

“A Year with Jesus”

Week 8, February 21st, Mark 1:40-45

//Through the first weeks of this project we have looked only inward in our interactions with Jesus and the Gospel stories. Any interaction with the Gospels requires a look outward as well. In fact, if a journey with Jesus doesn't challenge how we see, interact, and love others, then it isn't a journey with Jesus. At the start of Mark's Gospel we are confronted with a picture of compassion.

Notes on the Leper

This could have been any number of skin diseases labeled under leprosy. It would have made the man “unclean” and forced him to live outside the community, making him legally untouchable. He is the definition of an “outcast.” Leviticus 13 and 14 details the Jewish law concerning skin diseases including the code to re-enter public life once healed, which Jesus directs this man to do in verse 44.

//Read Mark 1:40-45

Imagine the story as you've done previously during this series, but imagine it as a bystander. Though the story is brief, each phrase provides intimate detail of each person's emotions and motivations.

//Pause and reflect, one at a time, on each of these moments in the story. What emotions, thoughts, questions are stirred for each?

- begged him on his knees
- “If you are willing...”
- moved with compassion (*Some translations read “indignant” or “moved with pity.” It is unclear, though all options are possible and accepted. For this devotion focus on Jesus' compassion.*)
- reached out his hand and touched the man
- “I am willing...”

//Use these thoughts to examine yourself in light of Jesus' healing.

Jesus is the picture of compassion which grows out of his empathy. It enables him to not only heal, but to see and provide what was most needed; physical touch (he could have healed without it), and community (going to the priest reestablishes his ability exist socially with others).

In light of Jesus, examine your own heart of compassion and willingness to empathize with others in need.

Who are the “outcasts” in our world, the modern day lepers? What opportunities are there for you to empathize and engage with compassion?

We could simply say that the leper represents those who are alone. What opportunities do you have to offer yourself to others in need of relationship?

Ways to engage this week...

-Ask God to help you actively see others with the compassion and empathy modeled by Jesus. Journal about your experience at the start of next week's devotion.

-Be open to how God might use you in new ways to care for the outcast and/or be a companion to the lonely. If this is already a part of your life with God, thank him for his willingness to use you, and be open to areas where you need to grow.

If you would like help in discerning how you might find opportunities to serve others, please contact me, marty@ccto.org, or any staff at CCTO.