

Loving the Outcasts **Mark 1:40-45**

Introduction:

1. Imagine a dirty child hugging his mother.
2. Today we want to see how Jesus responded in exactly the same way towards a leper. Mark 1:40 states, *“There came a leper to him.”*
3. This is amazing in and of itself because lepers were the outcasts of society. It was the ultimate in uncleanness for a Jew. If you had leprosy, it meant a life of isolation and loneliness.
4. Are there “outcasts” that live in our society, today?
 - How about those who are physically handicapped, those stuck in nursing homes and are all alone with nobody to visit them, those with addictions, those who are homeless, those with AIDS, those children who are overweight or maybe just can't seem to fit in, those who are mentally challenged, teens in juvenile delinquency centers, etc.?
5. There are many in our society who feel like outcasts because of a divorce, or physical abuse, or sexual abuse, or emotional and mental abuse.
6. There are many who feel like this leper. They feel very alone, cut off from society, isolated, and feel like nobody wants to be around them.
7. This is where the church, the body of Christ, comes in. In a church for others, outcasts are not only welcomed, they are truly loved! Why is this so important for our church? It is very simple:

Jesus loves outcasts.

1. In verse 40, this leper came and approached Jesus. He was taking a chance that Jesus might walk away as the Scribes and Pharisees did, or that Jesus might cast stones at him or taunt him like others did.
2. But he felt that Jesus was different. He felt this man might just be the One who could change his whole life. Man, was he ever right! vs. 41-42
 - Jesus loved this leper, and He took action when nobody else would. Jesus acted when the rest of society forsook this man. He acted when this man's own religion ignored him.
3. I wonder how many people in our community are like this leper and they think, “I wonder if those people at CrossRoads are different? I wonder if they will love me, accept me, and help me?”
 - Just as this man came to Jesus, people come to us.
 - They come to a Sunday morning service, or a Bible Study, or GriefShare, or teen night on Wednesdays, or a Single Adults' Bible Study, or a Single Mom's activity, or ride the bus to church, or come to our Deaf Ministry, or come to WTB, or attend a support group, etc.
4. Jesus didn't turn His back on the outcast, or walk by him or ignore him. Nor can we!

5. We must not only welcome outcasts, but love and care for them! Why? It is very simple. Jesus loves outcasts, and He lives in us and desires to live and love through us.
6. Jesus knows what it feels like to be an outcast and be forsaken and have nobody.
7. **But how do we love the outcasts that God sends our way? There are two thoughts here in our text.**

First, we must allow compassion to move us.

- A. Verse 41 says that Christ was “*moved with compassion.*”
 - This means that Jesus had a depth of feeling towards this man. Ten times we are told in the gospels that Jesus had compassion on people around Him. It bothered Him to see people suffering and in need.
- B. Does it bother us? Do we really care? Does it ever occur to us that people are in our midst (at church, work, etc.) that are deeply wounded and suffering?
- C. It is so easy **not** to care. We see so much suffering and pain. It is easy, if we're not careful, to build shells and shield ourselves from the suffering around us, and become hardened and calloused. Jesus refused to do this.
- D. I love to see new ministries start in our church. Do you know what ministry is? It is something that **helps people.**
 - If somebody were to say, “Let's start a new committee,” I wouldn't get very excited. But when somebody says, “Pastor, I would like to start a new ministry,” I get pumped!
 - Committees discuss; ministries act! Committees are into maintaining; ministries are into helping people.
- E. Why do people start new ministries? Compassion moves them.
- F. A church for others is a church of compassion. Jude 22

Second, we must allow Jesus to touch others through us.

- A. I love verse 41. “*Jesus put forth his hand and touched him.*”
- B. You have to understand the life of a leper in Jesus' day to really appreciate what Christ did here.
 - The leper had to cry out, “Unclean, unclean,” lest anyone get too close.
 - But Jesus didn't avoid him, didn't run away like all the rest, didn't avoid eye contact with him, and didn't just feel sorry for him. Jesus put forth His hand and touched him.
- C. Jesus has ascended into heaven and sent back His Spirit to dwell in those who believe on Him. Now if Jesus is going to touch those who need a touch, He will do it through **us**—His body, the church!
 - We are Jesus' hands of compassion. We are His hands of love in a world that is crying for someone to care.

- Jesus was not turned back by the repulsiveness of the leper and He doesn't want us to turn our backs on the outcasts and lepers of our society.
 - Jesus wants us to minister to people, regardless of who they are or what they have.
 - Jesus' touch of compassion comes through us, through our touch, through our love, and through our caring.
- D. Each Sunday when we come to church our prayer should be, “Lord Jesus, touch someone through me today. Show compassion to someone through me.”
- E. The question we should be asking ourselves is, “What ministry can I be involved in whereby You can touch and impact others through me?”

In Conclusion:

1. After Jesus heals this leper, He tells him something that may seem a little strange to you (vs. 43-44). First of all, this was what the Law of Moses commanded, but secondly, this was to be a testimony to them that Christ was the Messiah.
2. Jesus didn't say to **never** tell anybody, but **first** go to the priests and show them.
3. This guy goes out and starts telling everybody (vs. 45), and people came to Jesus.
4. When a church becomes a church for others, word spreads!