



Sunday School Lesson
Mark 1:40-45
by Lorin L. Cranford
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The Power of a Touch



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In this study we encounter Jesus healing an individual who possessed the dreaded disease of leprosy. In both the first century world and in our world, few diseases pose such dread as this slow, painful path to death. To be sure, leprosy was not an automatic death sentence in either world, but a cure from it was not common in either world.



In the Smyth-Helwys Formations unit on "Everyday Blessings" the emphasis is on 'touch.' The experience of touching another human being was not the same between the first century Jewish world and our contemporary world. In American culture we value our 'body space' and when someone 'invades' it to touch us we respond either with acceptance or rejection depending on our feelings toward the other person. Some of these same psychological dynamics were true of Jesus' world. But most importantly that Jewish world added the religious principle of ritual purity to this experience. To be touched risked being made ritually impure and thus unable to worship God

in the temple. For an impure person to touch you made you impure before God. To a devout Jew this was serious business! One's religious status before God was at stake. Thus, great caution was exercised regarding whom you allowed to touch you and whom you touched.

Unquestionably a leper was unclean and untouchable. For Jesus then to touch this man as a part of the healing dynamic took on meaning far beyond a simple contact of one human to another. It's meaning reached much deeper than an simple expression of care and warmth. Jesus intentionally crossed social and religious boundaries in the way he healed this man. In the visible demonstration of touching the claim to deity was made which asserted that Jesus wasn't bound by custom or even the OT Levitical code. God always stands above human limits, and Jesus by his touch claimed such prerogatives.

I Context

Since this study comes after [several others](#) in the Gospel of Mark, the relevant contextual materials from the previous studies will be incorporated into this study. New material will be added where it applies to this particular passage.

a. Historical

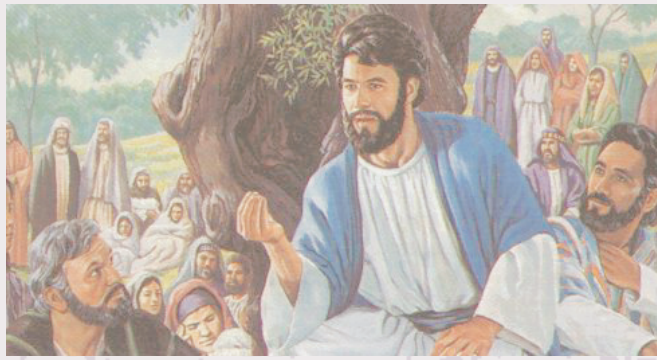
External History. The authorship of this gospel document is mostly understood from early church tradition, since the document itself contains no indication of who was responsible for its writing. Modern approaches to the assessment of early church tradition tend to be cautious at best, and often skeptical.

The compositional history of Mark's gospel begins with the traditional understanding first developed among the Church Fathers of the second through fifth centuries. In that perspective Mark is the [John Mark](#) who is mentioned some eight times in the New Testament. His mother owned a large home in Jerusalem where the disciples gathered for prayer (Acts 12:12). He traveled with Paul and Barnabas on the first missionary journey until they left Cyprus and for some unknown reason abandoned the missionaries to return home. With the planning for the

second missionary journey (Acts 15) Barnabas wanted to take his nephew Mark but Paul was determined that Mark shouldn't come. Consequently, Paul and Barnabas split company and Paul chose Silas to go with him. By Paul's writing of Colossians and Philemon in the late 50s to early 60s, Mark and Paul have reconciled and Mark is viewed as a valuable servant of God (Col. 4:10; Philm 24). In 2 Tim. 4:11 just before Paul's death he also views him very positively.

This is the extent of the biblical record about Mark. Unprovable tradition extends the story to place Mark in Rome in the 60s and the one to whom Peter recounts his memories of Christ's ministry. Thus the gospel of Mark is seen as a reflection of Peter's understanding of the gospel, and largely on this basis the gospel found its way into the canon of the New Testament.

Modern scholarship has looked carefully at this church tradition about Mark and the second gospel. Since so much of that early tradition cannot be verified by objective evidence, considerable questions about its accuracy exists. Instead, most biblical scholars today simply accept the view that no one can say for certain who composed this gospel.



Why is this important? A major reason is that what ever understanding a Bible student assumes, his or her approach is influenced in interpreting any passage in these three gospels where at least two of them describe the same event. A necessary part

The few items that can be gleaned from examining the contents of the gospel itself suggest that it was most likely written prior to the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem in AD 70, based on Mark 13. Literary analysis suggests that the gospel was written either from northern Palestine in Galilee or somewhat further north of there. The language and writing style of the Greek text strongly suggests that the gospel was written somewhat in the pattern of the ancient Greek and Latin *bios*, i.e., lives of famous people. This suggests that the gospel was composed for a Gentile readership without much understanding of the Jewish background of Jesus and early Christianity. Very little about the sources used by Mark can be gleaned with certainty from the gospel itself.

A second external history issue has to do with the use of the Gospel of Mark by the other gospel writers. [An earlier study](#) addressed that issue in detail; so we will just summarize the assumptions underlying our approach to the so-called “[Synoptic Problem](#)” coming out of [Source Critical](#) studies of the first three gospels, called the [Synoptic Gospels](#).

The working hypothesis of the literary relationship of these three gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, is that Mark was written first. When Matthew and Luke set out to compose their gospel accounts the two sets of common materials available to them were the gospel of Mark and a collection mostly of things that Jesus said labeled in modern scholarship the Q document after the German word *Quelle*, which means source. Each writer had extensive other materials, but both gospel writers had access to Mark and Q. The idea is represented in chart form in this diagram.



This is not the only approach to this issue, but it is the one that I’ve found most credible over the past forty plus years of Bible study.

of interpretation of the so-called double or triple tradition materials entails comparative analysis of the similarities and differences in these accounts. Consequently some comparative analysis will be incorporated into the exegesis of our passage in Mark. [A more detailed analysis](#) is found the end of this study.

Internal History. Time and place markers in Mk. 1:40-45 are limited in number and vague.

Place markers. These are limited to the introductory sentence and Jesus’ instructions about the priests. Mark 1:40 simply says a leper came to Jesus with a plea for healing. Nothing is indicated about where they were when this event took place. Matthew and Luke are more detailed since they both provide a [set up scene](#) in introducing this episode. But they do not provide much help, since Matthew sets up the episode as Jesus is coming down from the mountain after the Sermon on the Mount. Luke differs somewhat by setting it up while Jesus was “in one of the cities.”

From the literary context of Mark it becomes clear that this episode took place during a preaching and healing tour of the province of Galilee: “**And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons**” (Mk. 1:39, NRSV).

For Mark, the thematic considerations for this miracle narrative were the



<http://www.keyway.ca/htmi2002/index.htm>

most most important aspects.

The other place marker has to do with Jesus' instructions to the man after the healing. Jesus told him to present himself to the priests for certification that he was now free of leprosy. This implied a trip from Galilee to Jerusalem, since this action required being in the temple for worship and examination by the priests in the outer courts. If the man wanted to be able to live freely in society such a certification

was essential in the Jewish religious tradition.

Time markers. Just as place markers are scarce, time markers are hardly present in the passage. [The sequence of pericopes](#) in Mark places this event toward the beginning of Jesus' ministry in Galilee. Matthew places his version just after the Sermon on the Mount, but Luke inserts his account before Jesus' sermon. But all three concur that it comes early on in Jesus public ministry.

b. Literary

Genre. Mk. 1:40-45 falls into the literary pattern of a healing miracle narrative. Such stories were common in the ancient world, although healing from leprosy was not so common.

This account is one of two such [miracles in the public ministry of Jesus](#). It is recorded in Mt. 8:1-4 and Lk. 5:12-16 as well as here in Mark. The second account relates to the [healing of ten lepers](#) recorded in Luke 17:11-19 and occurred much later in Jesus' ministry after having left Galilee. Additionally, Jesus dined in the house of a Simon the leper, but no account of his healing is provided.

R.K. Harrison ("leprosy," *Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible*, iPreach) observes in regard to Jesus' ministry to lepers:

In his ministry Jesus healed many described in the NT as λεπροί, and, according to Matt. 10:8, the cleansing of such people was one of the tasks allotted to the Twelve during their mission. In Mark 1:40-45 (= Matt. 8:2-4; Luke 5:12-15) Jesus healed a man from a skin disease by means of his touch and a pronouncement. Perhaps this condition was *vitiligo* rather than true leprosy.

The ten men whom Jesus healed on his way to Jerusalem (Luke 17:11-19) were instructed to satisfy the requirements of Levitical ceremonial law before returning to their homes. They, too, probably suffered from *vitiligo*, which, if psychogenic in nature, would respond to that suggestion which appears to have been undertaken as part of the treatment (Luke 17: 19).

His assertion of "Jesus healed many" cannot be substantiated by the biblical record. One has to assume from [summarizing statements](#), e.g., Mt. 11:5 and Lk. 7:22, that more than these few accounts of healing took place. But such remains an assumption, rather than stated claims in the biblical record.

The role of miracles in Jesus' ministry has importance for our study. More precisely, the role of miracle narratives in the composition of the Gospel of Mark is significant. J.L. Mays (*Harper's Bible Commentary*, Logos Systems) has some helpful obser-

vations:

The Miracles of Jesus in Mark

Miracle stories occupy roughly a third of the Gospel (more than the passion narrative). Mark describes

the miracles of Jesus as "mighty works" (Gk. *dynameis*, 6:2; 9:39), not "signs" that authenticate the ministry of Jesus (see 8:11-13; cf. 15:29-32). From our perspective they are better called "symbols" of the power of God manifest in Jesus. This power is stronger than the forces of evil and illness and responds to the needs of suffering people. They comprise four groups: healings (1:29-31, 40-45; 2:1-12; 3:1-5; 5:25-34; 7:31-37; 8:22-26; 10:46-52); exorcisms (1:21-28; 5:1-20; 7:24-30; 9:14-27); nature miracles

(4:35-41; 6:35-44; 6:45-52; 8:1-9; 11:12-14, 20-22); and one resuscitation (5:21-24, 35-43). Mark also refers to them in summaries of Jesus' ministry (1:32-34; 1:39; 3:10-12; 6:5; 6:53-56). The different groups have similar formal characteristics, which argue for oral retelling prior to Mark. Similar tales of extraordinary deeds of the prophets, Jewish rabbis, and Hellenistic heroes were common.

Mark incorporates these stories for a variety of reasons: to show Jesus as a prophet mighty in word and deed (1:27; 2:12; 6:1-6), to exalt him above other claimants to divine power (cf. 13:21-22), and to evoke wonder and awe in God's power (4:41; 7:37). By placing most of them prior to the first passion prediction (8:31-32) and the beginning of Jesus' journey to Jerusalem, Mark subjects them to the narrative paradox of his Gospel. Jesus the powerful one submits to God's will in becoming the powerless victim who is raised up by God. The resurrection is the ultimate work of power in Mark.

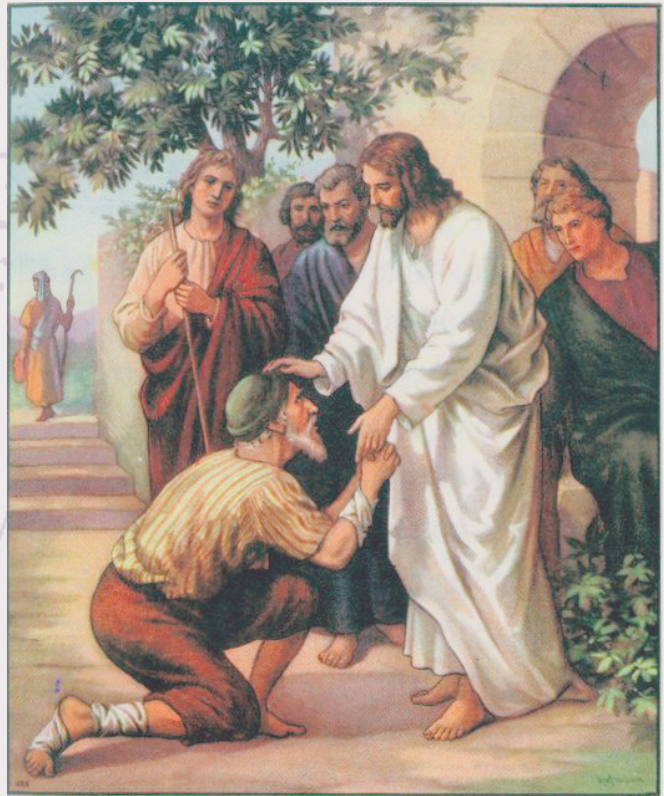
Out of the 35 [individual miracles](#) contained in all four gospels, the healing of the leper is the sixth one and follows on the heels of Jesus' healing of Peter's mother-in-law from a disabling fever. The literary pattern follows the typical structure of ancient miracle narratives: the need, the miracle, its impact.



Literary Setting. Mark's placing of this miracle in his story helps focus attention on the power and authority of Jesus early in his public ministry. The following [outline of Mark](#) illustrates this point:

- II. Jesus ministered and taught in Galilee. 1:14-6:29
 - A. Jesus began his ministry with authority. 1:14-45
 1. The Gospel of the Kingdom (vv. 14-15)
 2. Four fishermen called (vv. 16-20)
 3. Miraculous Healings (vv. 21-45)
 - a) Sabbath exorcism at Capernaum (vv. 21-28)
 - b) Peter's mother-in-law and others healed (vv. 29-34)
 - c) Preaching and healing tour in Galilee (vv. 35-39)
 - d) *Leper cleansed (vv. 40-45)*
 - B. Jesus encountered controversy. 2:1-3:35
 1. Paralytic healed and forgiven (2:1-12)
 2. Calling of Levi (2:13-17)
 3. Question about fasting (2:18-22)
 4. Plucking grain on the Sabbath (2:23-28)
 5. Man with withered hand healed (3:1-6)
 6. Withdrawal and more healings (3:7-12)
 7. The Twelve chosen (3:13-19a)
 8. Beelzebul accusation (3:19b-30)
 9. True kinship (3:31-35)

Mark introduces Jesus as a 'take charge' kind of person who began ministry with definite goals in mind. A part of that intention of Jesus was to address critical problems that plagued people in Galilee. Diseases and other health issues were major concerns, for which existing medical remedies offered almost no hope. Thus from the outset Jesus demonstrates not only God's loving care for people afflicted by these issues, but that Jesus possesses the necessary divine power to eliminate these dangers to life. Sub-



sequent to this miracle with the leprosy man, other miracles are narrated in chapters two and three. But these miracles increasingly take place in growing controversy with the religious leadership in Jerusalem who have representatives positioned in Galilee to criticize Jesus. These subsequent miracles take place in ways that ignore established Jewish religious tradition. But the series of miracles at the start of Jesus' ministry climax with the leper and do not entail the controversy associated with those in the second and third chapter of Mark's story of Jesus.

II. Message

Literary Structure. Ancient miracle narratives typically revolved around a threefold structure. **First**, the circumstances prompting the performing of a miracle are presented. **This is followed** by some kind of depiction of the action doing of the miracle. This can vary dramatically in the ancient patterns. **Finally**, the impact of the completed miracle is described. Much variation of narrative detail will be found here as well. When a person receives a miracle, almost always the impact of the performing of the miracle will be described. But in the NT pattern particularly a second level of impact frequently describes the effect the doing of the miracle has on the bystanders who observe the miracle being done.

The miracle of the healing of the leper follows this typical pattern with the distinctive Markan style. Thus the threefold structure will form the basis of our exegesis of this miracle.

Several actions in this narrative violated ancient Jewish religious law and custom. The leper was supposed to keep a wide distance between himself and other people. But this man ignored that legal code and approached Jesus up close. Religious people were not supposed to touch a leper since it instantly brought them into ritual impurity, and thus negatively impacted their status before God. But Jesus ignored this legal understanding. Jesus' rather hostile reaction to the healed leper is surprising and given without

signals as to why. This suggests the possibility of an exorcism aspect since Mark at this point in his narrative suddenly shifts of the language of exorcism narratives. From the limited details one cannot determine the particulars taking place in the event. Both Matthew and Luke omit this language in their depiction in a different interpretation of the event. Finally, the disobedience of the healed leper to follow Jesus' instructions to not say anything about his healing except to the priests in the temple at Jerusalem underscore the human freedom to follow or not follow God's bidding. Matthew and Luke adopt different perspectives at this point. Matthew completely omits the response of the leper to Jesus' instructions. Luke shifts the spreading fame of Jesus that limited Jesus' movements to a generic statement that word about this man's heading spread extensively. No mention of the leper's being responsible for it is given.

We must then approach the Markan text in this larger contextual understanding, if we are to correctly grasp what Mark is trying to communicate to us about this event.

a. A leper approaches Jesus, v. 40

Greek NT

<1:40> Καὶ ἔρχεται πρὸς αὐτὸν λεπρὸς παρακαλῶν αὐτὸν [καὶ γονυπετῶν] καὶ λέγων αὐτῷ ὅτι Ἐὰν θέλῃς δύνασαί με καθαρίσαι.

NASB

40 And a leper came to Jesus, beseeching Him and falling on his knees before Him, and saying, "If You are willing, You can make me clean."

NRSV

40 A leper came to him begging him, and kneeling he said to him, "If you choose, you can make me clean."

NLT

40 A man with leprosy came and knelt in front of Jesus, begging to be healed. "If you want to, you can make me well again," he said.

Notes:

One important consideration for our understanding of Mark is a visual comparison of how Mark sets up the event in contrast to Matthew and Luke. From the more detailed analysis at the end of this lesson, we take a look at this.

Matthew 8:1-2

<8:1> Καταβάντος δὲ αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ ὄρους ἠκολούθησαν αὐτῷ ὄχλοι πολλοί. <8:2> καὶ ἰδοὺ λεπρὸς προσελθὼν προσεκύνει αὐτῷ λέγων, Κύριε, ἐὰν θέλῃς δύνασαί με καθαρίσαι.

NRSV

1 When Jesus had come down from the mountain, great crowds followed him; 2 and there was a leper who came to him and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, if you choose, you can make me clean."

Mark 1:40-45

<1:40> Καὶ ἔρχεται πρὸς αὐτὸν λεπρὸς παρακαλῶν αὐτὸν [καὶ γονυπετῶν] καὶ λέγων αὐτῷ ὅτι Ἐὰν θέλῃς δύνασαί με καθαρίσαι.

NRSV

40 A leper came to him begging him, and kneeling he said to him, "If you choose, you can make me clean."

Luke 5:12-16

5:12 Καὶ ἐγένετο ἐν τῷ εἶναι αὐτὸν ἐν μιᾷ τῶν πόλεων καὶ ἰδοὺ ἀνὴρ πλήρης λέπρας· ἰδὼν δὲ τὸν Ἰησοῦν, πεσὼν ἐπὶ πρόσωπον ἐδεήθη αὐτοῦ λέγων, Κύριε, ἐὰν θέλῃς δύνασαί με καθαρίσαι.

NRSV

12 Once, when he was in one of the cities, there was a man covered with leprosy. When he saw Jesus, he bowed with his face to the ground and begged him, "Lord, if you choose, you can make me clean."

Immediately one notices the lack of geographical setting in Mark. Although Matthew and Luke differ at that point, they do position the location of this event in some manner. But Mark doesn't. Mark isn't concerned with where this event took place. His interest is how this event contributes to the portrait of a powerful Jesus who overcomes a wide array of diseases with the power of God. When Matthew and Luke put their story together using Mark as one of their individual sources, both chose to add geographical markers in setting up the event: Matthew the moun-

tain and Luke a city. That had symbolical significance for them as well. For Matthew, Jesus was coming down the mountain from delivering the Sermon on the Mount which represented the essence of God's new Law regarding the Kingdom of God. To encounter this leper after such an experience provided action demonstration that Jesus' words about the Kingdom were marked by the presence and power of God Himself. Luke's concern is uniformly with Jesus reaching people in cities and thus placing this event in a city in Galilee is consistent with his thematic

concerns. Thus both gospel writers felt freedom to reposition this event to fit their individual concerns.

The encounter of the leper with Jesus is described in a similar manner but not with the same details among all three gospel writers. Two aspects are depicted: 1) the man's approach to Jesus, and 2) his verbal request.

The man's approach. The three translations render the Greek text differently:

NASB: a leper came to Jesus, beseeching Him and falling on his knees before Him, and saying

NRSV: A leper came to him begging him, and kneeling he said to him

NLT: A man with leprosy came and knelt in front of Jesus, begging to be healed

Greek: ἔρχεται πρὸς αὐτὸν λεπρὸς παρακαλῶν αὐτὸν [καὶ γονυπετῶν] καὶ λέγων αὐτῷ

A literal translation of the Greek text is "comes to him a leper pleading with him [and kneeling] and saying to him." Mark paints a picture of desperation by the man. But it is also a picture of confidence in Jesus' ability to meet his needs.

The kneeling expression is not certain, since the Greek participle [καὶ γονυπετῶν] does not show up in several of the earliest and most reliable manuscript copies of the text. If this was not in the original copy of Mark, then the depiction simply reads "comes to him a leper pleading with him and saying to him." The participle γονυπετῶν (*gonypeton*) adds to be description an act of humility and reverence by the leper.

Quite clearly Matthew and Luke in their use of Mark understood the idea of reverence of Jesus by the leper. Matthew depicts his approach as "a leper who came to him and knelt before him, saying" (λεπρὸς προσελθὼν προσεκύνει αὐτῷ λέγων). And Luke with different words describes the same thing: "When he saw Jesus, he bowed with his face to the ground and begged him" (ἰδὼν δὲ τὸν Ἰησοῦν, πεσὼν ἐπὶ πρόσωπον ἐδεήθη αὐτοῦ λέγων). The terminology used by these gospel writers clearly portrays the man coming to Jesus with appropriate reverence and humility.

The editorial committee for the UBS *Greek New Testament* chose to include the participle as they explain in the *Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (2nd ed., Logos Systems):

On the one hand, the combination of B D W *a*l in support of the shorter text is extremely strong. On the other hand, if καὶ γονυπετῶν were the original reading, homoeoteleuton could account for its accidental omission. On the whole, since in the parallel passages Matthew's use of προσεκύνει (Mt 8.2) and, still more, Luke's πεσὼν ἐπὶ πρόσωπον (Lk 5.12) seem to support the originality of the idea of kneeling in Mark's account, the Committee decided to retain καὶ



γονυπετῶν with \aleph L Θ *f* *a*l but to enclose the expression with square brackets.

Thus the text presents the leper as one who, although breaking the Levitical Code about approaching people with leprosy, came to Jesus with humility and reverence.

The man's request. Although each gospel writing described the man's approach to Jesus differently, Matthew and Luke chose to reproduce his verbal request exactly as their Marcan source had stated it: "If you choose, you can make me clean" (Ἐὰν θέλης δύνασαί με καθαρίσαι). The only variation from Mark is the addition of Κύριε ("Sir") in both Matthew and Luke. This heightens the tone of respect and humility by the leper.

The structure of the Greek text expression, Ἐὰν θέλης ("if you choose...") underscores the politeness of the request (Gk. 3rd class conditional protasis). The leper made no demand to be healed. Nor did he reflect uncertainty over whether or not Jesus could heal him: δύνασαί με καθαρίσαι ("you can make me clean").

Mark highlights the role of faith by those seeking Jesus' ministry. The leper came to Jesus with full confidence in Jesus' ability to heal him. He only had one request: heal me. And he couched that in a polite request: If you wish. His desperate desire for healing had led him to breach the Levitical code about keeping a certain distance from other people. He felt that he had to get close enough to Jesus to make his request known. But upon achieving that, he demonstrated proper respect to Jesus in making his request known to the Lord.

The connection of this to us today? The leper's example challenges us when we would make requests of our Lord. He had faith in Jesus' ability to meet his needs. Do we? His desire to get to Jesus was a driving force leading him to do whatever was

necessary to get his request before the Lord? How strong is our desire to come to Christ with our needs? Finally, he demonstrated reverential respect of Jesus in making his request known. Do we? In our contemporary self-centered culture even we as disciples

face temptations to make demands rather than requests. Demonstrating reverence and respect even to God is not a trademark of our culture nor of many Christians. We have a lot that we can learn from this leprous man!

b. Jesus heals the leper, vv. 41-42

Greek NT

<1:41> καὶ σπλαγχνισθεὶς ἐκτεῖνας τὴν χεῖρα αὐτοῦ ἤψατο καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ, Θέλω, καθαρῖσθητι·
<1:42> καὶ εὐθὺς ἀπῆλθεν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ ἡ λέπρα, καὶ ἐκαθαρίσθη.

NASB

41 Moved with compassion, Jesus stretched out His hand and touched him, and said to him, "I am willing; be cleansed." 42 Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed.

NRSV

41 Moved with pity, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, and said to him, "I do choose. Be made clean!" 42 Immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean.

NLT

41 Moved with pity, Jesus touched him. "I want to," he said. "Be healed!" 42 Instantly the leprosy disappeared; the man was healed.

Notes:

This second part highlights the actual doing of the miracle by Jesus. When studying the patterns of miracle working in the ancient world, quite a lot of insight comes from observing the variety of means used by the miracle worker to perform the miracle. Most of this literature outside the gospels and Acts will stand in stark contrast to the patterns typically surfacing in Jesus' ministry and those of Peter and Paul, which followed a similar pattern to those methods of Jesus.

Again, [some analysis](#) of how Matthew and Luke use their Markan source at this point in the narrative is important for better understanding of Mark.

Matthew 8:3

<8:3> καὶ ἐκτεῖνας τὴν χεῖρα ἤψατο αὐτοῦ λέγων, Θέλω, καθαρῖσθητι· καὶ εὐθέως ἐκαθαρίσθη αὐτοῦ ἡ λέπρα.

NRSV

3 He stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, "I do choose. Be made clean!" Immediately his leprosy was cleansed.

Mark 1:41-42

<1:41> καὶ σπλαγχνισθεὶς ἐκτεῖνας τὴν χεῖρα αὐτοῦ ἤψατο καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ, Θέλω, καθαρῖσθητι· <1:42> καὶ εὐθὺς ἀπῆλθεν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ ἡ λέπρα, καὶ ἐκαθαρίσθη.

NRSV

41 Moved with pity, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, and said to him, "I do choose. Be made clean!" 42 Immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean.

Luke 5:13

5:13 καὶ ἐκτεῖνας τὴν χεῖρα ἤψατο αὐτοῦ λέγων, Θέλω, καθαρῖσθητι· καὶ εὐθέως ἡ λέπρα ἀπῆλθεν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ.

NRSV

13 Then Jesus stretched out his hand, touched him, and said, "I do choose. Be made clean." Immediately the leprosy left him.

Several things stand out from this comparison. Matthew and Luke considerably shorten Mark's account. The action of Jesus' touching the leper is the one place where Matthew and Luke retain the wording of Mark pretty much in tact:

- Mt.- ἐκτεῖνας τὴν χεῖρα ἤψατο αὐτοῦ
having stretched out the hand he touched him
- Mk.- ἐκτεῖνας τὴν χεῖρα αὐτοῦ ἤψατο
having stretched out the hand him he touched
- Lk.- ἐκτεῖνας τὴν χεῖρα ἤψατο αὐτοῦ
having stretched out the hand he touched him

The Mt. / Lk. variation over the placing of αὐτοῦ is a stylistic variation and doesn't change the meaning of the statement.

Jesus' verbal response to the leper's request is identical except for the way it is introduced:

- Mt.- λέγων, Θέλω, καθαρῖσθητι
saying, I wish, be cleansed
- Mk.- καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ, Θέλω, καθαρῖσθητι
and he says to him, I wish, be cleansed
- Lk.- λέγων, Θέλω, καθαρῖσθητι
saying, I wish, be cleansed

The Matthean and Lukan identical introduction of Jesus' words with the participle λέγων (*saying*) represents a stylistic shortening of Mark's longer καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ (*and he says to him*). By their use of the participle λέγων, Matthew and Luke more closely tie what Jesus said to his action of touching. As Jesus touched the man, he also was speaking to him -- at the same time.



The second part of the performing of the miracle is the issuing of a verbal command for the leper to be cleansed of his disease. Thus Jesus used both touch and words to achieve the miracle. Touch expressed a compassion, willing to override conventional rules about contact with a leper. Words expressed an authority that surpassed the power of the leprosy that gripped the body of this man.

Jesus' words emphasize two things. **First**, he answered the request of the leper, "if you choose" (ἐὰν θέλης) with "I do choose" (Θέλω). His verbal acceptance of the leper's request reinforces his compassion reflected in his touching the man.

Second, Jesus spoke authoritatively to the man, "be cleansed" (καθαρίσθητι). The form of the Greek verb has aspects that prevent a full translation of the idea clearly into English. **First**, the passive voice utilizes a concept in ancient Greek called in English the 'causative passive voice.' The effect is to say, "be caused by something outside you to be healed." Of course, that outside something was God's power expelling the leprosy. Thus Jesus was bringing God's power to bear on this man's disease, not any power resident humanly within himself. As such, the accomplishing of the cleansing reflects God's power residing in Jesus' ministry. The miracle then signals God's approval of Jesus and his ministry. **Second**, the Aorist tense of the verb depicts this action of healing as taking place in a brief moment. Healing wasn't something to be stung out over a lengthy period of time. It would happen instantly at the command of Jesus. Thus, whether healing took place immediately or not would indicate the level of divine authority that Jesus possessed. The proof was in the pudding so to speak.

The nature of the command is important to understand. Jesus here is *making* the leper free from

his disease. Although similar words might be used later by the priests in the temple at Jerusalem, their words would *certify* that the man was free from his disease. Jesus did not assume the authority to make such a certification.

What happened as a consequence of Jesus' touch and words? "Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed." Here again Matthew and Luke modify and shorten their Markan source in their wording but not in the meaning:

Mt.- καὶ εὐθέως ἐκαθαρίσθη αὐτοῦ ἡ λέπρα.
and immediately was cleansed his leprosy

Mk.- καὶ εὐθὺς ἀπῆλθεν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ ἡ λέπρα, καὶ ἐκαθαρίσθη.
and immediately departed from him the leprosy and he was cleansed

Lk.- καὶ εὐθέως ἡ λέπρα ἀπῆλθεν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ.
and immediately the leprosy departed from him

Both Matthew and Luke choose different elements of their Markan source to stress in their depiction. For Matthew the man's leprosy was cleansed; for Luke the leprosy departed from the man. Mark asserts the leprosy departed from the man and he was cleansed. The verbal actions of departing (ἀπῆλθεν) and cleansing (ἐκαθαρίσθη) are used different ways.

How did Jesus heal people? A quick survey of the [35 specific miracles](#) described in the four gospels reveals that mostly he spoke and the miracle took place. Most of the time he was speaking directly to the person needing healing. In the exorcisms, he always spoke to the demon(s) inhabiting the individual rather than to the person himself. In a few instances Jesus just reassured a parent of a sick child that the child was healed. This, while the child was not present with the parent. Upon arriving back home the parent found that the child had been healed just as Jesus had said. In eleven of the 35 miracles Jesus also touched the individual in some manner along with speaking to him or her. In two instances only a touch is described and no spoken words to the sick person are provided. In one instance the narrative simply states that Jesus healed an individual, but gives no details. All of this reflects the diverse patterns that Jesus used in performing miracles. Unlike his Hellenistic counterparts, he was not limited to a formula of secret words as the means of healing people. For the gospel writers the ability to heal people and to control nature (cf. nature miracles in the above list) merely confirmed the presence and power of God upon Jesus' ministry. This in turn underscored the validity of his teachings about the Kingdom of God.

What was the significance of Jesus touching individuals as apart of his healing ministry? The fact that he didn't always touch them clearly indicates that physical contact was not essential for divine power to heal the individuals. Why then did he touch some individuals on certain occasions? For a listing of these instances see miracles numbers 4, 8, 12, 18, 20, 22, 24, 27, 28, 32, and 34 in [the listing of Jesus' miracles](#).



Thus when Jesus reached out and touched the leper, his action had profound implications. Not only did he symbolically express his compassion and concern for the leper, but, just as importantly, his action expressed his rejection of interpersonal relations set up by the Pharisees and even the OT legal code.

The significance of the [touching action](#) is important to understanding this miracle. As is true in our culture, touching another person normally reflected concern and compassion in ancient Jewish culture. But unlike our culture, first century Judaism layered religious significance on top of the basic meaning of compassion. In the OT legal code certain items and people were 'untouchables.' Mostly this was because they were considered to be corrupting. To touch them meant one became ceremonially impure and unable to offer sacrifices to God, until a rigid purification ritual had been completed. Among those individuals who were untouchables were Gentiles and Jews with certain diseases such as leprosy. In the Pharisaical interpretation of the Law in the Pentateuch, becoming religiously impure was to condemn oneself to eternal damnation. This was serious indeed!

expressed his rejection of interpersonal relations set up by the Pharisees and even the OT legal code.

The connection of all this to us? Several thoughts come to mind. Jesus' words and action expressed a genuine compassion for persons in desperate need. Even for the 'untouchables' of his world. His example challenges us to love and care for others. Although we can't bring God's power to bear in overcoming physical diseases the same way that Jesus did, we can lift these people up to God for His healing. And, we must take whatever action is available in order to meet their physical needs. To do less is to step outside the bounds of the path that Jesus has set for us. As 1 Peter 2:21 reminds us, "[For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow in his steps](#)" (NRSV).

c. Jesus sternly warns the leper, vv. 43-45

Greek NT

<1:43> καὶ ἐμβριμησάμενος αὐτῷ εὐθύς ἐξέβαλεν αὐτόν <1:44> καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ, Ὅρα μηδενὶ μηδὲν εἶπης, ἀλλὰ ὑπάγε σεαυτὸν δεῖξον τῷ ἱερεῖ καὶ προσένεγκε περὶ τοῦ καθαρισμοῦ σου ἃ προσέταξεν Μωϋσῆς, εἰς μαρτύριον αὐτοῖς. <1:45> ὁ δὲ ἐξελθὼν ἤρξατο κηρύσσειν πολλὰ καὶ διαφημίζειν τὸν λόγον, ὥστε μηκέτι αὐτὸν δύνασθαι φανερωῶς εἰς πόλιν εἰσελθεῖν, ἀλλ' ἔξω ἐπ' ἐρήμοις τόποις ἦν· καὶ ἤρχοντο πρὸς αὐτὸν πάντοθεν.

NASB

43 And He sternly warned him and immediately sent him away, 44 and He said to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, as a testimony to them." 45 But he went out and began to proclaim it freely and to spread the news around, to such an extent that Jesus could no longer publicly enter a city, but stayed out in unpopulated areas; and they were coming to Him from everywhere.

NRSV

43 After sternly warning him he sent him away at once, 44 saying to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, as a testimony to them." 45 But he went out and began to proclaim it freely, and to spread the word, so that Jesus could no longer go into a town openly, but stayed out in the country; and people came to him from every quarter.

NLT

43 Then Jesus sent him on his way and told him sternly, 44 "Go right over to the priest and let him examine you. Don't talk to anyone along the way. Take along the offering required in the law of Moses for those who have been healed of leprosy, so everyone will have proof of your healing." 45 But as the man went on his way, he spread the news, telling everyone what had happened to him. As a result, such crowds soon surrounded Jesus that he couldn't enter a town anywhere publicly. He had to stay out in the secluded places, and people from everywhere came to him there.

Notes:

In describing the impact of the miracle, Mark became the base for Matthew and Luke to modify, as the texts below illustrate.

Matthew 8:3b-4

καὶ εὐθέως ἐκαθαρίσθη αὐτοῦ ἡ λέπρα. <8:4> καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς, "Ὅρα μηδενὶ εἶπης, ἀλλὰ ὕπαγε σεαυτὸν δεῖξον τῷ ἱερεῖ καὶ προσένεγκον τὸ δῶρον ὃ προσέταξεν Μωϋσῆς, εἰς μαρτύριον αὐτοῖς.

Mark 1:42-45

<1:42> καὶ εὐθὺς ἀπῆλθεν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ ἡ λέπρα, καὶ ἐκαθαρίσθη. <1:43> καὶ ἐμβριησάμενος αὐτῷ εὐθὺς ἐξέβαλεν αὐτόν <1:44> καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ, "Ὅρα μηδενὶ μηδὲν εἶπης, ἀλλὰ ὕπαγε σεαυτὸν δεῖξον τῷ ἱερεῖ καὶ προσένεγκε περὶ τοῦ καθαρισμοῦ σου ἃ προσέταξεν Μωϋσῆς, εἰς μαρτύριον αὐτοῖς. <1:45> ὁ δὲ ἐξεληθὼν ἤρξατο κηρύσσειν πολλὰ καὶ διαφημίζειν τὸν λόγον, ὥστε μηκέτι αὐτὸν δύνασθαι φανερῶς εἰς πόλιν εἰσελθεῖν, ἀλλ' ἐξῶ ἐπ' ἐρήμοις τόποις ἦν· καὶ ἤρχοντο πρὸς αὐτὸν πάντοθεν.

Luke 5:13b-16

καὶ εὐθέως ἡ λέπρα ἀπῆλθεν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ. 5:14 καὶ αὐτὸς παρήγγειλεν αὐτῷ μηδενὶ εἶπεῖν, ἀλλὰ ἀπελθὼν δεῖξον σεαυτὸν τῷ ἱερεῖ καὶ προσένεγκε περὶ τοῦ καθαρισμοῦ σου καθὼς προσέταξεν Μωϋσῆς, εἰς μαρτύριον αὐτοῖς. 5:15 διήρχετο δὲ μᾶλλον ὁ λόγος περὶ αὐτοῦ, καὶ συνήρχοντο ὄχλοι πολλοὶ ἀκούειν καὶ θεραπεύεσθαι ἀπὸ τῶν ἀσθενειῶν αὐτῶν· 5:16 αὐτὸς δὲ ἦν ὑποχωρῶν ἐν ταῖς ἐρήμοις καὶ προσευχόμενος.

NRSV

Immediately his leprosy was cleansed. 4 Then Jesus said to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them."

NRSV

42 Immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean. 43 After sternly warning him he sent him away at once, 44 saying to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, as a testimony to them." 45 But he went out and began to proclaim it freely, and to spread the word, so that Jesus could no longer go into a town openly, but stayed out in the country; and people came to him from every quarter.

NRSV

Immediately the leprosy left him. 14 And he ordered him to tell no one. "Go," he said, "and show yourself to the priest, and, as Moses commanded, make an offering for your cleansing, for a testimony to them." 15 But now more than ever the word about Jesus spread abroad; many crowds would gather to hear him and to be cured of their diseases. 16 But he would withdraw to deserted places and pray.

A quick **comparison** reveals the following. **(1)** All three record that once Jesus touched the man and spoke to him, the leprosy disappeared immediately. **(2)** All three record the instructions that Jesus gave to the man regarding the ritual of purification in the temple. **(3)** Only Mark alludes to the agitation in Jesus when he gave instructions to the man. **(4)** Matthew omits reference to the man's disobedience about not saying anything about his healing. Luke comes close to doing the same by mentioning in general that fame about Jesus drew massive crowds seeking to listen to him and to be healed by him. **(5)** Mark asserts that the leper's failure to keep silent led to a severe limitation of Jesus' ministry to uninhabited places. Luke didn't allude to this, and instead indicates that Jesus' withdrawal into this region was to pray. Quite clearly, Matthew and Luke modify their Marcan source with their own purposes in mind.

Mark seemingly links attitude and words from Jesus to the man. And he does so in his typical dramatic fashion. For Mark, Jesus spoke to the man in

the authoritative tone that characterizes Mark's portrait of Jesus consistently through his gospel. The other two gospel writers use a different, milder character of Jesus. In Mark, Jesus sternly warned the man in his forceful order for him to depart. Although the instructions of Jesus are generally the same, the tone in which they are cast by Mark is much harsher. Perhaps this indicates that Jesus perceived what the man was going to do and thus spoke to him harshly in order to stress the importance of not saying anything to anyone except the priests in Jerusalem. Matthew and Luke for their own reasons decided to omit the harsh contextual tone of the instructions.

Mark's account underscores **several features**. **(1)** Jesus' words to the man were spoken in a harsh tone of voice. **(2)** The man was told not to talk about his healing to anyone. **(3)** He was instructed to go to Jerusalem, over 60 miles to the south, in order to complete the purification ritual in the temple at Jerusalem. **(4)** The leper completely ignored Jesus'

instructions to not say anything. Nothing is mentioned about whether he ever went to Jerusalem or not. (5) The resulting interest in Jesus forced him to avoid the populated areas because of crowd problems.

The *harsh tone* of Jesus' instructions to the healed leper are somewhat puzzling to modern readers. As PHEME PERKINS ("Mark," *New Interpreter's Bible*, iPreach) highlights:

A violent emotional response is attributed to Jesus in v. 43. Since Jesus heals the man as easily as he did Peter's mother-in-law (vv. 41-42), the emotional notes in v. 43 seem more appropriate to an exorcism, with its conflict against the demonic, than to a healing miracle. The NIV and the NRSV fail to capture the tone of this verse. "Sent away" hardly captures the elements of force or violence of the Greek word, which may also be translated "drive away" or "cast out" (ἐκβάλλω *ekballo*); the harsher form was used to translate the verb in 1:12. Similarly, "sternly warned" hardly conveys the emotional agitation attached to the verb (ἐμβριμάομαι *embrimaomai*), which expresses anger or displeasure; it may refer to shaking the head or snorting. Why does Jesus become agitated and push the man away from his presence? The NIV and the NRSV renderings assume that the verb serves to underline the seriousness of Jesus' instruction to keep quiet and go to the priest.

Some interpreters think that Jesus' response indicates anger at the social conventions surrounding the treatment of persons with scale diseases. If the assumption that such diseases were signs of divine anger was widely shared, Jesus might have been troubled by the view that God was responsible for the man's condition. Others think this verse may have come from a variant of the episode in which a sufferer's condition was attributed to demonic influence. Leprosy was often attributed to a divine curse. Since Jesus' emotional response follows a healing, the possibility that his reactions are dictated by the social codes surrounding the disease appears more probable. Ordinary tradespeople and laborers, like Jesus and his disciples, probably did not have the concern for ritual purity found among priests and scribes. Another possibility emerges if one considers what drove the man to approach Jesus. Had he already been refused a declaration of cleanness by the priests before coming to Jesus?

No one can say with certainty what was going on here. For their own reasons the other two gospels,



even though depending on Mark for some parts of this narrative, chose not to include this feature. Much of what Prof. Perkins tosses out above is pure speculation with no basis in specific text statement, and mostly reflects twenty first century American cultural values, not first century Jewish values. Mark does have a tendency to use very dramatic, forceful language in describing Jesus' actions and words. Perhaps this is nothing more than a reflection of that writing style.

Jesus' command for the leper to *say nothing* reflects a Markan pattern, as indicated by R.T. FRANCE ("Mark," *New International Greek Testament Commentary*, Logos

Systems):

We have seen already Jesus' determination to silence the demons who recognised him (1:34; cf. 1:25). Here we have for the first time his attempted silencing of those whose personal experience of his healing power would naturally lead them to talk about him (cf. 5:43; 7:36; 8:26). Interestingly, whereas we are left to assume that demons were effectively silenced, in the case of humans both here and in 7:36 the command is ignored. (It may in any case be questioned how realistic Jesus' command was: a cured leper restored to society was not an everyday occurrence, and the question of how it had happened could hardly be avoided.) The pragmatic reason for this secrecy is clearly spelled out in v. 45; publicity of this sort resulted in excessive, and probably misdirected, popular enthusiasm which was a serious hindrance to Jesus' mission. It is not clear yet whether this is a question of 'messianic secrecy', as we have not been informed that anyone (other than the demons) was speaking of Jesus in messianic terms.

Jesus command for the man to *speak to the priests* in the temple at Jerusalem reflects the necessary ritual for a healed man to reenter society. They do reflect by Jesus an appreciation for a legitimate role of the Mosaic Law (here cf. [Lev. 13-14](#)) in first century Jewish society. Sometimes this wasn't the case.

The *man's disobedience* produced negative results on Jesus' ministry. Jesus was limited by excessive popularity. Perhaps, also they saw in Jesus a quick ticket out of debilitating health problems. Luke's account casts this limitation in a more positive light than Mark's

The connection of this to us? Sometimes our disobedience to Christ causes him difficulties in carrying out God's will. Even when we think we're okay in what we do. Good intentions are not always on track.

Gospel Parallels

Matthew 8:1-4

<8:1> Καταβάντος δὲ αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ ὄρους ἠκολούθησαν αὐτῷ ὄχλοι πολλοί. <8:2> καὶ ἰδοὺ λεπρὸς προσελθὼν προσεκύνει αὐτῷ λέγων, Κύριε, ἐὰν θέλῃς δύνασαι με καθαρίσαι. <8:3> καὶ ἐκτείνας τὴν χεῖρα ἤψατο αὐτοῦ λέγων, Θέλω, καθαρίσθητι· καὶ εὐθέως ἐκαθαρίσθη αὐτοῦ ἡ λέπρα. <8:4> καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς, Ὅρα μηδενὶ εἴπῃς, ἀλλὰ ὑπάγε σεαυτὸν δεῖξον τῷ ἱερεῖ καὶ προσένεγκον τὸ δῶρον ὃ προσέταξεν Μωϋσῆς, εἰς μαρτύριον αὐτοῖς.

NRSV

1 When Jesus had come down from the mountain, great crowds followed him; 2 and there was a leper who came to him and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, if you choose, you can make me clean." 3 He stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, "I do choose. Be made clean!" Immediately his leprosy was cleansed. 4 Then Jesus said to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them."

Mark 1:40-45

<1:40> Καὶ ἔρχεται πρὸς αὐτὸν λεπρὸς παρακαλῶν αὐτὸν [καὶ γονυπετῶν] καὶ λέγων αὐτῷ ὅτι Ἐὰν θέλῃς δύνασαι με καθαρίσαι. <1:41> καὶ σπλαγχνισθεὶς ἐκτείνας τὴν χεῖρα αὐτοῦ ἤψατο καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ, Θέλω, καθαρίσθητι· <1:42> καὶ εὐθὺς ἀπῆλθεν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ ἡ λέπρα, καὶ ἐκαθαρίσθη. <1:43> καὶ ἐμβριμησάμενος αὐτῷ εὐθὺς ἐξέβαλεν αὐτόν <1:44> καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ, Ὅρα μηδενὶ μηδὲν εἴπῃς, ἀλλὰ ὑπάγε σεαυτὸν δεῖξον τῷ ἱερεῖ καὶ προσένεγκε περὶ τοῦ καθαρισμοῦ σου ὃ προσέταξεν Μωϋσῆς, εἰς μαρτύριον αὐτοῖς. <1:45> ὁ δὲ ἐξελθὼν ἤρξατο κηρύσσειν πολλὰ καὶ διαφημίζειν τὸν λόγον, ὥστε μηκέτι αὐτὸν δύνασθαι φανερῶς εἰς πόλιν εἰσελθεῖν, ἀλλ' ἐξῶ ἐπ' ἐρήμοις τόποις ἦν· καὶ ἤρχοντο πρὸς αὐτὸν πάντοθεν.

NRSV

40 A leper came to him begging him, and kneeling he said to him, "If you choose, you can make me clean." 41 Moved with pity, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, and said to him, "I do choose. Be made clean!" 42 Immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean. 43 After sternly warning him he sent him away at once, 44 saying to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, as a testimony to them." 45 But he went out and began to proclaim it freely, and to spread the word, so that Jesus could no longer go into a town openly, but stayed out in the country; and people came to him from every quarter.

Luke 5:12-16

5:12 Καὶ ἐγένετο ἐν τῷ εἶναι αὐτὸν ἐν μιᾷ τῶν πόλεων καὶ ἰδοὺ ἀνὴρ πλήρης λέπρας· ἰδὼν δὲ τὸν Ἰησοῦν, πεσὼν ἐπὶ πρόσωπον ἐδεήθη αὐτοῦ λέγων, Κύριε, ἐὰν θέλῃς δύνασαι με καθαρίσαι. 5:13 καὶ ἐκτείνας τὴν χεῖρα ἤψατο αὐτοῦ λέγων, Θέλω, καθαρίσθητι· καὶ εὐθέως ἡ λέπρα ἀπῆλθεν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ. 5:14 καὶ αὐτὸς παρήγγειλεν αὐτῷ μηδενὶ εἰπεῖν, ἀλλὰ ἀπελθὼν δεῖξον σεαυτὸν τῷ ἱερεῖ καὶ προσένεγκε περὶ τοῦ καθαρισμοῦ σου καθὼς προσέταξεν Μωϋσῆς, εἰς μαρτύριον αὐτοῖς. 5:15 διήρχετο δὲ μᾶλλον ὁ λόγος περὶ αὐτοῦ, καὶ συνήρχοντο ὄχλοι πολλοὶ ἀκούειν καὶ θεραπεύεσθαι ἀπὸ τῶν ἀσθενειῶν αὐτῶν· 5:16 αὐτὸς δὲ ἦν ὑποχωρῶν ἐν ταῖς ἐρήμοις καὶ προσευχόμενος.

NRSV

12 Once, when he was in one of the cities, there was a man covered with leprosy. When he saw Jesus, he bowed with his face to the ground and begged him, "Lord, if you choose, you can make me clean." 13 Then Jesus stretched out his hand, touched him, and said, "I do choose. Be made clean." Immediately the leprosy left him. 14 And he ordered him to tell no one. "Go," he said, "and show yourself to the priest, and, as Moses commanded, make an offering for your cleansing, for a testimony to them." 15 But now more than ever the word about Jesus spread abroad; many crowds would gather to hear him and to be cured of their diseases. 16 But he would withdraw to deserted places and pray.

Scene Comparisons:

Scene intro:

Mt. - Καταβάντος δὲ αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ ὄρους ἠκολούθησαν αὐτῷ ὄχλοι πολλοί.

Mk. - xxxxxxxxxxxxxx

Lk. - Καὶ ἐγένετο ἐν τῷ εἶναι αὐτὸν ἐν μιᾷ τῶν πόλεων καὶ ἰδοὺ ἀνὴρ πλήρης λέπρας·

Mark provides no introductory scene giving placement details. This is rather typical of the second gospel, possibly suggesting that he used this piece of Jesus tradition more thematically than anything else. Matthew sets the narrative with Jesus coming down from the mountain and encountering large crowds wanting to follow him. Luke sets the narrative as when Jesus was in one of the cities.

Man comes to Jesus

Action:

Mt. - καὶ ἰδοὺ λεπρὸς προσελθὼν προσεκύνει αὐτῷ

Mk. - Καὶ ἔρχεται πρὸς αὐτὸν λεπρὸς παρακαλῶν αὐτὸν [καὶ γονυπετῶν]

Lk. - ἰδὼν δὲ τὸν Ἰησοῦν, πεσὼν ἐπὶ πρόσωπον ἐδεήθη αὐτοῦ

Verbal:

Mt. - λέγων, Κύριε, ἐὰν θέλῃς δύνασαί με καθαρίσαι.

Mk. - καὶ λέγων αὐτῷ ὅτι Ἐὰν θέλῃς δύνασαί με καθαρίσαι.

Lk. - λέγων, Κύριε, ἐὰν θέλῃς δύνασαί με καθαρίσαι.

Mark's depiction of the man's approach to Jesus is graphic -- he came to Jesus pleading and bowing before Jesus. Matthew switches it somewhat with the man worshipping Jesus (bending the knee) after approaching Jesus. Luke has a vivid picture of the man seeing Jesus and falling down before him. He then begins begging Jesus.

Both Matthew and Luke follow their Markan source identically in recording the man's request to Jesus. The focus of the request is not whether Jesus could heal him. Rather it is on whether Jesus wants to heal him. Matthew and Luke soften the request with the polite address Κύριε, sir.

Jesus affirms his care:

Touching:

Mt. - καὶ ἐκτείνας τὴν χεῖρα ἥψατο αὐτοῦ

Mk. - καὶ **σπλαγχνισθεὶς** ἐκτείνας τὴν χεῖρα αὐτοῦ ἥψατο

Lk. - καὶ ἐκτείνας τὴν χεῖρα ἥψατο αὐτοῦ

Verbal:

Mt. - λέγων, Θέλω, καθαρίσθητι·

Mk. - καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ, Θέλω, καθαρίσθητι·

Lk. - λέγων, Θέλω, καθαρίσθητι·

Matthew and Luke both omit the emotional reference, **σπλαγχνισθεὶς**, perhaps reflecting the textual variant issue over **σπλαγχνισθεὶς**. The alternative reading, **ὀγισθεὶς**, ("having become angry"), creates a more difficult reading, thus being favored by internal transcriptional principles. But the external mss evidence favors the text reading of having become compassionate toward the man. Both Matthew and Luke follow exactly the Markan depiction of the action and the words of Jesus to the man. Both, however, shift αὐτοῦ as the direct object to a post position from Mark's pre-position.

Miracle takes place:

Mt. - καὶ εὐθέως ἐκαθαρίσθη αὐτοῦ ἡ λέπρα.

Mk. - καὶ εὐθὺς ἀπῆλθεν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ ἡ λέπρα, καὶ ἐκαθαρίσθη.

Lk. - καὶ εὐθέως ἡ λέπρα ἀπῆλθεν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ.

Mark's depiction of the healing becomes the basis for Matthew and Luke with each picking up different elements of the longer Markan statement.

Jesus instructs the leper:

- Mt. - καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς, Ὅρα μηδενὶ εἶπης, ἀλλὰ ὑπάγε σεαυτὸν δεῖξον τῷ ἱερεῖ καὶ προσένεγκον τὸ δῶρον ὃ προσέταξεν Μωϋσῆς, εἰς μαρτύριον αὐτοῖς.
- Mk. - καὶ ἐμβριμησάμενος αὐτῷ εὐθύς ἐξέβαλεν αὐτόν καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ, Ὅρα μηδενὶ μηδὲν εἶπης, ἀλλὰ ὑπάγε σεαυτὸν δεῖξον τῷ ἱερεῖ καὶ προσένεγκε περὶ τοῦ καθαρισμοῦ σου ἃ προσέταξεν Μωϋσῆς, εἰς μαρτύριον αὐτοῖς.
- Lk. - καὶ αὐτὸς παρήγγειλεν αὐτῷ μηδενὶ εἰπεῖν, ἀλλὰ ἀπελθὼν δεῖξον σεαυτὸν τῷ ἱερεῖ καὶ προσένεγκε περὶ τοῦ καθαρισμοῦ σου καθὼς προσέταξεν Μωϋσῆς, εἰς μαρτύριον αὐτοῖς.
- Mark's longer depiction of Jesus' instructions to the healed man are shortened and re-worded by both Matthew and Luke. Also both leave off the unclear Markan reference to ἐμβριμησάμενος αὐτῷ εὐθύς. The sternness of Jesus' initial instructions is significantly toned down by both Matthew and Luke. The instructions to follow the prescribed process for legal certification of cure in Mark is closely followed by Matthew and Luke with only minor modification.

The leper's reaction:

- Mt. - xxxxxxxxx
- Mk. - ὁ δὲ ἐξελθὼν ἤρξατο κηρύσσειν πολλὰ καὶ διαφημίζειν τὸν λόγον,
- Lk. - διήρχετο δὲ μᾶλλον ὁ λόγος περὶ αὐτοῦ,
- Matthew does not include the disobedience of the healed man to not say anything to anyone. Luke takes the healed man off the hook by simply say that word about this leper spread all the more.

The crowd's response:

- Mt. - xxxxxxxxx
- Mk. - ὥστε μηκέτι αὐτὸν δύνασθαι φανερῶς εἰς πόλιν εἰσελθεῖν, ἀλλ' ἔξω ἐπ' ἐρήμοις τόποις ἦν καὶ ἤρχοντο πρὸς αὐτὸν πάντοθεν.
- Lk. - καὶ συνήρχοντο ὄχλοι πολλοὶ ἀκούειν καὶ θεραπεύεσθαι ἀπὸ τῶν ἀσθενειῶν αὐτῶν· αὐτὸς δὲ ἦν ὑποχωρῶν ἐν ταῖς ἐρήμοις καὶ προσευχόμενος.
- Again, Matthew omits Mark's limitation of Jesus' ministry because of the crowd response. Luke does not describe the extensive crowd response in terms of a limitation of travel as does Mark. Jesus was in the deserted area to pray, but large crowds were coming seeking healing and wanting to hear him teach.

Greek NT

<1:40> Καὶ ἔρχεται πρὸς αὐτὸν λεπρὸς παρακαλῶν αὐτὸν [καὶ γονυπετῶν] καὶ λέγων αὐτῷ ὅτι Ἐὰν θέλῃς δύνασαι με καθαρίσαι. <1:41> καὶ σπλαγχνισθεὶς ἐκτείνας τὴν χεῖρα αὐτοῦ ἤψατο καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ, Θέλω, καθαρίσθητι. <1:42> καὶ εὐθὺς ἀπῆλθεν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ ἡ λέπρα, καὶ ἐκαθαρίσθη. <1:43> καὶ ἐμβριμησάμενος αὐτῷ εὐθὺς ἐξέβαλεν αὐτὸν <1:44> καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ, Ὅρα μηδενὶ μηδὲν εἶπῃς, ἀλλὰ ὑπάγε σεαυτὸν δεῖξον τῷ ἱερεῖ καὶ προσένεγκε περὶ τοῦ καθαρισμοῦ σου ἃ προσέταξεν Μωϋσῆς, εἰς μαρτύριον αὐτοῖς. <1:45> ὁ δὲ ἐξελθὼν ἤρξατο κηρύσσειν πολλὰ καὶ διαφημίζειν τὸν λόγον, ὥστε μηκέτι αὐτὸν δύνασθαι φανερωῶς εἰς πόλιν εἰσελθεῖν, ἀλλ' ἔξω ἐπ' ἐρήμοις τόποις ἦν καὶ ἤρχοντο πρὸς αὐτὸν πάντοθεν.

NASB

40 And a leper came to Jesus, beseeching Him and falling on his knees before Him, and saying, "If You are willing, You can make me clean." 41 Moved with compassion, Jesus stretched out His hand and touched him, and said to him, "I am willing; be cleansed." 42 Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed. 43 And He sternly warned him and immediately sent him away, 44 and He said to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, as a testimony to them." 45 But he went out and began to proclaim it freely, and to spread the news around, to such an extent that Jesus could no longer publicly enter a city, but stayed out in unpopulated areas; and they were coming to Him from everywhere.

NRSV

40 A leper came to him begging him, and kneeling he said to him, "If you choose, you can make me clean." 41 Moved with pity, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, and said to him, "I do choose. Be made clean!" 42 Immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean. 43 After sternly warning him he sent him away at once, 44 saying to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, as a testimony to them." 45 But he went out and began to proclaim it freely, and to spread the word, so that Jesus could no longer go into a town openly, but stayed out in the country; and people came to him from every quarter.

NLT

40 A man with leprosy came and knelt in front of Jesus, begging to be healed. "If you want to, you can make me well again," he said. 41 Moved with pity, Jesus touched him. "I want to," he said. "Be healed!" 42 Instantly the leprosy disappeared; the man was healed. 43 Then Jesus sent him on his way and told him sternly, 44 "Go right over to the priest and let him examine you. Don't talk to anyone along the way. Take along the offering required in the law of Moses for those who have been healed of leprosy, so everyone will have proof of your healing." 45 But as the man went on his way, he spread the news, telling everyone what had happened to him. As a result, such crowds soon surrounded Jesus that he couldn't enter a town anywhere publicly. He had to stay out in the secluded places, and people from everywhere came to him there.

Greek NT Block Diagram

40

Καὶ

Need

A ἔρχεται . . . λεπρὸς
 πρὸς αὐτὸν
 παρακαλῶν αὐτὸν
 [καὶ
 γονυπετῶν]
 καὶ
 λέγων αὐτῷ ὅτι

Ἐὰν θέλῃς

δύνασαί με καθαρίσαι.

1

41

καὶ

Miracle

B τὴν χεῖρα αὐτοῦ ἤψατο
 καὶ
 Γ λέγει αὐτῷ,
 2 θέλω,
 3 καθαρίσθητι.

42

καὶ

εὐθύς

Δ ἀπῆλθεν . . . ἡ λέπρα,
 ἀπ' αὐτοῦ

καὶ

E ἐκαθαρίσθη.

43

καὶ

Impact

ἐμβριμησάμενος αὐτῷ
 εὐθύς
 Z ἐξέβαλεν αὐτόν

44

καὶ

H λέγει αὐτῷ,

4

Ὅρα

5

μηδενὶ μηδὲν εἶπης,

ἀλλὰ

6

ῥαγε

7

σεαυτὸν δεῖξον τῷ ἱερεῖ

καὶ

8

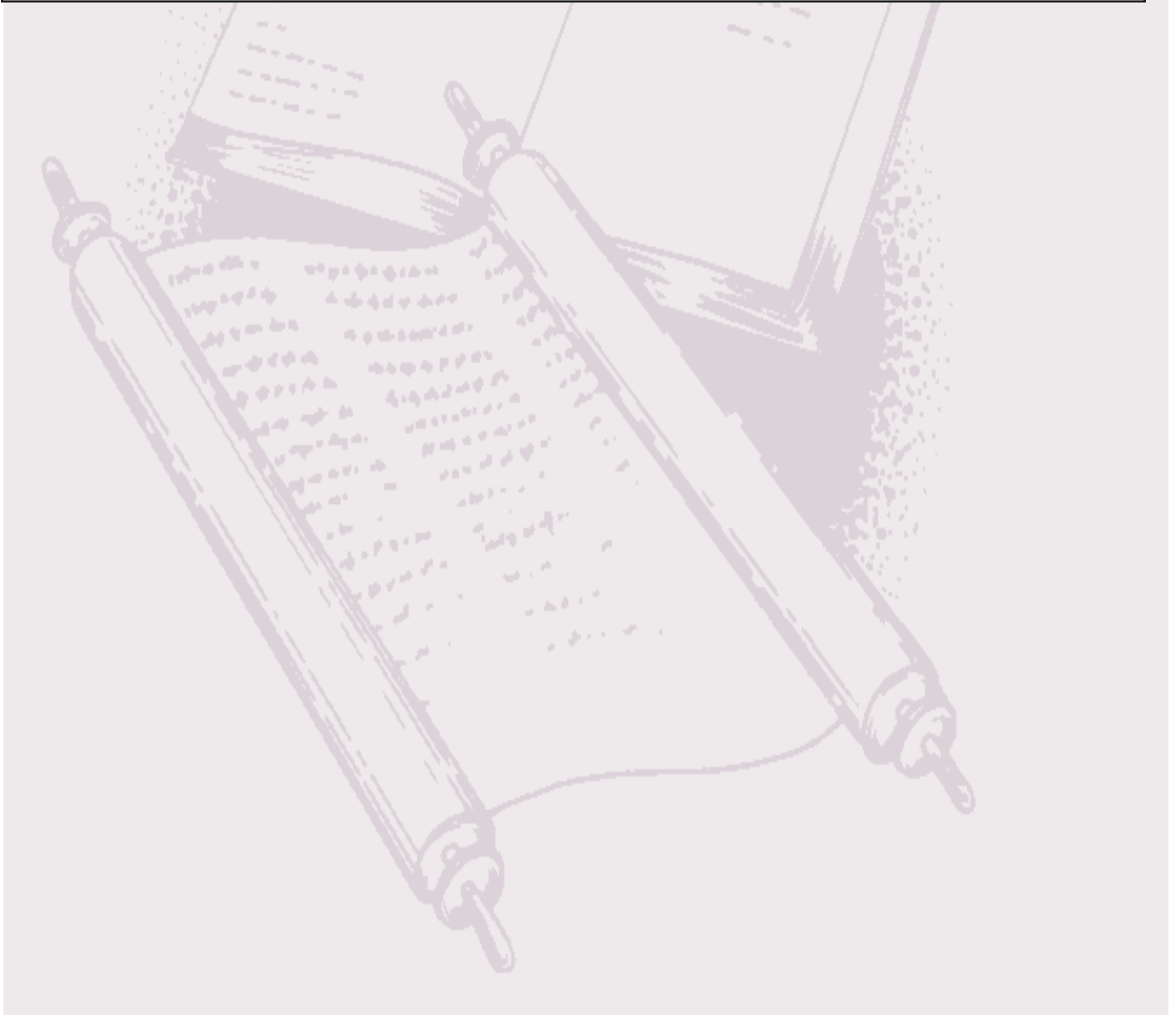
προσένεγκε

περὶ τοῦ καθαρισμοῦ σου

ἃ προσέταξεν Μωϋσῆς,

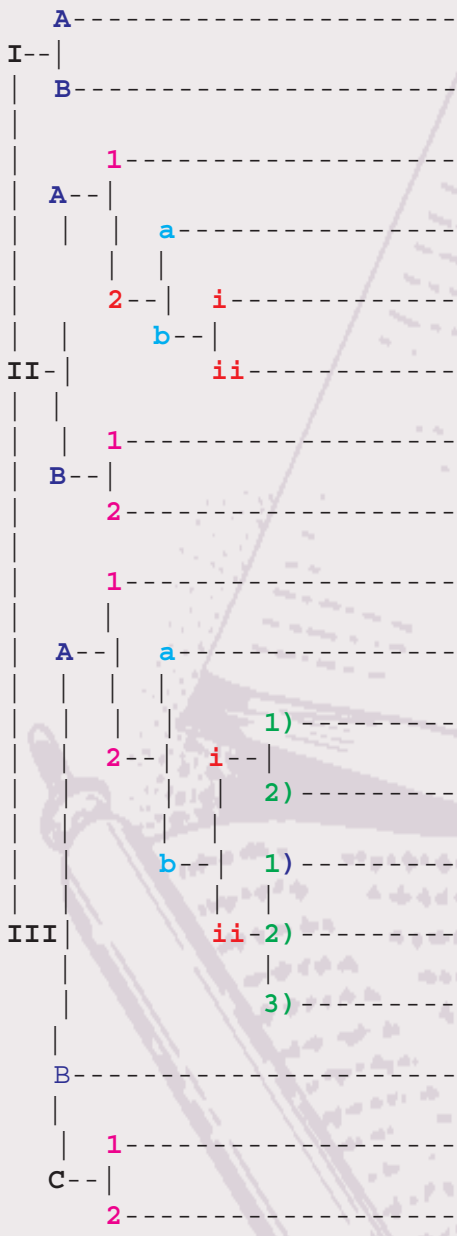
εἰς μαρτύριον αὐτοῖς.

θ **ὁ...ἦρξατο** ἐξελθὼν
 κηρύσσειν πολλὰ
 καὶ
 διαφημίζειν τὸν λόγον,
 φανερῶς
 εἰς πόλιν
 ὥστε μηκέτι αὐτὸν δύνασθαι...εἰσελθεῖν,
 ἀλλ'
 ἔξω
 ἐπ' ἐρήμοις τόποις
 I **ἦν**
 καὶ
 K **ἦρχοντο**
 πρὸς αὐτὸν
 πάντοθεν.



Semantic Diagram

καὶ



A	Pres	Act	Ind	3	S	λεπρός
1	Pres	Dep	Ind	2	S	(σὺ)

καὶ

B	1 Aor	Dep	Ind	3	S	(Ἰησοῦς)
Γ	Pres	Act	Ind	3	S	(Ἰησοῦς)

2	Pres	Act	Ind	1	S	(ἐγώ)
3	1 Aor	Pass	Imp	2	S	(σὺ)

καὶ

Γ	2 Aor	Accl	Ind	3	S	ἡ λέπρα
Δ	1 Aor	Pass	Ind	3	S	(λεπρός)

καὶ

E	2 Aor	Act	Ind	3	S	(Ἰησοῦς)
Z	Pres	Act	Ind	3	S	(Ἰησοῦς)

4	Pres	Act	Imp+	2	S	(σὺ)
5	2 Aor	Act	Subj-	2	S	(σὺ)

ἀλλὰ

6	Pres	Act	Imp+	2	S	(σὺ)
7	2 Aor	Act	Imp+	2	S	(σὺ)

καὶ

8	Pres	Act	Imp+	2	S	(σὺ)
H	1 Aor	Dep	Ind	3	S	(λεπρός)

ἀλλ'

Θ	Impf	---	Ind	3	S	(Ἰησοῦς)
I	Impf	Dep	Ind	3	P	(ὄχλοι)

Exegetical Outline

- I. (A-1) **A leper requested that Jesus heal him.**
 - A. (A) A leprous man came humbly to Jesus with a request.
 - B. (1) He affirmed his belief in Jesus' power to heal with a request that Jesus choose to do so.
- II. (B-E) **When Jesus touched the man and spoke a word of authority the man was healed.**
 - A. (B-3) By action and words Jesus expressed his desire to heal the man
 - 1. (B) Jesus touched the leper as an act of healing
 - 2. (Γ-3) Jesus affirmed his willingness by commanding the man to be healed.
 - a. (Γ) Jesus responded to the man's request
 - b. (2-3) By his words Jesus asserted his desire to help the man.
 - i. (2) Jesus affirmed his desire to help the man.
 - ii. (3) Jesus issued the command for the man to be healed.
 - B. (Δ-E) At Jesus' command and touch the leprosy left the man.
 - 1. (Δ) The leprosy left the man immediately
 - 2. (E) The man was cleansed of his leprosy in an open manner
- III. (Z-K) **In spite of being told exactly what to do, the man's disobedience placed limits on Jesus' ministry.**
 - A. (Z-8) The impact of the man's healing brought stern words from Jesus to him.
 - 1. (Z) With agitation Jesus quickly sent the man away after the healing.
 - 2. (H-8) Jesus provided clear instruction on what the man was and was not to do
 - a. (H) Jesus spoke serious words of instruction to the healed leper.
 - b. (4-8) Jesus sternly admonished the man to head straight to Jerusalem in the custom of the Law of Moses about certification of healing from leprosy.
 - i. (4-5) With stern words Jesus imposed silence on the healed leper.
 - 1) (4) Jesus called attention to his words
 - 2) (5) Jesus warned the man to no say anything to anyone about his healing
 - ii. (6-8) Jesus commanded the man to follow the Law in regard to his healing.
 - 1) (6) Jesus told the man to prepare to travel.
 - 2) (7) Jesus told the man to present himself to the priest in the temple in Jerusalem
 - 3) (8) Jesus told the man to follow Moses' regulations about the leprosy.
 - B. (Θ) Once the man left Jesus he did not follow the instructions to remain silent
 - C. (I-K) The man's disobedience to Jesus' words brought negative impact on Jesus' ministry.
 - 1. (I) Jesus was forced to avoid the cities because of the large crowds coming to him.
 - 2. (K) People came from everywhere to Jesus in the deserted regions where he was staying

Greek NT Analysis

<1:40>

καὶ : Coordinate conjunction introducing a new sentence with a loose connection to what preceded - and

J.R. Edwards, Mark, Pillar NT Commentary, Logos Systems:

By appending this story to 1:35–39 Mark leads us to understand it as an example of Jesus' missionary outreach to "the nearby villages" (v. 38) of Capernaum. Like the previous narrative, and typical of Mark, it lacks geographical specificity. Just as an elaborate frame can detract from a great painting, Mark regularly omits contextual details so as not to detract from the essential focus of the narrative.

ἔρχεται : Pres (Hist) - Dep - Ind - 3 - S - ἔρχομαι - he came

πρὸς αὐτὸν : Pers Pron - Acc (Measure) - M - S - αὐτός, - ή, -ό - to him

λεπρός : 2 - Nom (Subj) - M - S - λεπρός, ὁ - a leper

J.R. Edwards, Mark, Pillar NT Commentary, Logos Systems:

"A man with leprosy came to him" understates a highly provocative and offensive encounter. **Leprosy** was a widespread disease in Palestine. This is apparent not only from the several lepers whom Jesus encountered in his ministry but also from the plethora of instructions about the disease in the Mishnah. Leprosy was then as now a subject of superstition and fear. Leprosy is a skin disease, and like all skin diseases it is difficult to diagnose and heal. Its conditions are discussed in two lengthy chapters in Leviticus 13–14 that read like an ancient manual on dermatology. The Hebrew term *tsara'at* covers other skin diseases besides leprosy, including boils (Lev 13:18), burns (Lev 13:24), itches, ringworm, and scalp conditions. Scribes counted as many as seventy-two different afflictions that were defined as leprosy. In the OT leprosy was generally regarded as a divine punishment, the cure of which could only be effected by God (Num 12:10; 2 Kgs 5:1–2). The dread of its contagion is reflected in the following passage: "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" (Lev 13:45–46).

This is not simply the description of an illness. It is a *sentence*, the purpose of which was to protect the health of the community from a dreaded contagion. Elaborating Leviticus 13–14, Mishnah tractate *Negaim* ("Plagues") discusses the spread of leprosy not only among people but also among garments (*m. Neg.* 3:7; 11:1–12) and houses (*m. Neg.* 3:8; 12–13). Lepers were victims of far more than the disease itself. 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. To ensure against contact with society, lepers were required to make their appearance as repugnant as possible. Josephus speaks of the banishment of lepers as those "in no way differing from a corpse" (*Ant.* 3.264). The reference to Miriam's leprosy in Num 12:12 prompted various rabbis to speak of lepers as "the living dead," whose cure was as difficult as raising the dead.⁴⁵ The diagnosis of leprosy thus encompassed both medical and social dimensions. Leprosy contaminated Israel's status as a holy people (although it did not contaminate Gentiles since they were already considered unclean, *m. Neg.* 3:1; 11:1). Other illnesses had to be healed, but leprosy had to be *cleansed* (e.g., Matt 11:5). Mark's account of Jesus and the leper is a mirror image of these tragic realities, for there is no reference to "healing," but there are four references to "cleansing" in six verses.

The offense of the leper's action is immediately apparent. Lepers were required to "stand at a distance" (Luke 17:12) of fifty paces. If a leper's entrance into a house contaminated it (*m. Negaim* 12–13), or his standing under a tree polluted anyone who passed under it (*m. Neg.* 13:7), then this leper's approach compromises Jesus' ritual cleanliness. Nevertheless, the leper risks everything, breaking both law and custom, on the chance of being healed and restored by Jesus. No obstacle, not even the decrees of the Torah itself, prevents him from coming to Jesus. His obsequious approach and posture, "beg[ing] him on his knees, 'If you are willing, you can make me clean,'" betrays the long humiliation of his affliction.⁴⁶ But contained within the leper's plea are the beginnings of faith that Jesus can save him. His faith is revealed by the fact that he does not question Jesus' *ability* to save him, only his *willingness* to save him. The leper's longing is profoundly human, for it is not God's ability that we doubt, but only his willingness — *if* he will do what we ask.

παρακαλῶν : Pres (Desc) - Act - Ptc (Adv: Modal) - Nom - M - S - παρακαλέω - exhorting, pleading

αὐτὸν : Pers Pron - Acc (Dir. Obj.) - M - S - αὐτός, - ή, -ό - him

[καὶ : Coordinate conjunction linking the two participles in parallel relation - and

γονυπετῶν] : Pres (Desc) - Act - Ptc (Adv: Modal) - Nom - M - S - γονυπετέω - kneeling

R.T. France, Mark, NIGTC, Logos Systems:

γονυπετῶν (αὐτὸν) may have been omitted in DB W, some OL, and the Sahidic, either by accident (homoioteleuton) or because it was felt to be redundant after παρακαλῶν αὐτὸν (a redundancy which would be typical of Marcan

style), or because the parallel in Mt. 8:2 does not use the rather rare verb γονυπετέω, but rather προσκυνέω. The presence of the idea of kneeling, but in different words, in both Matthew and Luke, suggests that γονυπετέω was used in Mark.

καὶ : Coordinate conjunction linking this third participle in parallel relation to the previous ones - and

λέγων : Pres (Desc) - Act - Ptc (Adv: Modal) - Nom - M - S - λέγω - saying

αὐτῷ : Pers Pron -Dat (Indir. Obj.) - M - S - αὐτός, -ή, -ό - to him

ὅτι : Subordinate conjunction introducing conjunctory substantival object dependent clause - that

Ἐὰν θέλῃς : Pres (Desc) - Act - Subjunc (Potential) - 2 - S - θέλω - if you want to, desire (Introduces polite 3rd class conditional protasis)

δύνασαι : Pres (Desc) - Dep - Ind (Potential) - 2 - S - δύναμαι - you can, could, are able to

με : Pers Pron - Acc (Dir Obj) - S - ἐγώ - me

καθαρίσαι : 1 Aor (Const) - Act - Infin (S: Obj) - καθαρίζω - to cleanse

<1:41>

καὶ : Coordinate conjunction introducing following sentence with a loose connection to the preceding one - and

σπλαγχνισθεὶς : 1 Aor (Culm) - Pass (NAE) - Ptc (Adv: Temp / Causal) - Nom - M - S - σπλαγχνίζω - after having compassion / because he had compassion

Robert Guelich, Mark, Word Biblical Commentary, Logos Systems: (Text Variant)

c. ὀργισθεὶς / σπλαγχνισθεὶς offers a genuine textual dilemma. Both expressions are attested in Jesus' ministry ("anger," cf. John 11:33, 38; Mark 7:34; 9:19, 23; "compassion," cf. Mark 6:34; 9:22). Only D a ff² r¹ support ὀργισθεὶς, but it represents the more difficult reading (Taylor, 187; cf. Lachs, *JQR* 71 [1980] 33–35). The disturbing presence of ὀργισθεὶς might account for the absence of either participle in Matt 8:3; Luke 5:13, who do use σπλαγχνίζεσθαι elsewhere (e.g., Matt 9:36; Luke 7:13). Perhaps the strongest argument for ὀργισθεὶς lies in its apparent correspondence to ἐμβριμᾶσθαι in 1:43, cf. John 11:33, 38 and στενάζειν in Mark 7:34 (G. Stählin, *TDNT* 5 [1967] 427, n. 326)

Lamar Williamson, Jr., Mark, Interpretation, iPreach:

The text also gives us a rare glimpse into the motivation of Jesus. "Moved with pity" seems to satisfy our desire to know how Jesus felt and why he acted as he did. The Greek text, however, is uncertain. Some ancient manuscripts read "anger" ("indignation") instead of "pity." Many recent critical commentators think this more difficult reading is correct (see "in warm indignation," NEB). "Indignation" would fit well with the harshness of verse 43 whose Greek verbal roots suggest "he snorted at him and cast him out." It would also explain why the other evangelists, finding "anger" in the Marcan text, omitted all references to Jesus' motivation (Mt. 8:3; Luke 5:13).

If "anger" is the original reading the text could be interpreted either of two ways. The term may express Jesus' hostility to the powers of evil, as in his rebuke of demons (1:25; 9:25) and his anger at hard-hearted religious leaders (3:5). The healing of the leper is then an example of Jesus' aggressive action against all that is unclean and destructive.

Alternatively, Jesus may have been indignant at this interruption of his primary mission of preaching. Jesus heals the leper, but foreseeing that crowds drawn by news of another healing would further impede his work (1:39, 45), he sends the leper away brusquely with a command to silence which the leper ignores.

"Moved with pity" is the usual reading. It accords well with the compassion which characterized Jesus (6:34; 8:2) and to which a sick boy's father appeals (9:22). Even if Jesus were "indignant" in the present instance, his compassion overcomes his irritation and he heals the leper. If "pity" is the correct reading, it explains why Jesus touched this untouchable. In an Old Testament parallel to this passage (2 Kings 5:1-14), Elisha does not touch Naaman. To touch a leper is a compassionate and courageous gesture whose significance only an outcast can fully appreciate.

Both "indignation" and "pity" enjoy weighty support, and each bears witness to elements of truth about Jesus: his divine enmity against sickness, sin, and alienation; his human irritation in the face of an interruption; and his divine/human compassion for suffering human beings.

ἐκτείνας : 1 Aor (Const) - Act - Ptc (Adv: Temp) - Nom - M - S - ἐκτείνω - having stretched out, reached out

τὴν χεῖρα : 3 - Acc (Dir Obj) - F - S - χεῖρ, χεῖρός, ἡ - his hand

αὐτοῦ : Pers Pron - Gen (Poss / Dir Obj) - M - S - αὐτός, -ή, -ό - his / him

ἤψατο : 1 Aor (Const) - Midd (Intensive) - Ind - 3 - S - ἅπτω - he touched (him)

Robert Guelich, Mark, Word Biblical Commentary, Logos Systems: (Text Variant)

"Touched him" (αὐτοῦ ἤψατο). Although touching frequently belonged to the healing ritual (see 1:31), one cannot

escape the additional implications of touching a leper. Jesus' healing power overrode the defiling condition of the leper. He then confirmed this healing gesture with a healing word by repeating the man's request in the affirmative. "I do. Be clean!"

R.T. France, Mark, NIGTC, Logos Systems:

The phrase ἐκτείνας τὴν χεῖρα αὐτοῦ is 'redundant' with ἥψατο (and is probably too common a phrase to be intended as an echo of 2 Ki. 5:11), but by including it Mark draws attention dramatically to the significance of this particular touch. Jesus often touched a patient in the course of healing, but leprosy, unlike most other diseases, carried ritual uncleanness, and to touch a leper would be to become unclean oneself (quite apart from the fear of physical contagion). For the principle of uncleanness contracted by touch see Lv. 11:24–40; 14:46–47; 15:5–12, 19–27; Nu. 19:11–16, etc. For the resultant social exclusion of the leper see Lv. 13:45–46, and the detailed provisions of the Mishnah tractate *Nega'im*. Jesus shows a similar disregard for social/ritual taboo in 2:15–17, and in 7:1–23 the whole issue of purity will be discussed, leading up to the famous pronouncement of 7:19 that all food is 'clean'. Here need takes precedence over convention (even when firmly based in the OT). It is, of course, a nice point whether to touch the leper did in fact render Jesus unclean when the touch was itself the means of his cure. The touch which should have made Jesus unclean in fact worked in the opposite direction.

καὶ : Coordinate conjunction linking the two verbs together to form a sequence of action / speech - and

λέγει : Pres (Hist) - Act - Ind - 3 - S - λέγω - he said

αὐτῷ : Pers Pron -Dat (Indir. Obj.) - M - S - αὐτός, -ή, -ό - to him

Θέλω : Pres (Desc) - Act - Ind - 1 - S - θέλω - I will, wish

καθαρίσθητι : 1 Aor (Const) - Pass (Causitive) - Imper (Com) - 2 - S - καθαρίζω - be cleansed

<1:42>

καὶ : Coordinate conjunction introducing a new sentence with a loose connection to what preceded - and

εὐθύς : Adverb of time / manner - at once, immediately

ἀπῆλθεν : 2 Aor (Const) - Act - Ind - 3 - S - ἀπέρχομαι - it departed, went away

ἀπ' αὐτοῦ : Pers Pron - Abl (Separation) - M - S - αὐτός, -ή, -ό - from him

ἡ λέπρα : 1 - Nom (Subj) - F - S - λέπρα, ἡ - the leprosy

καὶ : Coordinate conjunction linking the two verbs together to form a sequence of action / speech - and

ἐκαθαρίσθη : 1 Aor (Const) - Pass (NAE) - Ind - 3 - S - καθαρίζω - he was cleansed

R.T. France, Mark, NIGTC, Logos Systems:

This is a particularly impressive καὶ εὐθύς; while the extent of the man's disfigurement cannot be known, an immediately visible cure is extraordinary. The vivid anthropomorphism ~P!~ (cf ~P!~A~ in v. 31) suggests that the symptoms of the disease could be seen to vanish, leaving the man visibly ~ (for a similarly immediate cure of leprosy see 2 Ki. 5:14, and the converse in Nu. 12:10; 2 Ki. 5:27; cf. also Ex. 4:6–7). Jesus' healings (except in 8:22–26) are immediate, and even the disfigurement of leprosy is no exception.

<1:43>

καὶ : Coordinate conjunction introducing a new sentence with a loose connection to what preceded - and

ἐμβριμησάμενος : 1 Aor (Const) - Dep - Ptc (Adv: Temp) - Nom - M - S - ἐμβριμάομαι - having become inwardly troubled: NASB: He sternly warned him; NRSV: After sternly warning him; NLT: told him sternly

Robert Guelich, Mark, Word Biblical Commentary, Logos Systems:

ἐμβριμησάμενος, uncommon verb whose meaning remains obscure. In classical Greek it meant "to snort" or "puff" like a disturbed horse or an expression of anger and agitation. "Anger" comes across in the LXX (Lam 2:6; Dan 11:30) and underlies NT references (Mark 14:5; John 11:33, 38). Matt 9:30 and Mark 1:43, however, use the verb in a miracle context, leading some to interpret it as "pneumatic excitement" or "prophetic frenzy" in a miracle worker (e.g., Bonner, *HTR* 20 [1927] 171–78; Theissen, *Miracle Stories*, 57–58). Kee (*JBL* 92 [1973] 418, n. 123) traces this verb to its Indo-European root, bhrem = "growl, grumble, mutter," which also translated the Semitic root גרל, *gar*, as did ἐπιτιμᾶν (see Comment on 1:25).

Bratcher & Nida, Translator's Handbook on Mark, Logos Systems:

Exegesis embriamesamenos auto 'sternly charging him,'

embriamaomai (14.5; cf. also Mt. 9.30, Jn. 11.33, 38) 'be indignant,' 'scold,' 'censure': the verb is rare in classical Greek and in the LXX, and Moulton & Milligan do not have any examples from the papyri to quote. Hatch (*Essays*, 25) is of the opinion that the word is best explained as a translation either of *zaam* 'to be angry' or of *gaar* 'to rebuke.' 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 *auto* 'with him' indicated the object rather than the cause of the anger. Most translations

carry the meaning of 'sternly (or, strictly) charged' (AV, ASV, RSV, Weymouth, Moffatt, Berkeley, Manson); Knox has 'spoke threateningly' while BFBS translates 'was indignant with him.' Some commentators do not agree with the idea of anger. Swete, for example, appeals to the use of the word in Jn. 11.33, 38 as indicating "depth and strength of feeling expressed in tone and manner"; Lagrange sees a certain degree of severity, *avec sévérité*; and Taylor quotes with approval Bernard (*International Critical Commentary, Gospel of John, 392f.*): "inarticulate sounds which escape men when they are physically overwhelmed by a great wave of emotion."

The further use of the verb in Mark (14.5), however, and the next verb *exebalen* 'he drove out' seem to show that at least some degree of anger is indicated by the verb in this passage.

αὐτῷ : Pers Pron - Dat (Dir Obj) - M - S - αὐτός, - ή, -ό - him

εὐθὺς : Adverb of time / manner - at once, immediately

ἐξέβαλεν : 2 Aor (Const) - Act - Ind - 3 - S - ἐκβάλλω - he drove him out; NASB, sent him away; NRSV, he sent him away at once; NLT, Jesus sent him on his way ; TEV, sent him away at once; NIV, Jesus sent him away at once with a strong warning; Message, Jesus dismissed him with strict orders

αὐτόν : Pers Pron - Acc (Dir Obj) - M - S - αὐτός, - ή, -ό - him

Pheme Perkins, Mark, New Interpreter's Bible, iPreach:

A violent emotional response is attributed to Jesus in v. 43. Since Jesus heals the man as easily as he did Peter's mother-in-law (vv. 41-42), the emotional notes in v. 43 seem more appropriate to an exorcism, with its conflict against the demonic, than to a healing miracle. The NIV and the NRSV fail to capture the tone of this verse. "Sent away" hardly captures the elements of force or violence of the Greek word, which may also be translated "drive away" or "cast out" (ἐκβάλλω *ekballo*); the harsher form was used to translate the verb in 1:12. Similarly, "sternly warned" hardly conveys the emotional agitation attached to the verb (*ejmbrima*"*omai embrimaomai*), which expresses anger or displeasure; it may refer to shaking the head or snorting. Why does Jesus become agitated and push the man away from his presence? The NIV and the NRSV renderings assume that the verb serves to underline the seriousness of Jesus' instruction to keep quiet and go to the priest.

Some interpreters think that Jesus' response indicates anger at the social conventions surrounding the treatment of persons with scale diseases. If the assumption that such diseases were signs of divine anger was widely shared, Jesus might have been troubled by the view that God was responsible for the man's condition. Others think this verse may have come from a variant of the episode in which a sufferer's condition was attributed to demonic influence. Leprosy was often attributed to a divine curse. Since Jesus' emotional response follows a healing, the possibility that his reactions are dictated by the social codes surrounding the disease appears more probable. Ordinary tradespeople and laborers, like Jesus and his disciples, probably did not have the concern for ritual purity found among priests and scribes. Another possibility emerges if one considers what drove the man to approach Jesus. Had he already been refused a declaration of cleanness by the priests before coming to Jesus?

Bratcher & Nida, Translator's Handbook on Mark, Logos Systems:

exebalen (cf. v. 12) 'he drove out': it is not agreed whether 'house' or 'synagogue' should be supplied, while some are of the opinion that neither is implied, the idea being simply that of driving away from his (i.e. Jesus') presence. RSV 'sent away' seems plainly inadequate, for the idea of forcible expulsion appears to be clearly indicated (cf. study of the word in v. 12).

J.R. Edwards, Mark, Pillar NT Commentary, Logos Systems:

Abrupt and adamant, "Jesus sent him away at once with a strong warning: 'See that you don't tell this to anyone.'" The word for "strong warning" is literally "snorting" in Greek, deriving from the Hebrew word for anger (*'ap*), meaning "to flare the nostrils." The word for "send away" is likewise stronger in Greek than in the NIV. Often used of expelling demons, the expression (Gk. *ekballein*) means that Jesus sent him packing.

<1:44>

καὶ : Coordinate conjunction linking the two verbs together to form a sequence of action / speech - and

λέγει : Pres (Hist) - Act - Ind - 3 - S - λέγω - he said

αὐτῷ, : Pers Pron -Dat (Indir. Obj.) - M - S - αὐτός, - ή, -ό - to him

Ἦρα : Pres (Desc) - Act - Imper - 2 - S - ὁράω - see, pay heed, listen up

μηδενὶ : Neg Pron - Dat (Indir Obj) - M - S - μηδεις μηδεμία μηδέν - to no one

μηδέν : Neg Pron - Acc (Dir Obj) - N - S - μηδεις μηδεμία μηδέν - nothing

εἴπης : 2 Aor (Const) - Act - Subjunc (Proh) - S - S - λέγω - do not say

ἀλλὰ : Coordinate conjunction of strong contrast - but, rather, instead

ὑπάγε : Pres (Desc) - Act - Imper (Com) - 2 - S - ὑπάγω - go, depart
 σεαυτὸν : Reflex Pron - Acc (Dir Obj) - M - S - σεαυτοῦ, -ῆς - yourself
 δεῖ ξον : 2 Aor (Const) - Act - Imper (Com) - 2 - S - δείκνυμι - show
 τῷ ἱερεῖ : 2 - Dat (Indir Obj) - M - S - ἱερέυς, -έρος, ὁ - to the priest
 καὶ : Coordinate conjunction linking the two verbs together - and
 προσένεγκε : 2 Aor (Const) - Act - Imper (Com) - 2 - S - προσφέρω - offer, make an offering
 περὶ τοῦ καθαρισμοῦ : 2 - Gen (Ref) - M - S - καθαρισμός, ὁ - concerning purity, cleansing
 σου : Pers Pron - Gen (Poss) - S - σύ - your
 ἃ : Rel Pron - Acc (Dir Obj) - N - P - ὅς, ἣ, ὅ - introducing relative substantival object dependent clause - those things which
 προσέταξεν : 1 Aor (Const) - Act - Ind - 3 - S - προστάσσω - he commanded
 Μωϋσῆς : Proper Name - Nom (Subj) - M - S - Μωϋσῆς, ὁ - Moses

R.T. France, Mark, NIGTC, Logos Systems:

The prohibition Ὅρα μηδενὶ μηδὲν εἶπης correspondingly strong (for ὄρα used to intensify a command cf. 8:15; for the pleonastic double negative cf. 5:3; 11:2, 14; 14:25; 15:4–5). We have seen already Jesus' determination to silence the demons who recognised him (1:34; cf. 1:25). Here we have for the first time his attempted silencing of those whose personal experience of his healing power would naturally lead them to talk about him (cf. 5:43; 7:36; 8:26). Interestingly, whereas we are left to assume that demons were effectively silenced, in the case of humans both here and in 7:36 the command is ignored. (It may in any case be questioned how realistic Jesus' command was: a cured leper restored to society was not an everyday occurrence, and the question of how it had happened could hardly be avoided.) The pragmatic reason for this secrecy is clearly spelled out in v. 45; publicity of this sort resulted in excessive, and probably misdirected, popular enthusiasm which was a serious hindrance to Jesus' mission. It is not clear yet whether this is a question of 'messianic secrecy', as we have not been informed that anyone (other than the demons) was speaking of Jesus in messianic terms. We shall return to this question on 8:30.

The one exception to the secrecy Jesus demands is to go to the priest and complete the necessary procedure for the restoration of a healed leper to society (Lv. 14:1–32). This καθαρισμός was a lengthy procedure, requiring eight days, not to mention the period taken to travel from Galilee to Jerusalem and back (even if there were a priest in the locality, the offerings must be made in the temple in Jerusalem; see *m. Neg.* 14 for the rabbinic regulations). Until it is completed he would presumably have little opportunity to talk about Jesus, as he would still be socially excluded (which is why Sergeant's idea, mentioned above, that he disobeyed this instruction as well is improbable). There must therefore be a time lag between vv. 44 and 45, even though Mark's flowing narrative suggests that the explosion of popularity was immediate.

Despite Jesus' own lack of concern for ritual purity in v. 41, he here insists on the correct observance of the OT regulations (ἃ προσέταξεν Μωϋσῆς). In this case, however, there was no conflict of interests, and indeed it was in the man's own interest to fulfil his legal obligations, to provide formal proof of his cure and thus to be allowed back into society.

J.R. Edwards, Mark, Pillar NT Commentary, Logos Systems:

Jesus commands the man to follow the traditional rite of cleansing as specified in Leviticus 14, and later elaborated in *m. Negaim* 14 of the Mishnah. The leper must first show himself to the priest. Although priests were officially associated with the temple ninety miles south in Jerusalem, it was not unusual to find them in outlying regions like Galilee. The Aaronic **priesthood** was a hereditary office; priests, like Levites, in other words, were born, not made. Josephus reports that there were some 20,000 priests in Palestine in his day (*Ag. Ap.* 2.108). They were divided into twenty-four priestly families or "courses." Each course needed to be present in Jerusalem in order to serve pilgrims at the major festivals of Passover (spring), Pentecost (or the Feast of Weeks, late spring), and the Day of Atonement, followed by the Feast of Booths (or Tabernacles, fall). Thereafter each course of priests served in the temple for one week, twice annually. A priest's temple duties were thus fulfilled in a few weeks of every year. According to the *Epistle of Aristeeas* (92–95), such duties included officiating at worship, burning incense, leading in liturgy, accepting sacrifices and offerings, hearing confessions, and, above all, butchery of animals for sacrifice. In normal rotations a priest's service would not have been overly taxing, but at festivals priestly service in the temple could be long and demanding. Once their temple duties were fulfilled, priests were free to return to their homes, even, as here, in distant Galilee. In off seasons they served as scribes, judges, and magistrates in their respective locales.⁴⁹

One legal responsibility of priests entailed making pronouncements regarding diseases: "only a priest may

pronounce [lepers] unclean or clean” (*m. Neg.* 3:1; also Lev 13:50; 14:2–4). Since it was a priestly duty to ensure the ritual cleanness of Israel, inspection of alleged leprosy cases played a natural role in their work. If a clean bill of health were rendered and certified in writing (*m. Neg.* 8:10), the healed person was instructed to present two birds, one of which was killed at the temple in Jerusalem. The other bird was then dipped in the blood of the slain bird and released. After a waiting period of eight days the healed person further brought to the priest three lambs, one a sin offering, one a guilt offering, and one a whole offering (Lev 14:10–11; *m. Neg.* 14:7). If a suppliant was too poor to afford three lambs, a reduction in offerings was allowed.

Lev. 13 - 14 (NRSV) instructions for lepers:

1 The Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying: 2 When a person has on the skin of his body a swelling or an eruption or a spot, and it turns into a leprous disease on the skin of his body, he shall be brought to Aaron the priest or to one of his sons the priests. 3 The priest shall examine the disease on the skin of his body, and if the hair in the diseased area has turned white and the disease appears to be deeper than the skin of his body, it is a leprous disease; after the priest has examined him he shall pronounce him ceremonially unclean. 4 But if the spot is white in the skin of his body, and appears no deeper than the skin, and the hair in it has not turned white, the priest shall confine the diseased person for seven days. 5 The priest shall examine him on the seventh day, and if he sees that the disease is checked and the disease has not spread in the skin, then the priest shall confine him seven days more. 6 The priest shall examine him again on the seventh day, and if the disease has abated and the disease has not spread in the skin, the priest shall pronounce him clean; it is only an eruption; and he shall wash his clothes, and be clean. 7 But if the eruption spreads in the skin after he has shown himself to the priest for his cleansing, he shall appear again before the priest. 8 The priest shall make an examination, and if the eruption has spread in the skin, the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it is a leprous F11 disease. 9 When a person contracts a leprous F12 disease, he shall be brought to the priest. 10 The priest shall make an examination, and if there is a white swelling in the skin that has turned the hair white, and there is quick raw flesh in the swelling, 11 it is a chronic leprous F13 disease in the skin of his body. The priest shall pronounce him unclean; he shall not confine him, for he is unclean. 12 But if the disease breaks out in the skin, so that it covers all the skin of the diseased person from head to foot, so far as the priest can see, 13 then the priest shall make an examination, and if the disease has covered all his body, he shall pronounce him clean of the disease; since it has all turned white, he is clean. 14 But if raw flesh ever appears on him, he shall be unclean; 15 the priest shall examine the raw flesh and pronounce him unclean. Raw flesh is unclean, for it is a leprous disease. 16 But if the raw flesh again turns white, he shall come to the priest; 17 the priest shall examine him, and if the disease has turned white, the priest shall pronounce the diseased person clean. He is clean.

18 When there is on the skin of one's body a boil that has healed, 19 and in the place of the boil there appears a white swelling or a reddish-white spot, it shall be shown to the priest. 20 The priest shall make an examination, and if it appears deeper than the skin and its hair has turned white, the priest shall pronounce him unclean; this is a leprous disease, broken out in the boil. 21 But if the priest examines it and the hair on it is not white, nor is it deeper than the skin but has abated, the priest shall confine him seven days. 22 If it spreads in the skin, the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it is diseased. 23 But if the spot remains in one place and does not spread, it is the scar of the boil; the priest shall pronounce him clean. 24 Or, when the body has a burn on the skin and the raw flesh of the burn becomes a spot, reddish-white or white, 25 the priest shall examine it. If the hair in the spot has turned white and it appears deeper than the skin, it is a leprous disease; it has broken out in the burn, and the priest shall pronounce him unclean. This is a leprous disease. 26 But if the priest examines it and the hair in the spot is not white, and it is no deeper than the skin but has abated, the priest shall confine him seven days. 27 The priest shall examine him the seventh day; if it is spreading in the skin, the priest shall pronounce him unclean. This is a leprous disease. 28 But if the spot remains in one place and does not spread in the skin but has abated, it is a swelling from the burn, and the priest shall pronounce him clean; for it is the scar of the burn. 29 When a man or woman has a disease on the head or in the beard, 30 the priest shall examine the disease. If it appears deeper than the skin and the hair in it is yellow and thin, the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it is an itch, a leprous disease of the head or the beard. 31 If the priest examines the itching disease, and it appears no deeper than the skin and there is no black hair in it, the priest shall confine the person with the itching disease for seven days. 32 On the seventh day the priest shall examine the itch; if the itch has not spread, and there is no yellow hair in it, and the itch appears to be no deeper than the skin, 33 he shall shave, but the itch he shall not shave. The priest shall confine the person with the itch for seven days more. 34 On the seventh day the priest shall examine the itch; if the itch has not spread in the skin and it appears to be no deeper than the skin, the priest shall pronounce him clean. He shall wash his clothes and be clean. 35 But if the itch spreads in the skin after he was pronounced clean, 36 the priest shall examine him. If the itch has spread in the skin, the priest need not seek for the yellow hair; he is unclean. 37 But

if in his eyes the itch is checked, and black hair has grown in it, the itch is healed, he is clean; and the priest shall pronounce him clean.

38 When a man or a woman has spots on the skin of the body, white spots, 39 the priest shall make an examination, and if the spots on the skin of the body are of a dull white, it is a rash that has broken out on the skin; he is clean. 40 If anyone loses the hair from his head, he is bald but he is clean. 41 If he loses the hair from his forehead and temples, he has baldness of the forehead but he is clean. 42 But if there is on the bald head or the bald forehead a reddish-white diseased spot, it is a leprous disease breaking out on his bald head or his bald forehead. 43 The priest shall examine him; if the diseased swelling is reddish-white on his bald head or on his bald forehead, which resembles a leprous disease in the skin of the body, 44 he is leprous, he is unclean. The priest shall pronounce him unclean; the disease is on his head. 45 The person who has the leprous disease shall wear torn clothes and let the hair of his head be disheveled; and he shall cover his upper lip and cry out, "Unclean, unclean." 46 He shall remain unclean as long as he has the disease; he is unclean. He shall live alone; his dwelling shall be outside the camp.

47 Concerning clothing: when a leprous disease appears in it, in woolen or linen cloth, 48 in warp or woof of linen or wool, or in a skin or in anything made of skin, 49 if the disease shows greenish or reddish in the garment, whether in warp or woof or in skin or in anything made of skin, it is a leprous disease and shall be shown to the priest. 50 The priest shall examine the disease, and put the diseased article aside for seven days. 51 He shall examine the disease on the seventh day. If the disease has spread in the cloth, in warp or woof, or in the skin, whatever be the use of the skin, this is a spreading leprous disease; it is unclean. 52 He shall burn the clothing, whether diseased in warp or woof, woolen or linen, or anything of skin, for it is a spreading leprous disease; it shall be burned in fire. 53 If the priest makes an examination, and the disease has not spread in the clothing, in warp or woof or in anything of skin, 54 the priest shall command them to wash the article in which the disease appears, and he shall put it aside seven days more. 55 The priest shall examine the diseased article after it has been washed. If the diseased spot has not changed color, though the disease has not spread, it is unclean; you shall burn it in fire, whether the leprous spot is on the inside or on the outside. 56 If the priest makes an examination, and the disease has abated after it is washed, he shall tear the spot out of the cloth, in warp or woof, or out of skin. 57 If it appears again in the garment, in warp or woof, or in anything of skin, it is spreading; you shall burn with fire that in which the disease appears. 58 But the cloth, warp or woof, or anything of skin from which the disease disappears when you have washed it, shall then be washed a second time, and it shall be clean. 59 This is the ritual for a leprous disease in a cloth of wool or linen, either in warp or woof, or in anything of skin, to decide whether it is clean or unclean.

εἰς μαρτύριον : 2 - Acc (Purpose) - N - S - μαρτύριον, τό - for a testimony, witness

αὐτοῖς : Pers Pron - Dat (Advantage / Ref) - N - P - αὐτός, - ή, -ό - for them

R.T. France, Mark, NIGTC, Logos Systems:

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. 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. (For the generally hostile usage see H. Strathmann, *TDNT*, 4.502–4.) When we meet priests later in the gospel, it will be in the form of the ἀρχιερεῖς who take the lead in the opposition to Jesus, and so it is likely that here, too, the phrase εἰς μαρτύριον αὐτοῖς has a note of confrontation, the αὐτοῖ being the priestly establishment represented by the one ἱερεὺς mentioned in v. 44.³⁸ It will be some time before Jesus himself appears in Jerusalem, but the arrival of this cured leper will serve advance warning of the activities of the Galilean prophet. It has also been seen in a more positive sense, ‘as a proof that, despite my reputation, I do expect people to observe the law’;³⁹ but that would seem both premature at this point in the narrative (Jesus has not yet acquired any such reputation) and misdirected, since the conflict over the law will arise with the scribes and Pharisees, not with the priests.

<1:45>

δὲ: Postpositive coordinate conjunction introducing a contrastive statement to the preceding - but

ὁ : Article used as substitute demonstrative pronoun in subject role - that one

ἐξελθὼν : 2 Aor (Const) - Act - Ptc (Adv: Temp) - Nom - M - S - ἐξέρχομαι - after having gone out

ἤρξατο : 1 Aor (Const) - Mid (Intensive) - Ind - 3 - S - ἄρχω - he began

κηρύσσειν : Pres (Desc) - Act - Infin (S: Obj) - κηρύσσω - to proclaim, herald

πολλά : Adj (Subst) - Acc (Manner) - N - P - πολὺς, πολλά, πολὺ - many times, often, frequently

καὶ : Coordinate conjunction linking two infinitives in parallel manner - and

διαφημίζειν : Pres (Desc) - Act - Infin (S: Obj) - διαφημίζω - to spread, distribute

τὸν λόγον : 2 - Acc (Dir Obj) - M - S - λόγος, ὁ - the message, word
 ὥστε : Subordinate conjunction in adverbial result infinitive phrase - so that, with the consequence that
 μηκέτι : Temporal adverb - no longer
 αὐτὸν : Pers Pron - Acc (Ref) - M - S - αὐτός, - ἡ, -ό - he
 δύνασθαι : Pres (Desc) - Dep - Infin (V: Result) - δύναμαι - he was able to
 φανερώς : Adverb of manner - openly, in public
 εἰς πόλιν : 3 - Acc (measure) - F - S - πόλις, -εως, ἡ - into a city
 εἰσελθεῖν : 2 Aor (Const) - Act - Infin (S: Obj) - εἰσερχομαι - to enter, go into
 ἀλλ' : Coordinate conjunction of strong contrast - but, rather, instead
 ἔξω : Adv of place - outside,
 ἐπ' ...τόποις : 2 - Loc (Place) - M - P - τόπος, ὁ - in places, locations
 ἐρήμοις : Adj (attrib) - Loc - M - P - ἔρημος, -ον - deserted

TDNT, ἔρημος, -ον

The adj. ἔρημος, (usually τόμος, in the NT) and the subst. ἡ ἔρημος refer to “abandonment,” whether of a person (πατὴρ ἔρημος, Soph. Oed. Col., 1717; ἔρημακλαίω, Eur. Suppl., 775; cf. Gl. 4:27: ἡ ἔραμος, “the abandoned wife”), or a cause (ἐσθῆς ἔραμος εὐδῶσα ὀπλων, Hdt., IX, 63), or a locality. The latter does not have to be a desert. It is a place “without inhabitants,” “empty,” e.g., an “abandoned city” or a “thinly populated district” (Hdt., IV, 17 f.; VI, 23; VIII, 65: κώμη ἔρημος διὰ τὸ πλείω χρόνον μὴ βεβρέχθαι; P. Lille, I, 26, 3 [3rd cent. B.C.], cf. Mt. 23:38 v.l.; Lk. 13:35; Ac. 1:20). It can naturally mean “waste” in the strict sense, e.g., an unprofitable “waste of stone or sand” (e.g., Hdt., III, 102: κατὰ γὰρ τοῦτο ἐστὶν ἐρημία διὰ τὴν ψάμμον), and it can thus be used for a “lonely” heath (e.g., Lk. 15:4, where the shepherd leaves the 99 sheep ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ).

ἦν : Imperf (Desc) - Ind - 3 - S - εἰμί - he was
 καὶ : Coordinate conjunction linking two independent clauses together - and
 ἦρχοντο : Imperf (Iterative) - Dep - Ind - 3 - P - ἔρχομαι - they were repeatedly coming
 πρὸς αὐτὸν : Pers Pron - Acc (Ref / Measure) - M - S - αὐτός, - ἡ, -ό - to him
 πάντοθεν : Adverb of place - from everywhere

J.R. Edwards, Mark, Pillar NT Commentary, Logos Systems:

Whether the man followed the prescribed rite of cleansing we are not told. What we are told is that he broke Jesus' command. “He went out and began to talk freely, spreading the news.” After he has been healed by Jesus, the leper's earnestness and humility (1:40) turn to complacency, even disregard. An adverse irony results. Jesus has relieved the leper of his burden, but in broadcasting the news the leper imposes a burden on Jesus, for “he could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside in lonely places.”

L. Williamson, Mark, Interpretation, Logos Systems:

SIGNIFICANCE

Interruptions are usually irritating, and the interpreter may be tempted to take up the theme of pity that overcomes indignation. The theme of irritation at interruptions depends here on a particular interpretation of a variant reading seen in the context of the preceding passage; it will therefore be treated later in connection with 5:21–43 and 10:46–52 where it is more obvious.

The attitude of the leper is more clearly significant in the present passage. His request, “If you will, you can make me clean,” is viewed positively in the text. It shows belief in the power of Jesus to heal, but not the confident trust which will elsewhere be called faith (5:34) and for which a sick boy's father will pray (9:24). Jesus, however, does not scold the leper for inadequate faith. Desperation may not be the noblest motive for seeking help, but Jesus does not scorn it. He recognizes it and is moved with compassion. The text is significant for desperate sufferers. For such sufferers, as for all readers, the main point of the passage lies in the response of Jesus, “I will.” By this reply Jesus shows he can in fact heal even the most dreaded diseases, such as leprosy or cancer. This word, which is grace to the leper, is also good news to the reader: God wills healing.

The healing of the leper confirms the impression given throughout Mark that Jesus is the great physician (see Introduction, pp. 19–22). The text is therefore significant for all who devote themselves to healing, whether physical healing as in this case, or psychological and spiritual healing as in other instances. By extension, the principle would apply to the healing of interpersonal, social, and international disorders as well. God is on the side of the healers.

However, to state the gospel of this passage in such a way is immediately to raise a serious theological and

practical problem. If the ministry of Jesus on earth was a revelation of the will of God, and he willed to heal this leper who came to him, why does he not always heal those who in faith seek his healing touch? Human experience makes it evident that either God cannot always do as he will or else God does not always will healing, at least not at the time and in the way that we beg for it.

Both experience and the text suggest that perhaps we have created the problem by stating the premise wrongly. We wish to hear: "God *always* wills healing," but this is justified neither by Scripture (e.g., Paul's "thorn in the flesh") nor by life. If this affirmation were true, the ultimate arbiter of events would be our will, not God's. The present text, however, affirms the lordship of Jesus Christ: "*I* will." And it appears in a Gospel in which Jesus himself, at the crucial hour, makes a prayer reminiscent of the leper's: "Father, all things are possible to thee; ... yet not what I will, but what thou wilt" (14:36). The healing of the leper must be interpreted finally in light of Jesus' own submission to the will of God. Though the passage does not resolve the theological problem it raises, it does illumine the terrain for persons confronted by a struggle with unrelieved illness and the problem of prayer unanswered or denied.

Jesus' will to heal and his touching the untouchable offer a model for the ministry of healing today, in the church and through individual Christians in their daily work. Disregard of personal danger and an overriding concern to restore the sick person is seen in many doctors and nurses and should characterize every follower of Christ. Jesus' stern command to the leper not to tell anyone is significant as a word of caution and rebuke to "faith healing" as it is sometimes practiced. Though Jesus does perform a miracle, he wishes to be known as more than a miracle worker. The crowds that gather in response to the leper's "preaching" (*k'ryssM*, v. 45) attest Jesus' popularity but are viewed as an embarrassment and a hindrance to his mission. This scripture offers firm guidelines in this matter for the church and for individual Christians. Ministries of healing? Yes. Opposition to disease and efforts to eradicate it? Yes. Compassion for those who suffer? Yes. Campaigns to gather crowds, win converts, and boost personalities (including that of Jesus)? No. There is in the present text no warrant for using healing programs as a means of attracting converts or making them the central focus of a church's life. The text does, however, invite all readers, including the interpreter, to join the leper at Jesus' feet and pray, "If you will, you can make me clean."

R.T. France, Mark, NIGTC, Logos Systems:

Thus in a few quick strokes Mark has painted a powerful picture of Jesus' 'success' and of the problems it is already beginning to cause. It will be important to bear this popular response to Jesus in mind as the opposition develops in succeeding scenes; his opponents do not represent the majority opinion.