately he was cured of his leprosy. Then Jesus said to him,

"See that you don't tell anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the gift Moses commanded, as a testimony to them."

"I am willing," he said. "Be clean!"

Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cured. Jesus sent him away at once with a strong warning:

"See that you don't tell this to anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them."

Instead he went out and began to talk freely, spreading the news. As a result, Jesus could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside in lonely places. Yet the people still came to him from everywhere.

- ❖ The **direct speech** is, with a few (minor) exceptions, similar in Matthew and Mark.
- ❖ The narrative of Mark is more elaborate.
 - Mark notices also **strong emotions**.
- ❖ Mark omitted the title "**Lord**".

Leprosy

- ❖ We do not exactly know which disease is designated. It is a skin disease, which cannot be equated with Hansen's Disease (leprosy).⁶ The Biblical description of the symptoms is found in Leviticus 13:
 - "The Lord said to Moses and Aaron, 'When anyone has a swelling or a rash or a bright spot on his skin that may become an **infectious skin disease**, he must be brought to Aaron the priest or to one of his sons who is a priest. The priest is to examine the sore on his skin, and if the hair in the sore has turned white and the sore appears to be more than skin deep, it is an infectious skin disease. When the priest examines him, he shall pronounce him ceremonially unclean. If the spot on his skin is white but does not appear to be more than skin deep and the hair in it has not turned white, the priest is to put the infected person in isolation for seven days. On the seventh day the priest is to examine him, and if he sees that the sore is unchanged and has not spread in the skin, he is to keep him in isolation another seven days. On the seventh day the priest is to examine him again, and if the sore has faded and has not spread in the skin, the priest shall pronounce him clean; it is only a rash. The man must wash his clothes, and he will

⁶ Leprosy. (2018, August 24). Retrieved from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leprosy>

be clean. But if the rash does spread in his skin after he has shown himself to the priest to be pronounced clean, he must appear before the priest again. The priest is to examine him, and if the rash has spread in the skin, he shall pronounce him unclean; it is an infectious disease” (Lev 13:1-8; See also Lev 13:9-44).

- “Scholars have reached some agreement about the probable diagnosis of *ṣāra’at* (“infectious skin disease”) in humans. The most certain conclusion is that it is not leprosy and does not include it. The main argument for this is that the symptoms Leviticus describes do not suggest leprosy.”⁷ Wright and Jones list seven arguments, two will suffice here:
 - (1) “The symptoms of leprosy progress very slowly over a period of several years. The swift development of *ṣāra’at* required by quarantine periods of seven days (Lev 13:4, 5, 21, 26, 31, 33) does not fit leprosy.
 - (2) Leprosy is not curable without drug therapy; but Leviticus 13–14 indicate that a person may recover from *ṣāra’at*.”⁸
- ❖ The consequences are described in Leviticus 13:45, 46):
 - “The person with such an infectious disease must wear torn clothes, let his hair be unkempt, cover the lower part of his face and cry out, ‘Unclean! Unclean!’ As long as he has the infection he remains unclean. He must live alone; he must live outside the camp.”
 - He must wear torn clothes.
 - He must let his hair unkempt.
 - He must cover the lower part of his face.
 - He must cry out ‘Unclean!’ Unclean!’ as long as he has the infection.
 - He must live alone, outside the camp (or the village). (2 Kings 7:3-10).
 - Numbers 5:1-5: “The Lord said to Moses, ‘Command the Israelites to send away from the camp anyone who has an infectious skin disease or a discharge of any kind, or who is ceremonially unclean because of a dead body. Send away male and female alike; send them outside the camp so they will not defile their camp, where I dwell among them.’ The Israelites did this; they sent them outside the camp. They did just as the Lord had instructed Moses.”
 - He was excluded from the ceremonies.

⁷ Wright, D. P., & Jones, R. N. (1992). *Leprosy*. In D. N. Freedman (Ed., Vol. 4, p. 278).

⁸ Wright, D. P., & Jones, R. N. (1992). *Leprosy*. In D. N. Freedman (Ed., Vol. 4, p. 278).

- “Lepers were not completely isolated from the rest of society. So if there were leper colonies or 'hospitals' they were not prisons; that is, their inhabitants were evidently free to come and go as they pleased.
- The notion that lepers were the living dead is reflected in several texts (Num 12:12; 2 Kgs 5:7; Job 18:13).⁹
- ❖ After the healing of the diseased person, he had to see the priest.
 - “The Lord said to Moses, ‘These are the regulations for the diseased person at the time of his ceremonial cleansing when he is brought to the priest: The priest is to go outside the camp and examine him. If the person has been healed of his infectious skin disease, the priest shall order that two live clean birds and some cedar wood, scarlet yarn and hyssop be brought for the one to be cleansed. Then the priest shall order that one of the birds be killed over fresh water in a clay pot. He is then to take the live bird and dip it, together with the cedar wood, the scarlet yarn, and the hyssop, into the blood of the bird that was killed over the fresh water. Seven times he shall sprinkle the one to be cleansed of the infectious disease and pronounce him clean. Then he is to release the live bird in the open fields’” (Lev 14:1-7; See also Lev 14:8-32).

Clean and Unclean

- ❖ An overview.
 - In the Old Testament clean, unclean, purity and impurity are related to the holiness of God and his purity.
 - Clean, pure = “טָהוֹר” (unclean = “טִהַרְהָ”):
 - 1. **pure**: gold (Ex 25:11-39); made of pure gold: candlestick Ex 31:8, table Lev 24:6;
 - 2. **ceremonially clean** (Lev 10:10; Dt 12:15 Job 14:4). Examples: meat (Lev 7:19), animals (Gen 7:2), birds (Lev 14:4; Gen 8:20; Dt 14:11), offering (Mal 11:1), water Ezek (36:25), well (Lev 11:36), seed (11:37), vessel (Is 66:20), turban (Zech 3:5), place (Lev 4:12); everyone who is not clean (2 Chron 30:17).
 - 3. **ethically clean**: eyes (Hab 1:13), hands (Job 17:9), words (Ps 12:7 Prov 15:26), heart (Ps 51:12), fear of the Lord (Ps 19:10).¹⁰
 - Unclean = “טִמֵּא”:

⁹ Davies, W. D., & Allison, D. C., Jr. (2004, Vol. 2, p. 11).

¹⁰ Koehler, L., Baumgartner, W., Richardson, M. E. J., & Stamm, J. J. (1994–2000, p. 369).

- 1. **unclean** (Lev 10:10, 11:47; Dt 12:15-22; 15:22 Ezek 22:26; 44:23; Job 14:4; a woman defiled in name Ezek 22:5;
 - 2. **ceremonially unclean**: animals (Lev 5:2a; 7:21; 11:29; 27:11, 27; Nu 18:15; Dt 14:7-10, 19); (...) unclean by contact with a dead person (Lev 22:4 (...) an unclean thing (Isa 52:11; Ezek 4:13) unclean of lips (Isa 6:5); things (Lev 15:17; Nu 19:22);
 - 3. further: **due to leprosy** (Lev 13:11, 55 and 14:40f); sexual emission (Lev 15:2, 25f, 33); other examples: Lev 11:4-38; 14:44f; 15:25f, 33; 20:25; Nu 19; Dt 26:14; Jos 22:19 and Am 7:17.¹¹
- ❖ **Uncleanness was in most cases a temporal condition**, which could vary from a few days, a week, or a prolonged period, as was the case with leprosy, and also with the woman, who suffered of bleeding for twelve years.
 - ❖ Touching the unclean:
 - “Or if a person touches anything ceremonially unclean—whether the carcasses of unclean wild animals or of unclean livestock or of unclean creatures that move along the ground—even though he is unaware of it, he has become unclean and is guilty.
 - **Or if he touches human uncleanness—anything that would make him unclean—even though he is unaware of it, when he learns of it he will be guilty.**” (Lev 5;2, 3)

Exposition

Verse 39 (*background*)

- ❖ **“So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.”**
 - While Jesus was travelling throughout Galilee, the following happened.
 - **“preaching”** the same verb is used in verse 45 where it is translated as **“to talk”**

Verse 40 (*scene 1*)

- ❖ **“A man with leprosy.”**
 - For further information about "leprosy," "clean" and "unclean" see above.
 - In addition: “The disease robbed them of their health, and the sentence imposed on them as a consequence robbed them of their name, occupation, habits, family and fellowship, and worshiping community.”¹²

¹¹ Koehler, L., Baumgartner, W., Richardson, M. E. J., & Stamm, J. J. (1994–2000, p. 376)..

- ❖ **“came to him and begged him on his knees, “If you are willing, you can make me clean.”**
 - **“came to him”** probably outside the cities and villages, because the man had to keep an distance from other people. See also verse 45.
 - The man approached Jesus and knelt before him within ‘touching-distance,’ by which he trespassed the Law. Compare Luke 17:12
 - The Greek text is more elaborate than the NIV84:
 - A man with leprosy came to him
 - “while he was pleading, kneeling, and saying” (= “begged him on his knees;” NIV84). This has the effect of a sense of strong, urgent appeal.¹³
 - **“If you are willing” = “ἐὰν θέλῃς.”** These words are found in all three parallel narratives: Matthew 8:2, Mark 1:40, and Luke 5:12. There is one other instance, where the same words are used, Mark 6:22: “When the daughter of Herodias came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his dinner guests. The king said to the girl, ‘Ask me for anything you want (= “ἐὰν θέλῃς”), and I’ll give it to you.’” By saying “I’ll give it to you,” King Herod brought himself into a position so that he couldn’t refuse the request of the daughter of Herodias, without shaming himself in front of his guests.
 - Bratcher and Nida: “Notice that **the request** of the leper **is conditioned** not on Jesus’ ability to make him clean (‘you can make me clean’) but on his desire or willingness (‘if you will’ or ‘if you wish’).”¹⁴
 - By doing this, the leper forces Jesus to grant him his request.
 - Imagine the following hypothetical narrative:
 - "A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, 'If you are willing, you can make me clean.' (...) '**I am not willing,**' he said. (...) Jesus sent him away at once with a strong warning: ‘See that you don’t tell this to anyone. But go’ (...) He went out and began to talk freely, spreading **this** news.”
 - Cleansing the leper implied curing him of his disease.

Verse 41, 42

❖ **“Filled with compassion”**

¹² Edwards, J. R. (2002, p.68-69).

¹³ France, R. T. (2002, p. 117).

¹⁴ Bratcher, R. G., & Nida, E. A. (1993, p. 65).

- “Filled with compassion” = “σπλαγχνίζομαι”: *have pity, feel sympathy*¹⁵ (Mk 6:34; 8:2; 9:22). Other texts have “οργισθεις; οργίζομαι”: *be angry*.¹⁶ This seems more fitting in the context, especially in verse 43:

- “a strong warning” and
- “sent him away” = “forced him to leave.”

compassion or anger?
If “being angry” is the original text, the question arises why Jesus was angry with the man or with the misery of the man.
If “filled with compassion” is original, the question arises why Jesus gave the man a strong warning and forced him to leave.

- R.T. France tries to solve the problem: “The most likely explanation is, perhaps, that the suffering caused by the disease, both physically and socially, moved Jesus not only to compassion but to anger at the presence of such evil in the world; perhaps also over the insensitivity of the social taboo. That the anger was not directed against the man himself is implied by the immediate compassionate response.”¹⁷
 - This solution does not explain the strong warning and why Jesus forced him to leave.
- A comparison Luke 17:12-15:

Mark 1:40-45	Luke 17:12-15
A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, "If you are willing, you can make me clean."	As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance and called out in a loud voice, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us!"

¹⁵ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 938).

¹⁶ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 721).

¹⁷ France, R. T. (2002, p. 117-118); Guelich, R. A. (1989, p. 74).

Filled with compassion (**anger**), Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!"

Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cured. Jesus sent him away at once with **a strong warning**:

"See that you don't tell this to anyone. **But go**, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them."

Instead he went out and began to talk freely, spreading the news. As a result, Jesus could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside in lonely places. Yet the people still came to him from everywhere.

When he saw them, he said,

"Go, show yourselves to the priests."

And as they went, they were cleansed.

One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice.

- The man with leprosy in Mark 1:40 forced Jesus by his strong request to heal him, but the ten men with leprosy stood at a distance. Jesus had to warn him and forced him to leave, instead, he went out and spread the news, of what had occurred to him. He disobeyed the command of Jesus. As a result, Jesus couldn't freely travel and had to stay in lonely places.

❖ **"Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man."**

- According to the Law of Moses, Jesus became ceremonially unclean. **"Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows"** (Isa 53:4).
- The fact that Jesus touched the man, is already a sign of his cleanness.
- Stein Remarks: "Jesus was troubled neither by the threat of the disease nor by possible ceremonial uncleanness. In contrast to others who became 'unclean' by contact with a leper, Jesus's contact with a leper brought 'cleansing' to the leper."¹⁸

❖ **"I am willing."** These words have such an impact. The will of Jesus is in accordance with the will of the heavenly Father. It is God's will.

¹⁸ Stein, R. H. (2008, p. 106).

- “Jesus says simply, ‘I will’. He does not say, ‘God wills’. Jesus himself is in control, and he is the source of healing power.”¹⁹

❖ **“Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cured.” xx**

- **“Immediately.”** This is a sign that the Kingdom of God has come (Mk 1:15; Mt 11:5; Lk 7:22).
- **“the leprosy left him”** “suggests that the symptoms of the disease could be seen to vanish.”²⁰

Verse 43

❖ **“Jesus sent him away at once with a strong warning:”**

- “a strong warning” = “**ἐμβριμάομαι**”: 1. **insist on something sternly, warn sternly.**²¹
 - The reason is found in the next words. Did Jesus already foresee that the man would disobey?
 - `The next verses make clear that the man didn’t go to the priest and went on telling the news to everyone he encountered.
 - Bratcher and Nida comment: “It has also been pointed out that the word means not merely to feel anger, but to show it, while the dative of the personal pronoun *autō* ‘with him’ **indicated the object** rather than the cause of the anger.”²² Jesus was not angry because of him but angry when the man would not obey him.
- “sent him away” = “**εκβάλλω**”: 1. **force to leave, drive out, expel.**²³ Using this strong verb: “force to leave” in combination with “strong warning” might indicate an unwillingness of the man to fulfil the Law, showing himself to the priest as a testimony to them.

❖ **“See that you don’t tell this to anyone.”**

- **“See”** = “**ὄραω**”: 2. **to be alert or on guard, pay attention, see to it that.**²⁴

¹⁹ Davies, W. D., & Allison, D. C., Jr. (2004, p. 14).

²⁰ France, R. T. (2002, p. 118).

²¹ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 322).

²² Bratcher, R. G., & Nida, E. A. (1993, p. 67).

²³ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 299).

²⁴ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 720).

- Compare:
- After Jesus restored sight to two blind men: "**Jesus warned them sternly, 'See that no one knows about this.'** But they went out and spread the news about him all over that region" (Mt 9:30, 31). "**Jesus warned them sternly,**" see above "a strong warning."
- After Jesus raised a girl from death: "He gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this, and told them to give her something to eat" (Mk 5:43).
- After Jesus healed a deaf and mute man: "Jesus commanded them **not to tell anyone**. But the more he did so, the more they kept talking about it" (Mk 7:36).
- There are two levels of communication:
 - At the time of cleansing the man with leprosy: "Don't tell this to anyone."
 - Jesus couldn't show himself in the public anymore (Mk 1:45). Gould comments: "His spreading the story prevented Jesus' work in public, and forced him into retirement, and so Jesus forbade his telling it. And the words in which he warned him off this dangerous ground are made as sharp as possible."²⁵
 - At the date of writing, after the crucifixion, resurrection and glorification of Jesus, this story must be told.
 - Now, the narrative glorifies Jesus and explains the growing resistance.
- ❖ **"But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded..."**
 - **"go"** = **"ὑπάγω"**: 1. **to leave someone's presence, go away.**²⁶ Imperative. See also the note on "sent him away" above.
 - **"That Moses commanded"**: "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished" (Mt 5:18, 19).
 - **"offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded."** See Leviticus 14:2-32. Compare Luke 2:22-24.
 - **"the priest"**: probably the priest in Jerusalem.
- ❖ **"As a testimony to them."**

²⁵ Gould, E. P. (1922, p. 32).

²⁶ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 1028).

- **“A testimony.”** = **“μαρτύριον”**: 1. **that which serves as testimony or proof, testimony, proof**; a. consisting of an action, a circumstance, or a thing that serves as a testimony.²⁷
 - What is the content of the testimony?
 - **Jesus forbade the man to tell this to anyone:**
 - "Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man.
 - 'I am willing,' he said.
 - 'Be clean!' Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cured" (Mk 1:41, 42).
 - As a testimony to them:
 - "But go,
 - show yourself to the priest
 - and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing" (Mk 1:44).
- **“to them.”** Who are they (“them”)? This is not immediately clear. It cannot refer to “the priest” only. Are they the people in general or especially the people opposing Jesus?
 - France remarks: “It is possible that that is all that is meant by εἰς μαρτύριον αὐτοῖς—a formal proof to ‘them’ (people in general) that he is cured (1). But the same phrase will occur twice more in Mark: in 6:11 it has a hostile sense, the shaking off of the dust from the disciples’ feet being a μαρτύριον to (perhaps *against*?) those who refuse their mission; and in 13:9 it is again in a context of opposition, where the disciples, hauled up before governors and kings *for Jesus’ sake*, will be there εἰς μαρτύριον αὐτοῖς.”²⁸
 - But because the man had to be silent about the manner he was cleansed, and if he had obeyed Jesus, Jesus’ name wouldn’t be mentioned at all, and the testimony can only be a formal proof or confirmation that he was cured.
 - This formal proof has essentially the function of external evidence. The man had once leprosy and now he was cleansed, and the priest would declare him clean after having examined him. The priest serves as an external witness.

²⁷ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 619).

²⁸ France, R. T. (2002, p. 120).

- After writing the Gospel, the testimony given within the context of the narrative would also prove that Jesus didn't abolish Moses but confirmed the Law. In this case "them" are the opponents of Jesus.
- As we will see, the man didn't go to the priest and as a result, there was no formal proof of his cleansing.

Verse 45 (scene 2)

❖ **“Instead he went out and began to talk freely, spreading the news.”**

- **“Instead.”** The man didn't obey the strong directions of Jesus.
- **“to talk freely, spreading the news”** about what Jesus had done for him.
 - **“the news”** Bratcher and Nida comment: “The precise nature of the *news* we do not know (see above), but it would certainly not be wrong to translate this entire phrase as ‘he kept telling more people about what had happened.’”²⁹
 - “This proclaiming of the acts of Jesus is not New Testament preaching even though we find the word κηρύσσειν in this connection. **It does not take place by commission but against the will of Jesus.**”³⁰
 - Friedrich continues: “There is a distinction between a witness and a herald. The herald goes through countries and publishes what he has to say so that all may hear. The place of the witness is in a lawsuit. There he is summoned and on the basis of his personal acquaintance with the facts he supports the one party and opposes the other. The healed person is a witness in the (emerging³¹) conflict between Christ and the priests (and other Jewish leaders³²). He goes off and acts as a herald. But in so doing he goes beyond his commission.”³³
- The result is that:
 - The cleansing might be questioned because there was no formal proof.

²⁹ Bratcher, R. G., & Nida, E. A. (1993, p. 71).

³⁰ Friedrich, G. (1964–, Vol. 3, p. 708). *κηρύξ (ἱεροκήρυξ), κηρύσσω, κήρυγμα, προκηρύσσω*. In G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley, & G. Friedrich (Eds.).

³¹ Added by the present writer.

³² Added by the present writer.

³³ Friedrich, G. (1964–, Vol. 3, p. 709). *κηρύξ (ἱεροκήρυξ), κηρύσσω, κήρυγμα, προκηρύσσω*. In G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley, & G. Friedrich (Eds.).

- The fact that Jesus had touched the man (against Moses) and the man didn't comply with the requirements of Moses might give fuel to resistance.

Verse 45 (scene 3)

- ❖ **“As a result, Jesus could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside in lonely places.”**
 - Roles have been changed. Whereas the man with leprosy previously had to stay in a lonely place, it is now Jesus who has to stay in lonely places.
- ❖ **“Yet the people still came to him from everywhere.”**
 - **“Yet” = “καί”**: η. **emphasizing a fact as surprising or unexpected or noteworthy**: *and yet, and in spite of that, nevertheless.*³⁴
 - Why is this noteworthy?
 - Could it be that the news spread by the man was not in favour of Jesus?

Application

Reading in context

- ❖ This story is part of Mark 1:40-3:6. There is growing opposition to the ministry of Jesus.

The whole narrative

- ❖ This narrative is not “a miracle story” only. It is also a story about “anger” or “compassion,” “a strong warning,” “sending away,” the Law, “testimony,” and disobedience.

Praise

- ❖ Praise Christ because of his authority (Mk 1:41-44), his sacrificial love, his wisdom, his knowledge, and his faithfulness to the Law and the Prophets (Old Testament), which are apparent in this short story of cleansing this man who suffered from skin disease (leprosy).

Verse 40

- ❖ **“A man with leprosy”** Due to misunderstandings, people who suffer from leprosy often don't get adequate treatment and are excluded from society. It is, therefore, necessary to stress the point that “leprosy” as it is used in the Bible cannot be equated with Hansen's disease (leprosy).
 - **“It is also important to note that institutions that work with leprosy patients prefer that we avoid putting a stigma upon anyone by calling a person a ‘leper.’** It is better to refer to the disease, ‘leprosy,’ and then to state that someone ‘has leprosy,’ or ‘suffers from leprosy,’ or ‘is a leprosy patient,’ rather than marking the individual as a ‘leper.’ We

³⁴ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 495).

cannot, of course, call it 'Hansen's Disease,' since it did not have that name at the time of Jesus, and to give it that name would be an anachronism."³⁵

- It is equally important to inform Christians about other diseases which are still taboo, so they can reach out more confidently, more lovingly, while taking care of the sick and showing them the love of Christ.
- Leprosy is not equal to sin! Compare John 9:1-3.
- ❖ Show great reverence to Christ, as the "man with leprosy" did. Have faith and trust.
 - Pray like "the man with leprosy", who asked: "**If you are willing.**" This doesn't imply that God will answer all our prayers as we want but in accordance with his sovereign will.

Verse 41

- ❖ "**Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man.**"
 - Remember: touching someone with leprosy, makes oneself unclean.
 - The man approached Jesus and knelt before him within 'touching-distance,' by which he trespassed the Law. Compare Luke 17:12.
 - This touch by Jesus is of greater value than a thousand words.
 - "**Jesus' gesture made clear that he was not concerned with others' taboos and dramatically demonstrated that God's love extends to even the most outcast of society.**"³⁶
 - Touching is a very strong means of non-verbal communication. Touching the man preceded the words of Jesus. In touching Jesus already declared him clean.
 - Touching someone can have so many different meanings in interpersonal relationships. Touching needs love and wisdom. There are moments when it is wise to refrain from touching.
 - Possible meanings without any word spoken:
 - You are not alone, I'm with you.
 - I will trust you.
 - I will comfort you.
 - I will help you.
 - I am near to you.

³⁵ Newman, B. M., & Stine, P. C. (1992, p. 221).

³⁶ Blomberg, C. (1992, p. 139).

- ❖ **“I am willing.”** These words have such an impact. We can pray for ourselves and other people. We can hope for the best. We can plead the promises and the faithfulness of God, but Jesus Christ is willing and what he is willing will happen.
 - “The leper reveals an astonishing confidence in Jesus’ power (“you can”), especially in light of the Jewish belief that cures of lepers were as difficult as resurrections from the dead (based originally on 2 Kgs 5:7). At the same time, the leper defers to Jesus’ sovereignty (“if you are willing”). **These twin thrusts are crucial in all Christian prayers for healing.**³⁷

Verse 41-44

- ❖ Be clean! By the will of Jesus the man is cured, this is also symbolized by the touch, by which the man is restored to community life and worship again.
- ❖ It is important to show that the man with leprosy didn’t obey the command of Christ.
 - It is understandable that the man felt relieved and happy, and that he wanted to tell everybody about what had happened to him.
 - English remarks: “Jesus’ reticence about having followers on any grounds other than personal faith provides a stern test of our evangelism and witness. **Our concern to impress or get results too often takes priority over a determination to help people to true faith in God through Jesus which will stand the test of daily life.** The ‘numbers game’ is a distinct snare for the Christian church leader.”³⁸

Verse 45

- ❖ Positions exchanged.
 - The man was freely disseminating the word (of his healing), while Jesus had to withdraw to lonely places.

Testimony

- ❖ The man had to show himself to the priest and offer the sacrifices commanded by Moses. Why did Jesus insist on this testimony? Probably for two reasons:
 - 1. Independent confirmation of his cleansing by the priest.
 - This confirmation validates the cleansing, so it couldn’t be denied.
 - 2. Jesus didn’t abolish the Law and the Prophets (Matthew 5:17-20).
- ❖ The man had to be silent about two things:
 - 1. That it was Jesus who cleansed him.

³⁷ Blomberg, C. (1992, p. 138).

³⁸ English, D. (1992, p. 64).

- 2. That he was touched, which was not allowed by the Law.
- ❖ Today, it is equally important that someone who has been cured by or after prayer must show himself to the doctor for confirmation.
 - Christians are responsible people, responsible to God, the church and the wider community.

WARNING. This message by Pastor Chris was found on Facebook.³⁹

MEDICAL CHECK UPS.

Why do you need a doctor to verify your healing after God has healed you.

Which report do you believe? Do you believe a doctor's report or God's report.?

Faith does not require physical evidence. In our journey of faith we need to grow BEYOND physical evidence.

In the old Testament contagious diseases such as leprosy needed verification after healing, but God didn't send them to the physicians, He send them to the priest.

Message title'-
Fight the Good Fight.

- This message suggests that there is a contradiction between the doctor's report and God's report, which is a false contradiction. Even the resurrection of Christ was substantiated by physical evidence when the Lord Jesus appeared to Thomas (Jn 20:24-29) and when the Lord had breakfast with his disciples (Jn 21:1-14).
- To support this claim with a reference to leprosy is false. The priest had to verify that the person was clean to partake in community and worship.
- ❖ When there are testimonies of healing are given during worship services, it is advisable to have them validated by a medical report.
 - Healing after medical treatment is also a gift by the grace of God.

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³⁹ Facebook. (n.d.). Retrieved April 15, 2023, from <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=697241324260238>

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