

Miracle Worker

Part Four: *leper*

June 25, 2023

Jesus healed thousands of people of many different ailments during His brief ministry on earth. He made the blind see, the deaf hear, and the lame walk, and He set demon-possessed people free. But there was one miracle of healing that made Jesus so popular that He no longer could enter a city without drawing a crowd of people. This miracle is recorded in Mark 1:40-45.

Jesus heals a man with leprosy.

Mark 1:40-45

1st – Mark tells us about a man with a dreadful disease. Vs. 40

Leprosy, which is known today as Hansen’s disease, is a devastating bacterial infection that disfigures a person’s appearance and destroys the nervous system, often leading to death. Leprosy was one of the most feared diseases in the ancient world because it was spread through the air and through physical touch.

What are the symptoms of leprosy?

- Pain and numbness throughout the body.
- Skin turns gray and becomes scaly, which eventually turns into tumorlike sores.
- Skin swells and bunches up around the ears and eyes. Eyebrows and eyelashes fall off.
- Skin emits a repulsive odor.
- The internal organs and bones deteriorate.
- The immune system is weakened, making the leper susceptible to other diseases.
- Unintentional destruction of tissue.

How were lepers treated in the 1st century?

- **Lepers were considered unclean sinners and forced to live as outcasts.**

A person suspected of having leprosy had to be examined by a priest (Leviticus 13). If the person showed signs of leprosy, he or she was quarantined for seven days. If the symptoms worsened, they were isolated for another seven days. If the person was found to have leprosy, they were expelled from society, so they did not infect anyone else (Lev. 13:45-46). The closest a leper could come to someone was six feet and then he had to cry out “Unclean! Unclean!”. A leper found in public could be stoned to death and then burned in the city’s trash heap.

2nd – Mark tells us about the Lord’s merciful miracle. Vs. 41-44

Jesus did not run from the man or send him away, instead, the Great Physician felt the leper’s pain and isolation and reached out to him. Jesus could have healed the man with a thought or word, but He chose to touch the outcast kneeling before Him. Then Jesus said something only He could say, “I am willing.” “Be healed!”

3rd – Mark tells us about Jesus’ popularity problem.

Vs. 45

Jesus commanded the former leper to show himself to the priest, who would examine him and declare him clean. The man could then offer the sacrifices detailed by Moses in Leviticus 14:2–31. Jesus’ command was qualified by the statement, “This will be a testimony to them.” The cleansing of the leper was an undeniable messianic sign (Matt. 11:5; Luke 7:22) that God was working in a new way. But the healed man did not obey Jesus’ command to keep silent. Instead, the man proclaimed the story of his cure far and wide. As a result, Jesus could not enter a town openly without encountering large crowds seeking healing.

Why is this miracle recorded in three Gospels?

- This miracle records when Jesus' ministry skyrocketed.
- This miracle shows Jesus is willing to touch the untouchable and able to heal the incurable.
- This miracle illustrates how Jesus makes us clean spiritually.

In the Bible, leprosy is a picture of sin. Leprosy spreads until it infects the entire body (Lev. 13:5–8); it defiles and isolates (Lev. 13:44–46); and it leads to fire (Lev. 13:47–59). Like leprosy, sin spreads until it infects every part of our body. It defiles us and alienates us from God. And sin makes us fit for the fires of hell.

The Law says anyone who touches a leper is defiled and should be cast out, which means Jesus defiled Himself when He touched the man covered in leprosy. He became unclean so He could make the man clean. In the same way, Jesus took our sins upon Himself so He could make us clean (2 Cor. 5:21).