

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

SESSION 2:

CHAPTER 1: 40 - 2:17

"A LEPER, A PARALYTIC AND A TAX COLLECTOR"



"Unclean! Unclean!," the man shouted and everyone scattered to avoid contact with the leper - everyone except Jesus. The religious wisdom of the day demanded that a holy man keep away from "sinners". So Jesus was bound to encounter resistance as he openly welcomed them. This passage focuses on Christ's compassion toward those who would normally have been ignored, if not avoided.

Notice however, how the pace slows down from the whirlwind of "immediately" and "at once" that characterised the "day of healing" in the previous verses.

Read Mark 1: 40 - 45



The Good News Bible talks of a man suffering from a "dreaded skin disease", it may not have been leprosy, but this person was treated as if he was afflicted with that condition.

Leviticus 13:45-46 states that a leper "must wear torn clothes, let his hair be unkempt, cover the lower part of his face and cry out "Unclean! Unclean!" He must also live alone outside the community.

QUESTIONS:

- 1(a). How do you think the fact he was considered to be a leper would have affected the man psychologically, religiously and socially?
- (b). What risks did the leper take in coming to Jesus?
What risks did Jesus take in responding to the man's need?
- (c). Some early manuscripts of Mark describe Jesus in v. 41 as being "moved with anger" , rather than compassion or pity.
To what, do you think, might such a possible emotion have been in response?
Why do you think we are told Jesus speaks sternly to the cured man?

- (d). What possible explanation are we given for our Lord's demands for secrecy ?
- (e). In some countries and in certain situations, some Christians will know in prayer that it is better not to attract too much attention to themselves. This isn't cowardice but wisdom. Why might this be the case here?

Read Mark 2: 1 - 12

N.B. *As well as an emphasis on the "sinners" of society, we are also informed of the more negative effects that the ministry of Jesus was capable of producing.*

- 2.(a). What are we told about the ministry of Jesus in the opening verses and what effect was it having on the people who wanted to meet him?
- (b). How do the four friends respond to the situation and the need of their paralysed friend?
- (c). Healing in the N.T. is often dependent upon faith. Whose faith is crucial here?
- (d). What is significant in the way in which Jesus pronounces the man healed?

What sort of relationship might there be between sickness and sin?
(cf. Jn 9.)



- (e). In what ways does Jesus' healing of the paralytic answer the questions raised in the minds of the teachers of the law?
- (f). What sort of reactions are produced by this healing miracle?
What are the different responses to Jesus' offer of forgiveness and healing?
- (g) The phrase "son of man" in 2:10 (and 2:27) comes from Daniel 7, referring to the

representative of God's true people opposed by the forces of evil. But God vindicates him, rescues him, proves him to be right and gives him authority... How does this extend the themes of chapter 1?

Read Mark 2: 13 - 17

N.B. *Levi, son of Alphaeus, is usually identified with Matthew (cf. Matt. 9: 9-13)*

- 3.(a). How would you describe the difference between the approach of Jesus and the Pharisees to the tax collectors and sinners mentioned here?
- (b). What do you think Jesus means by describing himself as a doctor?
- (c). Jesus came announcing the kingdom and calling people to follow him. What change would need to take place in these Pharisees before they could answer his call?



For Further Reflection

- 4.(a). The paralytic's friend showed they cared. How can we follow their practical example?
- (b). Who do you think of as being "beyond the pale" or "unlovely" or "unreachable" for God's Kingdom?