



Jesus Cleanses a Leper

Story Elements

- **Text:** Mark 1:40-45 (also Matt. 8:2-4 and Luke 5:12-16)
- **Setting:** circa AD 27 in Capernaum, Galilee
- **Characters:** God, Jesus, and an unnamed leper
- **Plot:** Jesus is approached by a leper who desires to be healed. Jesus cleanses the man of leprosy, and the fame of Christ spreads even more rapidly.
- **Key word(s):** “_____” – Leprosy was a dreaded disease that not only killed its victims slowly but cast the leper out of society. It was not just a disease that needed healing, it was condition that needed ceremonial cleansing – which is why the leper asked to be cleansed and not merely healed.
- **Climax:** **Mark 1:41** *And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and*

touched him... The first half of this verse mark the climax because Jesus it shows Jesus doing something as astounding as any miracle: he *willingly* touches a leprosy person. This shocking act would have astonished the crowd as much as the healing would have amazed them.

“If Thou Wilt”

1. **REVIEW:** While preaching in a Capernaum synagogue, Jesus had healed a man possessed of unclean spirit. After sunset, Jesus continued to preach and heal the people who gathered at the house where he was staying. Early the next morning, Jesus went into a solitary place and prayed for a long while before embarking on a preaching tour of Galilee with his disciples.
2. (v 40) During his journeys in Galilee Jesus is approached by a leprous man. To appreciate the scene, we need to understand the disease and the social stigma that came with it:
 - (a) Leprosy (also called Hansen’s disease) is a contagious bacterial infection that often proved fatal to its victims. It causes _____, which often leads to repeated (and untreated) injuries, resulting in loss of limbs. It can also cause skin lesions and deformities. John MacArthur notes, “While the OT term for leprosy includes other skin diseases...this man may have actually had true leprosy (Hansen’s Disease), or else his cure would not have created such a sensation.”¹
 - (b) Given the contagious nature and the gruesome deformities that often accompanied an infection, social stigma was severe and made the leper’s suffering all the worse. Consequently, lepers were often forced into _____ and seclusion.
 - (c) Additionally, those who should have been spiritual leaders to lepers were often the most notorious in their cruelty towards the leper. Edersheim explains:

“Rabbinism loved to trace disease to moral causes... [Rabbinical teachings] represent a reaction against the doctrine of original sin, **in the sense that it is not the Fall of man, but one’s actual transgression, to which disease and death are to be traced** according to the saying: ‘Not the serpent kills, but sin.’”² Edersheim goes on to note that one rabbi even boasted, “that he always threw stones at [lepers] to keep them far off.”³

APPLICATION → Jesus had become renown, not only for his healing power, but also for his compassion for the common and the needy – a virtue that certainly his behavior and his preaching conveyed, the proof of which is seen in how the leper approached Jesus. “He would have fled from a _____,”⁴ but he came to Jesus, kneeling and pleading.

¹ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005) 1200.

² Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1971) 494. Emphasis mine

³ *Ibid.*, 495.

⁴ *Ibid.*

3. The leper's statement, *if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean*, is not so much a request as it is a confession of faith in Christ's power to cleanse and a _____ of will to Christ's goodwill.

“I Will”

4. (v 41) Looking upon the leper, the Savior was *moved with compassion*.

APPLICATION → Matthew Henry reminds us that, “we have nothing in us to recommend us to his favour, but our *misery* makes us the objects of his _____.”⁵

- (a) *...put forth his hand, and touched him...* Jesus only needed to speak the word, yet he touched the leper – a gesture that powerfully demonstrated not only the compassion of Christ (no one else would have dared to touch the leper), but especially the _____ of Christ (Jesus was not made to be *unclean*, but he made to be *clean*).

APPLICATION → Pause to marvel that the One who could not be made unclean was willing to be made _____ *for us ...that we might be made the righteousness of God in him, 2 Cor. 5:21*. This is grace!

- (b) (vv 41-42) *I will; be thou clean*. Christ's word came with power, and the leper was immediately and totally cleansed.
5. (vv 43-44) Jesus charged the man to tell nobody about the miracle, but to immediately show himself to the priest and to offer what is commanded in the Law of Moses for the healing of a leper.
- (a) The secrecy was needed to keep Christ's fame from attracting uncontrollably large crowds (which is what happened, *cf v 45*).
- (b) The appearance before the priest was for two reasons:
- The Law of Moses required it (see Lev. 14), and Jesus fulfilled the law perfectly.
 - The healed leper offering his sacrifice would be a *testimony unto them* – that is, a testimony to the religious leadership in _____ that He who has the authority to cleans the temple of corruption also has the holiness to cleanse the leper of uncleanness.

APPLICATION → Spurgeon connects the leper's cleansing ceremony with baptism: “The man was clean and yet he must go to be _____ cleansed. After we have the thing signified by an ordinance, we are not, therefore, to forego the sign, but the rather to attend to it with care.”⁶

Answer Key: Key word(s): “clean” • 2. a) neuropathy; b) poverty; → Rabbi • 3. submission • 4. → mercy; → sin • 5. b) Jerusalem; → ceremonially

⁵ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary, VOL V, Matthew to John* (Iowa Falls: Riverside Book and Bible House, N.D.) 457.

⁶ Charles Spurgeon, *An Exposition of Matthew, the Gospel of the Kingdom* (Springfield: Particular Baptist Press, 2015) 48.