

OpenTheo

Mark 1:40 - 2:12



Gospel of Mark - Steve Gregg

In this talk, Steve Gregg discusses the biblical story of Jesus healing a leper and forgiving the sins of a paralyzed man. He explores the concepts of sin and ceremonial uncleanness, and how Jesus' healing miracles serve to illustrate spiritual truths and demonstrate his power in the new covenant. Gregg emphasizes the importance of faith, compassion, and submitting to God's will, as well as the controversy and conflict that surrounded Jesus' healing and forgiving ministry.

Transcript

Let's turn again to Mark chapter one, and we have just a little bit left of this chapter to take, and we'll probably be getting into chapter two as well tonight. Look at the end of verse 40. Then a leper came to Jesus, imploring him, kneeling down to him and saying to him, if you are willing, you can make me clean.

And Jesus moved with compassion, put out his hand and touched him and said to him, I am willing, be cleansed. As soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed. And he strictly warned him and sent him away at once.

And he said to him, see that you say nothing to anyone, but go your way, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing those things which Moses commanded as a testimony to them. But he went out and began to proclaim it freely and to spread the matter so that Jesus could no longer openly enter the city, but was outside in deserted places. And they came to him from every quarter.

Now, the distinctive thing about this miracle compared to many others that Jesus performed is it was performed not only on a person who was sick, but also who was ceremonially unclean. Ceremonial uncleanness is a condition that was rather easy to contract under the law. You could contract uncleanness by, well, if you're a woman, by having your menstrual period or if you happen to be on the battlefield, if someone dropped dead next to you or if you attended a funeral of one of your family members or if you're a man and had a seminal discharge during the night.

There's all kinds of things that could cause a person to be ceremonially unclean,

including childbirth. A woman was unclean for like 40 days after she had a boy and about 80 days after she had a girl. Lots of things would make people unclean.

Many conditions of uncleanness were temporary, though most of the ones I just mentioned were temporary. A person would be unclean for a prescribed period of time, maybe a day. A lot of times it was till sundown.

Other times it was for a week or in many cases it was until the condition simply ended. In the case of leprosy, it was almost always a life sentence. Now, uncleanness, ceremonial uncleanness in the Old Testament needs to be understood for what it is and what it isn't.

It is not something for which God blames a person. It is not the same as being guilty of something. Obviously, all the conditions I just mentioned are things that a person usually doesn't bring upon themselves.

They are situations that happen in the course of life and which contract uncleanness. Certainly a leper can't be blamed for being leprous. Sometimes people may have thought that leprosy was the stroke of God brought upon people who had sinned.

And sometimes it was. Miriam was smitten with leprosy because of God's anger, or at least his displeasure with her complaining against Moses. Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, was stricken with leprosy for a similar reason, for displeasing God in a different way.

But there are cases of people smitten with leprosy as a judgment. But there's also people who have leprosy. And it's not particularly a judgment from God.

It's just a misfortune, like many other conditions of uncleanness. Now, the thing about uncleanness was, like all things in the ceremonial law, it was symbolic. It was a law that was given to teach lessons about spiritual things.

The rituals of the Old Testament law had symbolic value. And that was their value. They were not moral in nature.

The moral laws are those laws that come directly from the character of God and reflect his demand that we be like him in those character traits. Faithful and just and merciful and humble and things like that. Traits that were character traits of God are moral issues because we're supposed to be like our maker.

And where we fail to be like him, we sin and fall short of the glory of God. But ceremonial things didn't have a moral basis. They were not dictated by the character of God.

They were dictated rather by things that God wished to foreshadow about the future. They had a teaching function rather than a moral function. And so the tabernacle and the sacrificial system and the laws that clean and unclean foods, none of them were moral issues.

They were all ceremonial issues that foreshadowed something about Christ or some spiritual truth. And so was uncleanness. The very state of being ceremonially unclean was a symbol of sin.

It was not sin. The person who was unclean was not held responsible and was not regarded by God to be sinful, the more because they were unclean than if they were not. A person who died a leper might die on very good terms with God.

But the condition of uncleanness was to tell us something about sin. It's like a picture of sin because the person who was unclean was, first of all, prevented from going into the tabernacle or the temple. They were not allowed to go and worship there.

They also, of course, were not allowed to be touched by other human beings. In fact, they had to be separated from human beings because anything that an unclean person touched became itself unclean. And if someone else sat on the same bed or the same chair that an unclean person sat on, they contract.

It's not really something that's contagious, like a disease is contagious, because there's no physical cause of the contracting uncleanness. I mean, if a woman is on a menstrual cycle and a person is not unclean, sits on the bed where she lay, he's unclean. There's nothing physical has transpired.

It's just a ceremonial category. But it's a category that is to tell us something about sin as an unclean person was thereby alienated from the worship of God and could not go to the tabernacle and alienated from family and friends and society in general. So sin is like that, sin separates people from God, sin separates people from each other.

It breaks relationships, both the vertical and the horizontal relationships are broken by sinfulness. And that's the lesson that uncleanness was to show. Now, another part of the lesson of uncleanness was the contagion of it.

And under the old covenant. It was a pretty sure guarantee that if you associated with sinful people, you'd pick up their ways. That is a given in the Proverbs, go from the presence of an angry man, lest you learn his ways and be like him.

The reason that God did not allow the Canaanites to live in the same land with the Israelites and told the Israelites to wipe them all out because he said, if you let them live, you will learn their evil ways. You'll be infected by them. You see, sin is that way.

Sin infects people by contact. If you are associating with sinful people, then you are going to pick up some of their ways. At the very least, if you don't compromise in all the ways they do in order to continue associating with them, you'll have to become tolerant of sin in ways that numbs your conscience.

You are changed negatively by immersion and constant contact with sinful people unless

there's something else going on. But you see, there is something else going on for us because, well, something changed in the new covenant. And it's illustrated in Jesus touching of a leper.

Because the unclean condition was considered contagious by touch, if you touch anyone who is unclean or anything they had touched, you would become unclean. Why? Because what it was pointing out is that association with sin and contact with sinners is a defiling thing morally. That was the lesson, that was the teaching that was intended from it.

Now, Jesus touched a leper. Under the law, that would have made Jesus ceremonially unclean, at least for a week. He would not be able to touch anybody.

He would not be able to go in the tabernacle. You know, but the thing is, when Jesus touched the leper, that leper became clean instead of the transfer being from the unclean person to the clean person, defiling the clean. Rather, the clean man touched the unclean and the unclean became clean because in Jesus there is a different power that had never been introduced in the Old Testament among the people of God.

And that is the power of the new covenant, the power of a new life, the power of the Holy Spirit resident in Jesus. And it is that power of the Holy Spirit that's in us, also the power of the new covenant, that makes it unnecessary for us to go out and annihilate the pagans around us or to separate ourselves up into monasteries. Because if the power of the gospel is in us, if the power of Christ through his spirit is in us, then association with sinners should make them cleaner rather than us dirtier.

Now, you might say, but I know Christians who associate with sinners and were corrupted. True, true. Because Christians do not always walk in the spirit.

And yet when you walk in the spirit, you will not fulfill the lust of the flesh. There is a power that God gives through his Holy Spirit, which is a new covenant phenomenon that allows us to go out and reach out and even lay hands on people who may not be clean, who may not be godly. And yet for healing to go out toward them rather than their sickness to come toward us or for cleanness and moral improvement to be brought upon the society like leaven leavens a lump of dough.

This is the power of the kingdom of God, Jesus, the kingdom of God is like leaven put into a lump of dough and it leavens the whole lump. And so the difference in the Old Testament, the new is in the Old Testament, there is simply no resource to the people of God to protect them from the defilement of sin. And under the law, God illustrated that by this phenomenon of of ceremonial uncleanness, which is so contagious by touch.

But Jesus is illustrating that that situation is turned around now. Jesus touches a leper and he does not become unclean, the leper becomes clean. The same thing happened later in another story with the woman who had the issue of blood.

She would have been unclean under the law. She touched Jesus under the old covenant that would make Jesus unclean. But instead, she got healed.

Now, I don't really see how, for example, the Pharisees could say to Jesus, we saw you touch that leper. You can't go into the temple anymore this week. I mean, he could just say, well, did you call it a leper? Do you say leprosy on this man? I mean, it was obvious that Jesus was not defiled by that contact and that it had gone the other way.

And that is really a picture of how the church is supposed to be in the world. The Israelites had to be isolated from sinners so that they would not be contaminated. And in certain times in church history, when the church's power was at a low ebb to be spiritually, had God live in a monastery away from the world.

At least people thought so because they felt like they'd be contaminated if they were in society. But people who walk in the spirit, people who walk in the power of the new covenant, people who are carriers of the kingdom of God, like Jesus, can and must live among sinners, must live in society. And must be 11, must be a contagion of righteousness to the society.

And so that's what is illustrated in this particular miracle. I believe that, frankly, all the miracles of Jesus, though they had obviously a compassionate motivation as well, they also serve to illustrate some spiritual truth. And that is something I think can be observed and demonstrated if you think about each of his miracles, they generally illustrate some spiritual truth that will be true.

Certainly the next miracle we read of in the next chapter, but we're not there yet. But Jesus stated that in the next chapter, he says, so that you might know that the Son of Man has the power to forgive sin. I'm going to heal this man.

That's what he illustrated when Jesus cast out demons. He said, if I'm casting out demons by the spirit of God, it's because the kingdom of God has come upon you. And so the miracles of Jesus taught things, including this one.

Now, the man came to him and was not sure about Jesus' willingness to help him. He came down worshipping, imploring, kneeling. And said, if you are willing, you can make me clean.

Now, that requires a lot of faith on the part of the leper. Because he had an incurable disease, who knows how long he'd been a leper, but you don't be a leper very long before you resign yourself to the fact this is my faith. This does not go away.

This does not. This is not a self-correcting condition. I'm going to be isolated from my family, from people.

I'm never going to feel a human touch again. I'm not going to be able to go and worship

God with the rest of the congregation. And it's a pretty despairing situation, much more than most unclean situations, because most unclean situations, at least it was hopeful that you'd come out of it.

You know, it's temporary, but this seems permanent. And he knew there was no natural power that could cure leprosy. And yet he was convinced that Jesus could do it.

He said, I know that if you're willing to do it, you can make me clean. Now, it says Jesus was moved with compassion. There are a few manuscripts that say he was moved with anger, but I'm not sure how that came to be in them.

Those those that do contain that reading, I'm sure we're not suggesting that he was angry at this man. How could it be angry at this man for wanting to be healed? Jesus healed people all the time, quite happily and willingly. Some feel like it did say he was moved with anger, but his anger was toward the leprosy or his anger was toward the fallenness of the world that caused some people to have this kind of misery.

I mean, there is such thing as righteous indignation. Jesus at the tomb of Lazarus wept, no doubt, at the tragedy of death that was staring him in the face there at the tomb, although he knew he was going to heal and raise the man from the dead. He knew he was going to raise Lazarus from the dead, but he still wept at the tomb, no doubt, because he could see the other people weeping.

It is graphically brought to his attention how death as a result of sin has brought such suffering and such sadness on the world. And he himself wept, I think, sympathetically. Likewise, I think he was angry at sin, but I don't think the reading that he was moved with anger here is very likely.

I don't believe we have any other instance in the Bible saying that Jesus was moved with anger, but there are many places that he was moved with compassion. Now, compassion, of course, is sympathy, mercy, feeling somebody else's pain. And almost always, whenever it speaks of Jesus, compassion says he was moved with compassion.

That is, compassion didn't just reside in him as sort of a quiet sympathy for people, it moved him. He was moved to do something. And genuine compassion should move people to action, should stir you to action.

There's times when you can't do anything, but it should be such a such a motivator in your heart that it frustrates you, you can't do anything because you would if you could. And if you can, you do, because that's what compassion really should be. That's what it was in Jesus continually said to be moved with compassion.

His compassion didn't just it wasn't just an attitude in his heart. It was something that animated him, that dictated behavior on his part. And he was moved with compassion and he put out his hand and touched the man and said to him, I am willing.

Be cleansed. And this man who may have never felt a human touch for years and never expected to feel a human touch again, felt the hand of Jesus on him. And he felt also something else.

His skin was changing. If there were missing appendages, they must have regenerated. We don't know if there were, of course, we don't know how advanced the man's condition was.

Sometimes skeptics say, well, how come Jesus doesn't ever heal amputees? And the answer is, I don't know. I don't know why he doesn't heal amputees. I'm not sure he doesn't.

I haven't seen every every case of healing at all. But here's a man who had leprosy. He might very well have.

He might have had missing appendages, as lepers often do. And that's as you may have heard, that the reason lepers have missing appendages is not because the disease eats them away, but rather because the disease robs them of feeling in their nerves. They don't feel things.

And so if they do something that damages their fingers or their toes, they don't know it like we do. If you put your hand on a hot stove, you feel it. You pull away.

A leper doesn't. He doesn't feel anything. He can burn his hand off and he can, you know, just by in many, many little ways, we protect ourselves.

We favor, you know, ourselves when we when we've got a sore foot or a sore hand. But they don't do that because they don't know it's sore and they just do harm to themselves. By the way, that's another way in which leprosy is a good picture of sin, because sin eventually makes you numb, morally numb.

If you live in sin thoroughly, then you don't even know the difference between right and wrong anymore. You don't know how much damage you're doing to yourself because you're oblivious to moral, your moral condition. And you don't feel when your conscience should be telling you this is wrong.

It hurts, hurts your conscience. But you don't have a conscience anymore. People can get to that point.

Not all sinners are at that point, but that's that's an advanced stage. And so this leper, whatever damage leprosy had done to him was now reversed. And he stood there fully cleansed, as we see.

As soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed. It didn't just start to get better. And a few weeks later, he found it was all gone.

It was just immediate. All the flakes, all this whiteness of the skin, all the red blotches and whatever. The cracked skin, it was just is all over.

I mean, now we have a not a natural. We don't really have a description of what the man looked like afterwards. But we do have another case of a leper that was supernaturally healed back in Second Kings, Chapter six, I believe, or five.

And I think it's Chapter five of Second Kings when Naaman the Syrian was a leper and came to Elisha the prophet and sought healing. And Elisha said, well, go dip yourself seven times in the River Jordan and you'll be clean. And the man at first was reluctant.

He thought it was a silly thing to do. And he was actually indignant. He said, you know, the rivers in my country are just as good as the River Jordan.

And he was not going to do it. And his own little servant girl, I think, or servant boy said to him, well, you know, if the prophet had asked you to do some hard thing, you would have done it. Why don't you try this simple thing? And so he did it.

And the Bible says he dipped himself seven times in the Jordan. And when he came up the last time, his skin was like the skin of a child. In other words, it was absolutely smooth, absolutely cured.

And I'm sure that the miracle done by Jesus on this leper was not less effective than that. This man had probably rejuvenated skin and skin that had been gross to look at and even more unthinkable to touch was now normal and clean. And imagine having that experience, the difference that would make in your life.

It's right. It almost seems unfair for just they don't tell anyone about this. How could you not tell people about this? There'd be nothing else you'd want to talk about.

You know, but it says Jesus strictly warned him and sent him away at once and said to him, see that you say nothing to anyone, but go your way. Show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing those things which Moses commanded as a testimony to them. The thing that Moses commanded.

That's a reference to Deuteronomy or Leviticus, chapter 14, where in chapter 13 and 14 of Leviticus, there's the laws concerning the leper. And chapter 13 talks about how to diagnose a leper. This is the priest's job at the tabernacle.

The priest is sort of like a public health official. And if someone suspected they might have leprosy, the beginnings of some problem on their skin, they'd go to the priest and he'd check it out. And if he thought it would look bad, he'd say, come back in a week, I'll check it again.

And if it advanced and then he would call it and called him a leper. And as soon as they

were diagnosed with leprosy, they were they were isolated. They were they were cut off from society.

But chapter 14 talks about if a leper is cleansed, he can go to the priest and do this certain ritual offer sacrifice and so forth, and the priest will declare him clean and then he'll get to go back to his home. Now, when they read those chapter 14, especially Leviticus, when I wonder, did that ever really happen? You know, did anyone really get better from leprosy? And I think the the answer would be one of two things. Either that law was awaiting Jesus to come so that so that that could become a testimony of his healing leprosy or probably more likely.

There were cases that were diagnosed as leprosy. But which weren't really what we call leprosy and therefore did get better after all, they didn't have exact, you know, scientific methods of checking out what kind of a virus somebody had and or what kind of a bacterium. So they were just looking at gross symptoms, the larger symptoms.

And if somebody looked like their skin disease was advancing, that was scary enough. They call that leprosy. But it might be some other skin disease, something that might even clear up so that they were called leprosy even when they didn't have what we call leprosy.

But what we call leprosy is called Hansen's disease. And it is not curable. Well, it is now.

Now they do have treatments for leprosy that can cure it, but only in recent years. But in biblical times, real Hansen's disease could never be cured except by a miracle. But since there would be cases of other skin problems that were of less severity, but would mistakenly be diagnosed as leprosy, there would be people who would spend some time in the leper colony and then find themselves better because whatever they had wasn't really leprosy.

Then they'd come and they'd have to show themselves to the priest and so forth. Now, Jesus tells this man to go and show himself to the priest and offer these sacrifices. This should not be thought to teach that Jesus instructed his disciples to follow the sacrificial system as if that's something we should do.

But this man was told to go do it because it was a testimony, he says to them, and also the man couldn't go home until he got a clean bill of health. He was quarantined for life unless the priest, the priest who had diagnosed him and declared him a leper, had to also give him a clean bill of health. So Jesus go and get that.

Show yourself to the priest, do the things Moses said and get yourself restored into society. Now, when Jesus said, don't tell anyone or don't speak to anyone in verse 44, like I said, that seems really kind of like an unfair suggestion. And on how long was it supposed to last? Was he supposed to go his whole life and never tell anyone that he'd

been a leper and Jesus had healed him? I doubt it.

It's possible that in this case, Jesus is just saying, don't speak to anyone on the way, just go directly to the priest. Don't stop and talk to anybody. Just go and get this done.

And if that's the case, then it's not so unreasonable. He's just saying, make make it a priority to go get your your clean bill of health from a priest. And then, of course, by implication, then you can talk to whoever you want to.

But don't stop and talk and tell people right now you have something that's a higher priority. I'm inclined to think that's what Jesus meant here. It makes it a little easier to understand, though there were times when he healed people and said not to tell anyone, even though there was no order, no item of business they had to do quickly.

It just seemed like he said, don't tell anyone. I have a feeling, though, that when Jesus said don't tell anyone, he was using something of a hyperbole, like don't blab this about. I'm sure he wasn't saying you can't tell your wife that you're clean now or somebody says, how come you don't have leprosy that you're not allowed to say Jesus did it? But it may be that he was simply trying to stifle the the excited and exuberant, you know, talking to everybody about it publicly.

Because why? Well, we see when the guy didn't keep Jesus instructions, he did go out and proclaimed it freely and spread the matter. It says Jesus could no longer openly enter the city. Verse 45, because people got so excited by these reports, they all wanted to come and throng him.

Now, you might think that Jesus would want that. I mean, does he want to heal everybody when he healed Peter's mother in law? That night after sundown, everyone who was in Capernaum brought their sick and their demons, so many healed them all. And when I think, well, if I could heal, I'd want to I want everyone to bring their sick to me.

But Jesus didn't come here primarily to heal. Healing was something he did that was consistent with his mission. But he came to preach the kingdom of God.

And that's what he said after that night when all the people of Capernaum had thronged around the house and had him heal everybody that they brought. The next morning, you remember, Jesus got up early and left town and he was praying. And it took a while for the apostles to find him when they got up and when they did, they said, Lord, everyone's waiting for you back in town.

He says, I need to go to other villages and preach the kingdom of God. That's what I was sent to do. In other words, I'm not really sent here to just heal all kinds of people.

And we need to understand that, too, because when we read of the wholesale healing

ministry of Jesus, as we do, we may get the impression that one of the main interests that God has is healing sicknesses. Well, if that was true, he could do a better job of it because there's a lot of Christians who pray for the sick and God doesn't heal. And it's overly simplistic to just say, well, they didn't have enough faith, because that's I just don't think that's true.

I think there's people who have a lot of faith who pray for sick and there's people get healed who don't have much faith at all. It seems like when God heals and when he doesn't heal, it's kind of a sovereign thing on God's part. He doesn't he doesn't always heal the people who have the strongest faith and he doesn't always not heal ones with the weakest faith.

I went to several of Catherine Kuhlman's meetings when she was alive. She was known for healing healings that took place in her meetings. And at the end of her meeting, she would always have people come up and and give testimony if they had gotten healed in the meeting.

And again and again, almost all of it was like a broken record. They said, well, I didn't really believe anything was going to happen. My friends brought me here because they wanted me to be healed and I didn't really believe it was going to happen.

But then I was sitting there and during the preaching, I just felt, you know, my my my paralyzed leg, you know, the muscle. I felt them regenerate. Now I can leap and dance and things like that.

I mean, those are the kind of testimonies that happened. And I remember thinking, none of these people believed that they were going to be healed, but they were. What's that say about the word of faith idea? You'll have what you confess.

You'll have what you believe. Obviously, I've known people who believe tremendously that they'd be healed. In fact, if I don't think Jeremiah would mind me saying so, his mother had a very strong faith.

She died of cancer when he was a baby. And I knew I knew his mother and his father. And and she had a very strong faith in God and healing stronger than I do.

Well, actually, much stronger than I do. And but but God wished something else. He wanted to take her home for whatever reason.

We can't really know what the will of God is and we can't change it by believing something strongly enough. Faith is not about manipulating God to get what we want from him. Faith is about our confidence in God, that we trust that he is going to do what he wants to do.

And we're up and we're on board with him, whatever it is. We certainly make our

requests known to God. But as Jesus did, if it is your will.

You see, the other attitude that many people have is, oh, you don't dare say if it is your will. I've heard people say that when this man said, if you are willing, you can maybe say, oh, that was not good to say that. You don't you don't say that to God.

Why? Well, there are people who say that you will be healed if you have enough faith to do so. And yet we know very well there are people who pray and seem to have faith and they don't get healed. So so the word of faith, people say, well, that's because they were saying if it's God's will, heal them.

And they say that leaves yourself an out that if your faith isn't strong enough to get the healing, then you can always blame the will of God on it. So they say it's a lack of faith to say if it is your will. Well, then Jesus must have lacked faith when he said, Father, if it is your will, let this cup pass for me, because he actually prayed for that cup to pass from him.

But he conditioned it. James said, go to now you who say today or tomorrow, we should go into such a city and continue their year and buy and sell and get gain. Sounds like prosperity confession to me.

He says, for that you ought to say if the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that. But now you rejoice in your boastings and all such rejoicing is evil, James said. So, you know, whoever said you shouldn't say if it is your will, they haven't read enough of the scripture to know that that's how Jesus prayed.

That's what James said you should do. And here's the man who actually did that. It didn't prevent him from getting healed.

He said, Lord, if you're willing, is that like a statement of unfaith? Well, it didn't stop Jesus from healing him. It's good to submit to God. It's good to submit to the will of God.

It's good to know that God doesn't always heal and doesn't maybe even always wish to heal. But to say, God, if you're willing, you can make me well, that is a faith that pleases him. Because it's a faith that not only believes that he can do whatever needs to be done, but it also is submitted to his will.

And too many times we decide what we want and then we develop a theology that says that God's kind of obligated to give us what we want if we just have the right. If we can screw up our willpower enough and get enough faith going, then God really has to come through for us. Then we become the lords.

We become the ones who are giving the orders. That's not Christianity. Christianity is submission to the will of God and making our requests known to God.

It's like a child coming to a father asking for something. If it's good for him, the father will give it. If it's not good for him, the father might not give it.

And if father doesn't give it, the child should trust that his father knows best. That's what faith is. Faith isn't believing that whatever selfish thing I ask my daddy to give me, he's going to give me.

Faith is saying that whatever is the right thing to do is what my daddy is going to do because he's the right kind of person, because he's a wise and good person. That's faith. And apparently this man thought that if you are willing, you can heal me.

I don't know if you're going to or not, but I know that you can. And Jesus, well, as a matter of fact, I am willing, therefore be cleansed. Now, this was one of the cases where Jesus chose to heal.

Some people say Jesus healed everyone who ever asked him. That's not true. It's just not true.

There were many sick people in Galilee when Jesus left. He had done his preaching to us through the whole of Galilee. There were still sick people when he was done.

On in Acts, chapter three, Peter and John found a lame man at the gate of the temple who had been lame for, what, 40 years. And Jesus had passed through that gate many times the previous month or two, right by that guy and hadn't healed him. Even his friend Lazarus, when his sisters came and said, Lord, the one you love is sick.

And by strong implication, would you please come and heal him? Jesus waited and let him die. It wasn't his will to heal him. Now, of course, you'll say, but he raised him from the dead.

And isn't that just as good? Yes, it's just good. He's going to raise us from the dead, too. He might let us die first, though.

He might even let us die sick, like Lazarus did. And someday he'll raise us from the dead. But that's exactly the point.

God's will is not always predictable, even about sickness. And the problem here was that people get obsessed with their physical well-being. Christians do and non-Christians do.

And when the people heard that Jesus healed this leper, they realized that he could help any physical problem they had. If they're sick, if they have a sick friend or neighbor or relative, they would bring them to Jesus. And it's not that Jesus didn't care to heal those people.

It's just that his main mission is not about restoring help. His main mission was to preach the kingdom of God. After all, if you restore somebody's health, it's a temporary fix

because that same person is going to die anyway.

A restoration of someone's health is never permanent. But the kingdom of God and bringing someone into the kingdom of God is bringing them eternal benefit. And therefore, given the two, Jesus would prefer to bring people into the kingdom of God.

The healings were there as illustrations of kingdom principles. The healings were there as confirmations of Jesus' authority and of his message. And that was true of the miracles that God did in the book of Acts as well, and that he still does when the gospel is preached in foreign lands.

And sometimes even in this country, there's occasionally a miracle or two, but not very often because the miracles were confirmations of the message. It says that in the closing verse of the gospel of Mark that we're reading. The very last verse tells us the apostles went out preaching the gospel everywhere and said the Lord worked with them, confirming the word with signs.

So it says in Mark 16, 20, the Lord worked with them, that is, with the preachers who are preaching the word, confirming their words through the accompanying signs. That's what Jesus did. That's what the apostles did.

They preached and there were signs that confirmed what they were saying. Those signs sometimes were healings. Sometimes there was something else.

Whatever, whatever was suited to the occasion to make the point that he wanted to make. But Jesus didn't just go around looking for sick people so that by the time he'd leave Galilee, everyone will be well. You know, Jesus could have done that if he wanted to.

In fact, Jesus could heal people from a distance. He didn't even have to be there. Remember the Syrophenician woman had a demon possessed daughter.

She didn't even bring her to Jesus. He just said, your daughter's well. And the woman went home and found she was well.

There was the nobleman and his servant. You know, his servant was sick and she said, your servant's going to live. The man went home and found he was well.

If Jesus just wanted to heal sickness, he could just announce all sick people be well and it would have happened. That apparently wasn't his mission. It's just the mission we wanted to have because we care more about our physical well-being than about spiritual things.

And the problem here is that these people came thronging Jesus so he couldn't even get into the city because all the people who wanted to be healed were so thronging him he

couldn't even go into the streets for two o'clock and therefore he couldn't even go in there and preach, which is what he was there to do. There's a preacher at the turn of the 20th century in Germany named Friedrich Christoph Blumhart. I'm sorry, Christoph Friedrich Blumhart.

He was the son of Johann Christoph Blumhart. The older Blumhart was the man who became well known almost unwillingly because of his famous exorcism of a notable demon possessed girl. And it was such a notable case that he became famous throughout Germany in the late 1800s.

And after the exorcism, God poured out a revival on the little German village where they were, which is Mötlingen in Germany, a little village. He's a Lutheran pastor. It was the 1800s, 1850s, I think is when it happened.

And after the exorcism, which lasted for two years because there were thousands of demons that came out of this girl, then there was a revival and people were getting saved, confessing their sins wholesale. And then there was this healing revival took place and Pastor Blumhart, who had no interest in doing such things, found people coming asking him to pray for their sickness. He'd pray for them and they get healed.

People came from all over Europe and the medical doctors of his town wrote to his denominational heads and said, tell Pastor Blumhart to stop praying for the sick. We have to make a living and no one is sick anymore. The doctors complained and they got him run out of the ministry.

So he left Mötlingen and started a little retreat center. And his son, Friedrich, Christoph Friedrich Blumhart, when the father was dying, he prayed for his son and the mantle of his father came on his son. And the second Blumhart, they usually call him Blumhart's father and son because they were so like each other.

He preached all over Europe and was extremely famous. Karl Barth and Dietrich Bonhoeffer and other famous German theologians were great admirers of him. But he had a powerful healing ministry like his dad did and people came for it.

And you know what? The time came when the younger Blumhart said, I'm not going to pray for the sick anymore. So these people just want to get healed. They don't care about the kingdom of God.

He wanted to preach the kingdom of God and he could see the people all they cared about was getting well. And he says, you know, I don't I don't mind these people getting well, but they're they're coming for the wrong reasons. They're not concerned about their souls.

And it looks like Jesus had the same concerns here. Don't go out and tell people about your healing because it's just going to make them come all for just for no reason but that

they want to be healed. And Jesus was trying to attract people who are looking for the kingdom of God, looking for God's rule to prevail in the world, not just to get the goodies, not just to get the benefits of it.

And, you know, it's funny because Jesus said about this, just the opposite of the modern church in many ways, because modern Christianity preaches the gospel in a way that's sort of like goodies only, you know, come and get it gospel. You know, if you come forward, you'll have eternal life. God will heal you.

God will prosper you. God will fix your marriage. God will do everything right for you.

And, you know, you certainly are cheating yourself if you don't come to God. Well, you know, some of those things are probably true about what God will do for you, but that's not the message that is simply trying to attract people who don't care about the kingdom of God and try to find something they do care about to try to lure them into the church. But, you know, if they don't care about the kingdom of God before they come to church, they often don't care after they get there either.

And so the church gets filled with people who don't care about the kingdom of God. They just care about tell me more about the goodies that God has for me. Jesus discouraged that.

He wanted people to come to him for the right reasons, and I think that's why he discouraged people from spreading the news about the miracles he did, because people wanted to see something sensational or wanted to get something out of him that was not necessarily related to what he was there to tell them about. Now, that's my explanation why I think Jesus often told people don't tell people about this. Although I don't think he meant it in an absolute sense.

Again, I think it's probably a hyperbole. Don't tell anyone this just means don't go blab this around. Of course, you can tell your wife.

How could you not? How could you not tell your children and the people that are in your neighborhood who otherwise would stay away from you because they think you're still a leper? After all, he was obviously told to go tell the priest. So don't tell anybody can't be absolute. In chapter two, it says, and again, he entered Capernaum after some days.

Now, he remember the last time he'd been there, he had cast a demon out of a man in the synagogue. He had healed Peter's mother-in-law of her fever. And that night he'd spent the whole night healing everyone in town.

He had tried to get off by himself in the morning to pray before a long time before day. But they found him and they wanted him to come back to Capernaum. He said, no, I'm going to go to other villages.

So he's been gone from Capernaum all this time. This leper got healed somewhere else. We don't know where, but it was not in Capernaum.

And Jesus withdrawal perhaps has hopefully caused some of the. Well, excitement about healing to die down, because now he's able to teach. He's sitting in a house, he's teaching and people are listening to him teach and says, and again, he entered Capernaum and some days it was heard that he was in the house.

Immediately, many gathered together so that there was no longer any room to receive them, not even near the door. And he preached the word to them. So we don't read that he was holding a healing ministry meeting this time, but he was preaching the gospel to them.

And they came to him bringing a paralytic who was carried by four men. Now, this is the only healing that we read of taking place in this particular gathering because it was a preaching meeting, not a healing meeting. But these men knew what Jesus could do.

And and they carried a paralyzed man for four men, one at each corner of his pallet. And when they could not come near him because of the crowd, they uncovered the roof where he was. And when they had broken through, they let down the bed on which the paralytic was lying.

Now, you might say, how do you break through a roof? Well, they had mud roofs. They didn't have a lot of rain there. They had baked brick roofs and sometimes they had to repair them on a regular basis because, you know, they could be dug through rather easily.

And I mean, they had some kind of thatch work that supported the adobe. But you could dig through it without much difficulty. I hope these guys repaired the roof afterwards.

You know, I mean, it's kind of not very kosher to destroy someone else's house and leave it the way you found it. But I'm going to assume they fixed it later on. But it's interesting when they lowered this man down from the roof and put him right in front of where Jesus was sitting in a crowd.

Jesus didn't get angry at them for breaking the roof. Now, whether Peter did, I don't know. It's Peter's house.

But Jesus was not ruffled by that. When he saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, son, your sins are forgiven you. Now, we don't know what sins this man may have committed.

Some people think his paralysis may have even been the result of some sin. Maybe he was engaged in some sin and was injured in the process and got, you know, a neck injury and was paralyzed. Or maybe it was even some other thing, some disease that has afflicted his spinal column or whatever.

His paralysis may or may not have been related to the sins that he had committed. But Jesus dealt with that matter first, because, again, Jesus is more concerned about eternal benefits to people than temporal benefits to people. And so he announced this man that his sins are forgiven.

And that was a controversial thing to say. Some of the scribes were sitting there. They were the religious teachers of the law.

And they were reasoning in their hearts, why does this man speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone? And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they reasoned thus within themselves, he said to them, why do you reason about these things in your hearts? Which is easier to say to the paralytic, your sins are forgiven you or to say, arise, take up your bed and walk. But that you may know that the son of man has power on earth to forgive sins, he said to the paralytic, I say to you, arise, take up your bed and go your way to your own house. And immediately he arose, took up his bed and went out in the presence of them all so that all were amazed and glorified God saying, we never saw anything like this.

Now, a number of points here, we see that when the men were lowering the man through the roof, they were willing to, oh, I guess, take the risk of incurring financial or even legal redress for damaging somebody else's roof. They actually, you know, it was probably a bit precarious being up there trying to lower the guy down with one hand while they're trying to keep, you know, from falling through the hole themselves and things like that. I mean, they were, this was not an easy thing for them to bring their friend to Jesus.

They had brought him, tried to bring him to the door, but there's no way to get through the door. They were not easily discouraged. They didn't go home and say, maybe another day.

They said, we're going to get him to Jesus because we know Jesus can fix it. We know Jesus can heal him. And their faith was demonstrated by their persistence.

And, you know, they took certain pains because they knew that it would be worth it if they could get him to Jesus. They knew for sure that he could be healed. And Jesus saw their faith.

Now, whether the man's faith, the sick man's faith was involved, we don't know. When it says he saw their faith, it could certainly mean all five of them. Though it's hard to know how he could see the man's faith because he wasn't doing anything.

He's paralyzed. You know, it was actually the four men who carried him whose faith was visible by their actions. The other man didn't have any actions.

So I don't know. I mean, Jesus could, of course, discern that the man had faith that he

did. But I don't know if that's what we're being told.

It may be that it was the faith of his friends that got him healed. If so, then that's instructive, too, because it would mean that it's not always the faith of the needy person that has to be engaged for that needy person to be healed or whatever else is needed, saved. But it was the faith of his friends and that our faith for our loved ones, our faith for other people's needs, people who themselves don't seem to have any faith.

Our faith may be sufficient as far as God's concerned to effect a miraculous intervention from God in their lives. But when he said, son, your sins are forgiven, you. He drew expected criticism.

He certainly knew the scribes would find that a controversial statement. Nobody is allowed to forgive other people's sins. Why? Because the offended party is God and nobody is God except God.

And only he can forgive sins. And that was the theological position the scribes were leaning on. They said, who can forgive sins but God? This man's blaspheming, acting like he's God.

Now, Jesus knew they were thinking that he knew it in his spirit. I don't know if that's like a revelation he got or if he was just sensitive enough to know that. Oh, I just said something to make those guys upset.

I know I know what they're thinking. I know what they're thinking and what I just said. And whatever way he knew, he spoke to them and said, why do you think that? In your heart, why do you reason in your heart that way? Now, he said, what is easier to say to the paralytic? Your sins are forgiven you or to say arise, take up your bed and walk.

Now, both statements are essentially equally easy to say. Jesus isn't saying which is easier to say, although that's what he actually does say. He doesn't mean is it easier to say one of those phrases or the other.

He means what is it easier to get away with saying? Is it easier to get away with saying your sins are forgiven? Something that no one looking on could possibly verify or falsify. I could just walk up to you and say your sins are forgiven, pretending to have authority to do that, which I don't have. But you wouldn't know if I had or not, because you can't tell by looking if your sins are forgiven or not.

There might be people who say, wow, Steve has the power to forgive sins. How do you know? Because he was out, he's forgiven everybody's sins in town. Well, just because someone says it doesn't mean they have the authority to do it.

And so it'd be easy to walk into your sins are forgiven, your sins are forgiven, whether they were or not, no one would know. So he says that's that's kind of the easy thing to

say since you can't be falsified, you can't be proved wrong. But something a little harder to say.

Is rise up, take up your bed and walk, because why is that harder? Because if it doesn't happen, you look like a fool. If you don't have the authority, it's obvious your authority can be easily falsified or verified. It becomes publicly known whether you're a fake or not.

It's easier for a charlatan to go around saying your sins are forgiven than go out and take up your bed and walk. And if they think he's a charlatan and not doesn't have the authority that he's claiming, then let's just see. He says, so that you may know that the Son of Man has the authority or that's what the word power means on earth to forgive sins.

Now, by the way, it's often said that by Jesus forgiving sins, he was demonstrating that he was God. Now, I believe that Jesus is God. I believe that the deed of Christ is a complicated doctrine because he's also a man.

He had human nature. He had human weaknesses and so forth. And he depended on his father for everything, just like we have to.

Nonetheless, God was incarnated in him. The word was made flesh in him. It's a mystery and I don't claim to know that, understand that mystery.

But I will say that Jesus, in saying your sins are forgiven, was not necessarily saying that he was God as much as I believe he was God. Jesus didn't go around declaring himself to be God. Or even declaring himself to be the Messiah.

He never made public declarations about that even. He was God and he was the Messiah, but he didn't go around broadcasting that. And when they said, who has power on earth to forgive sins but God? He didn't say, well, let me demonstrate to you that I'm God.

So that you might know that I am God and have power to forgive sins. I'll tell this man to get up. But he said, no, you might know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.

It sounds like he's basically saying I've been authorized by God to forgive sins. It's true, the average man can't go around announcing to people their sins are forgiven unless he has special authorization, unless he's in a special relationship with God, unless he's been unless he's God's word to mankind announcing God's forgiveness. Again, I'm not trying to take away from the fact that Jesus is God because I believe that he's God.

But I'm saying that sometimes people make a little more than he makes out of this particular feature. For example, people say if a person goes around forgiving people's

sins like that, they're either God or they're a madman or they're, you know, a charlatan, a deceiver. Well, there is a fourth option.

They might not even be God. They might be authorized by God to act on his behalf. Now, Jesus does not make the claim here that he is God.

And he never in his ministry makes that claim. Not overtly. That was claimed for him by inspired writers at a later date.

But in the Gospels, he doesn't. He does say that he has authority as the Son of Man. He has authority on earth to forgive sins.

And and thus, while he certainly is God, that's not exactly the claim he makes in this particular statement. See, Jesus made far more references to his humanity than to his deity. In fact, he doesn't say that you might know that the Son of God has authority on earth to forgive sins, but rather that you might know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.

And we probably will have to talk about that term Son of Man at some point in the series, because I don't think we have time right now to quit. But it's something to consider, because Jesus called himself the Son of Man lots and lots of times, like 70 times on record. It was the favorite term he used for himself.

Son of God, he used a few times, a handful or less. But Son of Man all the time. His emphasis was always about his role in as the Son of Man, whatever that meant.

But among other things, it meant a human being. He was a human being. He was God who had become a human being.

And in that role, he had authority on earth to forgive sins. And that's what he claims for himself. And he says, I'll prove that.

He said to the man who was paralyzed, I say to you, arise, take up your bed and go your way to your house. And immediately that happened. The man was no longer paralyzed and made a profound and proper impression on the crowd who admitted that they'd never seen anything like it before.

Now, here's another example of what I was saying. The miracles of Jesus were there to teach spiritual lessons. He says so directly here.

He could have healed the man directly and it would have been uncontroversial, by the way. Jesus healed other people that were uncontroversial. It only was controversial when he did it like on the Sabbath or something.

And this was not apparently the Sabbath. And so when he saw a paralyzed man, he could have just acted as he had done in so many cases. He said, OK, you're well, you're

well, be healed.

And then he would have walked out and would be marveling. But Jesus didn't just do it that way. He instead made it a controversial matter by making it a teaching moment.

A time to teach something about the kingdom of God, namely that Jesus has come to procure and announce that God forgives sins. And this, by the way, apart from what the Jews thought, they they believed he had to go offer a sacrifice in the temple to get his sin forgiven. But this man hadn't gone and offered his temple sacrifice.

He just received unilateral forgiveness. Jesus said, your sins are forgiven you. He knew that'd be controversial, but that's what Jesus came to do is to bring a controversial truth to light and to bring the movement that would be in conflict with the powers of darkness.

And the people who were sold to the powers of darkness, like the scribes and Pharisees, of course, they're in conflict with it. He expected that conflict. But he he didn't just heal the man because the man needed to be healed.

He healed the man as a sign that he, Jesus, has the right to forgive people's sins. Authority on earth has been given to forgive sins. And so I hope we begin to see that the miracles of Jesus were not just not not just just compassion for the poor.

He had that. He had compassion on the poor and the sick, of course. And we read of that.

But there are a lot of sick that didn't end up healing. And, you know, someone who had nothing but compassion for the sick, and that was all it was about, should have just gone around and healed everybody and left it, left no one sick. But there was something more to it.

He was the one who was coming to heal the moral condition of Israel, as Isaiah had said. And these healings were evidence that he was that healer. And the various healings illustrate different aspects of that truth.

So there we have that story as well. Two stories of healing, one of an unclean man and one of a paralyzed man. But both of them, I think, intended to be instructive of lessons about the kingdom of God and the power of the kingdom.

To see sins forgiven and to reverse the trend of uncleanness, to bring in a dynamic that was able to be in contact with uncleanness and overcome it rather than be overcome by it. And also to to announce the forgiveness of sins. So.