

CLOSE-UPS OF JESUS THROUGH THE LENS OF MARK - Part two

Wednesday, July 1st, 2020 - 7:00 p.m.

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Today we will study **Mark 1:40-2:12**. Again, the style will be brief and devotional, seeing simple lessons from the life of Jesus. The text will set the outline for our study. For the most part, each point is self contained.

- 1) **Mark 1:40-42** - "And a leper came to him, imploring him, and kneeling said to him, "If you will, you can make me clean." [41] Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand and touched him and said to him, "I will; be clean." [42] And immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean."

Every healing miracle of Jesus was immediate and definite - See also 1:25-27, 30-31, 41-42. Notice also the one exception in **Mark 8:22-25**. There was an obvious authenticity to Christ's healing work. Nobody was encouraged to pretend. In fact, this is what the Mark 8 passage may have been testing. Nobody ever tried to manufacture faith by crawling away from Jesus saying, "I'm healed? I'm healed!" when they weren't healed. When people were healed by Jesus they knew they were healed. The surrounding crowds knew a miracle had taken place.

The Leper Cleansed - This disease wasn't actually contagious by touch. It was only under Mosaic Law that lepers were to remain separate from society (eg. Naaman, a Syrian, commanded the entire Syrian army as a leper - **2 Kings 5:1**). The leper, in the OT, was considered a picture of sin and uncleanness, a walking parable of unrighteousness. No man could take the disease away. It is of double significance that Jesus does two things: First, He touches the untouchable. He was on the side of outcasts. People didn't have to qualify. Second, He cleanses what was thought uncleansable. No case is too hopeless or dark. How many times I've needed the encouragement of this truth against both the accusation of the Devil and my own conscience.

- 2) **Mark 1:43-44** - "And Jesus sternly charged him and sent him away at once, [44] and 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, for a proof to them." **Jesus commands him to be silent**. Why? The text hints at several reasons:

First, **Jesus didn't want the masses following Him just because He worked miracles**. See also **1:32-38**. Certainly miracles could be, and frequently were, a sign for unbelievers. Signs backed up Jesus' words and could lead to repentance and a changed heart. But without a changed heart following Jesus became a spectator activity. This is what Jesus purposely discouraged. See **Matthew 12:38-39**.

Second, **the miracle wouldn't serve as a "testimony" (44) to them until it was officially verified**. Notice that Jesus didn't see scrutiny and verification as contrary to faith and obedience. Jesus would love working under the endorsement of medical doctors. True spiritual works never shy away from proof and Jesus wanted this sign to be as effective as possible. So **rejection** of Jesus is morally culpable..

- 3) **Mark 2:1-12** - **The healing of the paralytic** - "And when he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. [2] And many were gathered together, so that there was no more room, not even at the door. And he was preaching the word to them. [3] And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. [4] And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him, and when they had made an opening, they let down the bed on which the paralytic lay. [5] And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "My son, your sins are forgiven." [6] Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, [7] "Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" [8] And immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, "Why do you question these things in your hearts? [9] Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, take up your bed and walk'? [10] But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he said to the paralytic—[11] "I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home." [12] And he rose and immediately picked up his bed and went out before them all, so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw anything like this!"

Perhaps one of the greatest lessons here is **your faith can help someone else!** Jesus ministered to the

paralytic when he saw "***their faith***" (5). Evidently, this man was too weak to trust for himself. The sick man's faith isn't even mentioned. We should never be too quick to blame the lack of immediate manifestations on the lack of faith of those seeking. This can be a cruel and heartless escape on the part of those ministering prayer. We don't even know the names of these four helpers but their ministry is one of the greatest in Scripture.

- 4) **Mark 2:5 - The nature of true faith** - "And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "My son, your sins are forgiven."

Jesus "**saw**" their faith. Faith shouldn't be minimized or mystified into some sort of positive mental state, as is so commonly done in the church today. To Jesus, faith was more than just positive thoughts. It was more than an accurate mental conception about His person. It was visible action - moving huge barriers at great personal cost. Notice how Peter ties faith closely to diligence, hard work and commitment (**I Peter 1:5-11**).

- 5) **Mark 2:5-12 - Three signs of Christ's Divinity** - "And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "My son, your sins are forgiven." [6] Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, [7] "Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" [8] And immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, "Why do you question these things in your hearts? [9] Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, take up your bed and walk?' [10] But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he said to the paralytic—[11] "I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home." [12] And he rose and immediately picked up his bed and went out before them all, so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw anything like this!"

The three signs come in rapid succession in these verses. First, ***He claimed to forgive sins*** (5-7). And notice that He claimed power to forgive sins that weren't obviously committed against Him personally. Second, ***He knew all their thoughts and intentions*** (8). Third, ***He healed the sickness instantly*** (9-12).

This leads to the last point:

- 6) **Mark 2:6-7 - The dangerous sin of unbelief** - "Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, [7] "Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

If some people followed Jesus too quickly because they liked the miracles He was doing (see point two), others (usually those in leadership) were too slow to submit to His Lordship. We know from the text that many people were "amazed" and "praised God" (12). But those with something to defend in terms of pride in possessions or position refused to budge to the obvious greatness of Jesus Christ. They chased Him to the death. For these political and religious leaders it's important to remember that their unbelief was not due to lack of evidence. The signs were numerous and striking. It was pride and a corrupt heart that kept them from Jesus. The presence of signs only served to harden their minds against obvious truth. Watch how this conflict builds throughout the rest of this book of Mark.