



Sermon-Based Study Guide
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Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church ♦ January 31, 2010

Sermon Title: Do Not Touch

Sermon Text: Mark 1:35-45

Related Texts: Leviticus 13:45-46; 2 Kings 5:1-15

“The Kingdom of God has arrived!” said Jesus as he launched his ministry in Galilee. Mark then begins to unveil the things Jesus said and did that reveal what that Kingdom of God in this world looks like. He teaches with an unprecedented clarity and directness – “authority” Mark calls it. Evil powers are threatened by Jesus’ teaching. A man influenced by an evil spirit reacts. Jesus drives the spirit out of the man. “A new teaching and with authority,” the crowds gasp. Jesus demonstrates the power of the Kingdom against disease and against evil powers. For Christians struggling under the oppressive power of Rome (Mark’s initial audience) such a demonstration of the Kingdom’s power is truly good news.

I. Start It – Connecting With One Another

Take a few moments to “check in” with one another. What three or four words might summarize your past week? How are doing right now? Take a moment to pray for any needs just shared and for God’s guidance as you study together.

II. Study the Text –Read the Gospel of Mark 1:35-45

- 1) Verse 34 ends with the crowds pressing in on Jesus in Capernaum. What effects might the crowd’s attention and demands have on Jesus? Do you think he was tempted to “revel in the spotlight?” How might such attention and demand steer him from his true purpose of making the Kingdom known?
- 2) Verses 35 through 39 find Jesus leaving the house secretly – “very early in the morning” can also be translated “in the middle of the night.” He goes to a solitary (or “lonely”) place to pray. What do you think he was praying about? Do you imagine him wrestling with 1) fame, 2) feeling overwhelmed, 3) needing to re-focus? Why or why not?
- 3) Verses 36 and 37 show the disciples’ eagerness to get Jesus back to the crowds. How does Jesus’ response in verse 38 indicate that he had re-focused on the priority of proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom?
- 4) Look at verses 40 through 42. A man with leprosy walks up to Jesus and begged for healing “If you are willing, you can make me clean.” What does this man know to be true about Jesus?
- 5) Now turn to 2 Kings 5:1-15. According to this passage, who actually heals Naaman – Elisha or God? If only God can heal what do you think the leper who approaches Jesus thinks about him and his power to heal?
- 6) Now take a quick look at Leviticus 13:45-46. How did the man with leprosy violate the Law of Moses? Look again at Mark 1:41. How did Jesus break that Law?

Note: People with skin diseases such as leprosy (Hansen's Disease) and other skin diseases were deemed to be unclean physically and ceremonially by the Law of Moses (Leviticus 13:45-46). Because of the physical uncleanness, such people were banished to life outside of cities (in lonely places) because leprosy was considered highly contagious and usually incurable. Lepers often inhabited city dumps or remote colonies where they eked out a meager living. By the time of Jesus' ministry, people with infectious skin diseases were required to wear bells around their necks. If someone approached them on the road they were required to call out, "Unclean! Unclean!" at the top of their voices so no one would make contact with them accidentally. Leprosy cut its victims off from members of their own family. They are isolated, ostracized, and living lonely often very solitary lives. Their disease also cut them off from the community of faith. Unclean people could not enter the temple or synagogue to worship or offer sacrifices. It is the epitome of alienation from the community of faith, friends, and family.

- 7) Jesus is moved with compassion (the Greek term means "to be moved deeply within one's inmost self"). How is compassion different from pity or mere sympathy? How does Jesus then respond to the man? Why do you think he reaches out to touch the man before speaking the cure?
- 8) Look at verses 43 through 45. The man is instructed to go to the priests (to fulfill the Law's regulations and to be pronounced ceremonially clean). In doing so the man would be a testimony to the priests. What would this testimony say to the priests about 1) the man and 2) about Jesus?
- 9) Instead, the man goes about telling what happened - "Jesus touched me and I was made clean." What two possible explanations are there for why Jesus could not then enter a town openly (but had to stay in "lonely places" like a leper would have to do)?
- 10) How does this passage show that the Kingdom of God - God's loving power that collides with the "fallen-ness" (the sin, disease, evil) of this world - has come, but it is not unfolding within the traditions and Laws of Judaism as might be expected?

III. Apply It - Reflect and Respond

Reflect: How would this passage help those Christians in Rome who were "outcasts" because of their faith in Jesus? Who are the "lepers" in our communities? What is your response to them?

Respond: How might you demonstrate the loving power of the Kingdom of God to such outcast, ostracized people? Would you be willing to "touch" the lives of those people even if it caused you to be labeled an outcast and be ostracized as well?

IV. Pray It - Responding in Prayer

Prayer Requests: How can your group pray for you?

Prayer for our Community and World: Please pray for Good Shepherd to be used by God to proclaim good news - in word and deed