

Sermon Title: Desperation Meets Compassion
Scripture Text: Mark 1:40-45

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 1-28-18

Come with me, if you would, please, to the last little paragraph in the Gospel of Mark. Lord willing, this morning we will look at verses 40-45 and complete this chapter. Now, I want you to get a sense of the scene that is described in our passage for today. You might think in terms of how Luke—the gospel writer Luke—summarized the whole segment of Jesus's ministry that was sort of the mid-point of it, the backbone of it, if you will. It's called "The Great Galilean Ministry," about 18 months that He focused almost everything He did in the northern region of Galilee. And in Luke 6:19, he throws in this little comment about what was happening there. He says, "And all the people were trying to touch Him, for power was coming from Him and healing them all." (NASB, and throughout, unless otherwise noted) It was quite a scene wherever Jesus went. Now, in the gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—you have only a sampling of the myriad healings that Jesus did (see Jn. 21:25). It was clearly in the thousands; we don't know how much. It was even said that He banished disease from Galilee during His ministry there.

But it's important to understand—not one of these healings was *ever* the main point. Keep that in mind. Jesus's purpose for His entire earthly ministry was what we saw Him say last time we got together. Remember, after the Sabbath day—He'd been to the synagogue on the Sabbath; He'd preached the gospel; He had cast out a demon from a demon-possessed man who was there in the synagogue; then He'd gone to Peter and Andrew's house; He'd healed Peter's mother-in-law. And then as soon as the sun went down the Sabbath was over and people could travel further and they could carry things, and they started bringing sick people to Jesus and there was this mob outside Peter's house—not a mob in a *bad* sense, but this huge group of people, and He was healing them all. He got up the next morning, early in the morning before anybody else, and He went off by Himself to pray. His disciples found Him and they told Him about huge crowds of people that were gathering around Peter's house again—actually, of course, because they had heard about all the healings from the day before. Now, Jesus said something that is completely contrary to our intuition, completely contrary to anybody who does evangelistic ministries these days—if they said, "Well, there's a huge crowd here that wants to see you," we'd run there. What did Jesus say? We saw this last time. Verse 38 of Mark 1—"He said to them, 'Let us go somewhere else to the towns nearby, so that I may preach there also; for that is what I came for.' "

Jesus came to preach—to preach what? To preach the gospel, to preach "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 4:17). And everything you'll find in Mark is directly related to his purpose for the book. He gave us the title of the book in what we call Verse 1, Mark 1:1—"The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." Everything here shows that He is the Son of God, He is the Christ, He is the Messiah, and it's about the gospel—the good news of salvation through Him. Now, Mark 1, this first chapter, concludes with the record of one more healing that Jesus did for the purpose of validating His preaching of the good news of salvation (Jn. 2:11; 3:2; 5:36; 10:25; Acts 2:22; 8:6; 14:3; Rom. 15:18-19).

Now I want to dive right in by having you notice how the passage begins, and I want to give you some background for this, and then we'll look at these specific six verses. Mark 1:40 says, "And a leper came to Jesus, beseeching Him and falling on his knees before Him, and saying, 'If You are willing, You can make me clean.' " A leper came to Jesus—out of all the others,

Sermon Title: Desperation Meets Compassion
Scripture Text: Mark 1:40-45

Speaker: Jim Harris
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Mark picked out this one because it is significant. Remember, I've told you that as you read about miracles that are recorded in Matthew and Mark and Luke, or even the few that John did, Luke being "the beloved physician" as Paul calls him (Col. 4:14) often gives more medical details about the healing and the situation of the healing. Luke 5:12 says that this man was "covered with leprosy," so he didn't just have a spot on the back of his hand. It says he was covered—it was apparently an advanced case of leprosy.

Now, what is leprosy? Well, leprosy gets a fair amount of ink devoted to it in the Old Testament (see Lev. 13:1-14:57; Num. 5:1-4; Deut. 24:8). The word itself comes from a Greek word that means "scale" or "scaly," which describes the outward appearance of a person with the disease; the skin gets disfigured. Now, we have to be honest and say it's not possible to, with absolute precision, nail down exactly what disease this man had, but we know that leprosy goes back to ancient Egypt, where it was called by that name, and they've even found the bacteria that caused leprosy in a mummy. So, don't mess with the mummy. We can only say that he was "covered" with it and he was desperate for relief. Now, the Hebrew word in the Old Testament that's translated "leprosy" is fairly broad—it could include many kinds of skin disease, as could that word "scaly." It could come from lots of different things, ranging from relatively mild and temporary to something life-threatening.

Now that said, that we can't be a hundred percent sure exactly what it is, it's pretty likely—at least it appears from the description in the text—that this man had the most serious of that range of diseases. It has been labelled in modern times "Hansen's Disease," because it was a doctor named Hansen who isolated it and identified the two bacteria that cause this condition. Now, in Bible times, they didn't have a blood test; they didn't have a way to culture bacteria; they didn't have any way to make a precise diagnosis. All that could be done was to observe the outward symptoms and treat the person accordingly. Now, since Hansen's Disease, and many other things that may well have fallen under that label "leprosy," are all contagious in one or more ways, the Old Testament Law included what amounted to a system of isolation or quarantine for keeping lepers from infecting others (Lev. 13:45-46; Num. 5:1-4).

Hansen's Disease is a long-term infection; there are two different bacteria that cause different kinds of this. Initially, infections are without symptoms, and they typically remain that way for 5 to 20 years, so if you caught leprosy, you didn't remember where you got it, unless you'd hugged a leper or something like that. Symptoms that develop include developing granular masses on the nerves, the respiratory tract, the skin, and the eyes; it's an ugly thing. As the disease attacks nerves, one of the phenomena that it can produce is a lack of ability to feel pain. That's why there is often the loss of parts of extremities due to repeated injuries and infections due to unnoticed wounds, and the infection can be ground in rather deeply into the tissues. Other phenomena are weakness and poor eyesight, common symptoms of leprosy. Leprosy is spread between people; even with modern technology, they're not *precise* about all the ways it can be spread, but it's thought to occur through a cough or contact with fluid from the nasal passages of the infected person. Leprosy occurs more commonly in groups of people that live in extreme poverty. You would expect that, since it is a bacterial disease, and poverty can go hand-in-hand with lack of sanitation.

Sermon Title: Desperation Meets Compassion
Scripture Text: Mark 1:40-45

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Now, in case you start itching while we're describing this passage, let me assure you—it's *highly unlikely* that you're going to contact leprosy. In 2015, there was about 200,000 known cases of it that year. I read online that, as of 2013, 14 countries contained 95 percent of the globally-reported leprosy cases. India, the greatest number of them, 59 percent; followed by Brazil, 14 percent; Indonesia, 8 percent; and the pockets with the highest prevalence are in Brazil, South Asia—especially India, Nepal, and Bhutan; some parts of Africa, especially Tanzania, Madagascar, Mozambique, and the western Pacific. So, you're not in the hotspot, okay? In the last 90 years, since the development of antibiotics, we have cures or treatments for all manner of skin diseases, including Hansen's Disease. There is a multi-drug approach—it's bacterial, so antibiotics will treat it, and they use a multi-drug approach, kind of an antibiotic cocktail, if you will, mixing things together. But, even though the leprosy, the Hansen's Disease, can be eradicated, those treatments can't restore the lost nerve function; they can't regenerate the tissue that has been disfigured; they can't regenerate tissue that has died; they can't give back the eyesight that has been lost.

God's provision for keeping leprosy from becoming epidemic was to isolate those with the disease—keep away from them. I mentioned that one of the places is Indonesia; the very far east island of Indonesia, half of it is Papua or West Papua, the other half is Papua New Guinea. I visited that island, and when I got there was welcomed by several hundred people. The missionaries said it will be a wonderful thing and they will really appreciate you if you'll shake hands when you get there. But, if you shake one person's hand, you've got to shake every hand that is extended to you, or it *won't* be such a wonderful thing. So, I started—I shook a hand, I shook a hand, and they lined up. And I kept shaking hands and shaking hands, and the missionary said, "And, oh, by the way—don't touch anything with that hand until you have been able to wash it very thoroughly because they have many skin diseases there," and I saw some pretty interesting-looking things.

So, it can be spread, and physical contact may be part of it, but also, as I said, from things like a sneeze, so, you have to take a public health approach. You have to isolate people who have this contagious condition, or it could become an epidemic. So, people with minor cases might be isolated short-term, and then some, as with Hansen's Disease, had to follow very strict rules for a long time. What kind of rules? Well, Leviticus Chapter 13, Verses 45-46 is the summary of the instructions: "As for the leper who has the infection, his clothes shall be torn"—in other words, he had to wear clothes that were tattered; that was a symbol—"and the hair of his head shall be uncovered, and he shall cover his mustache and cry, 'Unclean! Unclean!'—in other words, like a warning signal, he had to announce that one who was contagious and ceremonially unclean was on his way (see Lam. 4:15)—" He shall remain unclean all the days during which he has the infection; he is unclean. He shall live alone; his dwelling shall be outside the camp." So it was a *big deal* to have this disease. Now, this had to do with *ceremonial* uncleanness, which meant the person wasn't allowed to participate in the activities of the tabernacle or the temple worship. Somebody pointed out to me in their study bible, right near the page that we're studying in Mark, there is a layout of the temple and it actually includes a leper's chamber, so you can see, even if a leper *did* come to the temple, there was still a way to isolate the lepers from the general population.

Sermon Title: Desperation Meets Compassion
Scripture Text: Mark 1:40-45

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 1-28-18

The secondary issue was public health. Now, it's common to hear preaching that says that leprosy is intended by God to be a "type" of sin—not a *kind* of sin, but a "type": a God-intended picture of sin, because it causes separation from God's people and from acts of public worship, and it causes degeneration. Now, I'm willing to say that leprosy could be used as a fitting *illustration* of certain aspects of sin, but there is no warrant from Scripture itself to say that God made leprosy a "type" or that He intended it to be some kind of an illustration of something bigger. There's plenty in this text without having to "read in" some symbolism that isn't there.

Now, you may have heard of a collection of writings called the Talmud. It's a collection of rabbinical writings; it includes *voluminous* commentaries and opinions about the Mosaic Law, and, to be honest, some pretty fanciful interpretations that are read into the Law as well. But, out of their zeal to apply the details of the Law, the Talmud says that the closest a leper could come to someone without the disease was six feet, and they said on windy days the distance was extended to 150 feet. Well, that tells you that they figured it was carried in an airborne kind of a way. Now, even if the Talmud goes way beyond what Leviticus and Numbers say about leprosy, you can easily see that the exile of lepers—the social separation of lepers—made that disease particularly grievous, because not only was there *physical* suffering, but there was social isolation from everybody except other lepers; and that's why, even to this day in certain countries, you will find the existence of leper colonies, places where lepers can only live with lepers.

Alright, now that's plenty of background for our text. You're able to see here how a desperate and diseased man came to meet the compassionate Christ. That's what we're going to get at today, so I've called it "Desperation Meets Compassion." It's very straightforward; you can outline it this way: Verse 40 is the desperate man; Verse 41 is the compassionate Christ; Verse 42 is the miracle of healing; Verses 43 and 44 is the test of faith; and Verse 45 is the tragic failure, and you'll see why when we get there.

So we start with the desperate man. Again, Verse 40—"And a leper came to Jesus, beseeching Him and falling on his knees before Him, and saying, 'If You are willing, You can make me clean.' " Now, right away, you see how desperate this man was. It looks kind of innocuous—he "came to Jesus." But think about that! He was required to make sure his appearance was like a neon flashing sign warning people to stay away from him so he would be recognized as having leprosy: torn clothes, the uncovered head. He was required to cry out, wherever he was near people, "Unclean! Unclean!" So, here's Jesus—people *flocking* around Him—and a leper came to Him. Now, either this guy completely flouted the Law of God and he weaseled his way and sneaked through the crowd to get to Jesus, and then he would have shocked everybody, or, maybe he cried out, "Unclean! Unclean!" and the crowd parted and he was the only one that actually got alone, close to Jesus. Maybe they made room for him. Either way, it was a spectacle of this man, and it showed how desperately he wanted to get to Jesus. He didn't care if he risked making Jesus and others ceremonially unclean; if you worked your way through the crowds, *surely* you would have had physical contact with others. He believed, from what he had heard, that if *only* he could get to Jesus, his life could be transformed if he was healed.

Sermon Title: Desperation Meets Compassion
Scripture Text: Mark 1:40-45

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 1-28-18

So his actions were, socially, totally unacceptable. And, yeah, he broke the Law of God even to get there. But his *attitude* was very respectful. Mark says he came "beseeching Him"—he came humbly, he came along side to Jesus for help, literally, is what the word would mean. Mark notes that he was "falling on his knees." Matthew's version says that he "bowed down" (Matt. 8:1), and Luke 5:12 says that eventually "he fell on his face and implored Him, saying, 'Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.'" So it's from Luke that we get the detail that when he came, he even used the word "Lord." Now, it's doubtful he had a full understanding of what "Lord" means. He clearly hadn't read Romans because it hadn't been written yet. But he also clearly knew that Jesus was the One in authority; Jesus has the power and the authority to heal him. He understood—maybe had witnessed from afar off things that Jesus had done, but he understood that all it took for Jesus to heal him was for Jesus to be willing to heal him.

Now, you can imagine the reactions of the other people around, and there were plenty of them. Horror would have been one reaction. "How *dare* this unclean man enter this crowd?" Many probably recoiled, probably pulled back, covered their mouths and their noses lest they breathe in the disease. They likely got away at least the distance that the rabbis specified, so I can picture at least a six-foot radius circle around Jesus and this guy. Probably the general reaction was most likely stunned silence. Surely people wanted to see what Jesus was going to do. It was a desperate act for this man to come boldly to Jesus in public. But, it was impossible to get to Him in private.

So there's the desperate man. Now he meets the compassionate Christ, Verse 41. Now, you know, Jesus perfectly kept the Law of God. Jesus would have had every right to be outraged by what the leper did. He broke the Law. He risked public health. He did something that *surely* everybody else around found offensive. Understand that the people watching were first-century Jews of Galilee—that means that all of their religious teaching came through the synagogues, and the control of the synagogues was totally under the Pharisees. The Pharisees taught a very subtle and totally poisonous false religion, a religion of works-righteousness (see Luke 18:9, 11-12). They made moralistic judgments all the time, they were passing judgments; they're who Jesus had in mind when He said, "Do not judge so that you will not be judged" (Matt. 7:1).

So there was likely a collective gasp when this guy reached Jesus, and then there was probably an aftershock gasp when Jesus did what He did. Look at it in Verse 41—"Moved with compassion"—now, that's a great phrase; it means "it touched Him in the inward part." Jesus *felt* it. The word that's translated "compassion" here is literally a Greek word for "guts"; He was moved in His gut, if you will; that's when you *really* feel something in the extremity of human emotion, it gets you in the gut. Well, Jesus was "moved with compassion" for him, and He "stretched out His hand and touched him, and said to him, 'I am willing; be cleansed.'" So that's a great characteristic of Jesus—"moved with compassion." He was never without compassion, but it's one thing to say you have compassion, but what Jesus did was an utterly shocking demonstration of compassion. He reached out His hand and "touched him." Astounding! You don't *touch* people who are unclean! You certainly don't ever intentionally *touch a leper*—at least not in that culture. But He touched him.

Sermon Title: Desperation Meets Compassion
Scripture Text: Mark 1:40-45

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 1-28-18

Now, think about that. Remember Luke's description—he was full of leprosy, it was all over him. He was possibly near death; we don't know that for sure, but it was a very serious disease, and it's a slow-moving disease, so ever since the day that this guy was diagnosed with leprosy, no one would have ever touched him. Think about that, and then think about what it would mean that, after years of that kind of isolation from human contact, you're touched by the compassionate hand of God the Son. Wow! But what was different about the situation of Jesus touching this guy compared to everyday social interaction is that Jesus could not be infected by the leper (see Heb. 7:26). The leper could not render Jesus ceremonially unclean. Just the opposite—the power and authority and holiness of Jesus could make the unclean man clean, could make the diseased man well.

And notice also, how significant that He touched him. Jesus could have healed the man simply by speaking to him. You know, Jesus could do miracles by remote control—He did it from miles away, sometimes. If the guy *had* been yelling "Unclean, unclean," Jesus could have said to everybody around Him, "Hold it, stop, wait a minute... You—over there—the leper: be clean!" He could have done that, but He let him get right up to Him, and He touched him. He came to earth to save sinners (1 Tim. 1:15); all of His miracles were to validate His message (Jn. 5:36; 10:25), and He touches the man to illustrate His—connecting His divine power with what this man needs. How simple. How profound. "I am willing; be cleansed."

Well, there's the desperate man; there's the compassionate Christ; now, Verse 42, the miracle of healing. There is no sermon point in the world simpler than this one. Mark 1:42—"Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed." Now, if you want, I can exegete that. The word "immediately" is Mark's favorite word: "immediately, right then." "The leprosy left"—that means the leprosy was gone. "And he was cleansed"—that means he was now perfect, okay? Got it? Comes pretty easy when you get verses like that. Now, Lord willing, next week I want to take us on a little side-trip about healing in general so that you can have a frame of reference that'll tie all these things together and help you see the significance of this and understand some things about Scripture and some things about Christ and some things about healing.

But just understand, this man was immediately *no longer contagious*. Not only that, he was restored to perfect health. Now, normally, if a person did recover from leprosy, they could stop having the scaly stuff, but even if it was in modern day and they were treated with antibiotics, they can cure the disease but it wouldn't restore anything that had been disfigured. But this guy immediately looked and acted normal; in Mark's words, "the leprosy left him." No marks! Nothing left behind. The disfigurement is gone. The weakness is gone. The numbness is gone. I don't know—maybe for good measure, Jesus healed his tattered clothes! I don't know...might have. No recovery period, no rehabilitation. The best that modern medicine can do can't do that for a leper.

Well, now the story takes a really interesting turn. I want you to see this. Immediately—Mark's favorite word—there comes a test of faith for this guy. Verses 43 and 44—"And He sternly warned him and immediately sent him away, and He said to him, 'See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses

Sermon Title: Desperation Meets Compassion
Scripture Text: Mark 1:40-45

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 1-28-18

commanded, as a testimony to them.' " So Jesus warned him and sent him away. That wasn't a suggestion, that wasn't a good idea, that wasn't a gentle request; that was a *command* from God the Son. "Don't go talking about this, okay?" He said, "Tell no one." That doesn't mean that Jesus wanted to keep the miracle a secret. That's not the point. There were already who-knows-how-many people around who had obviously witnessed this thing that had happened; they were going to talk about it, but Jesus often said things like that because He was never trying to draw crowds for the purpose of interest in healings—that was *never* what He was all about. He didn't want to feed the frenzy of interest in miracles.

But in this case, there's another vital element besides "don't talk about it." You can go read, this afternoon, if you want to, if you're having too good of a day and you want to read something depressing, you can go read Leviticus Chapter 14. It's 57 verses of details of procedures for the priests to deal with lepers who were recovering from the disease, and it was how to restore them to normal social life in Israel and how to deal with their possessions and their dwellings, which really could have bacterial cooties, so, a lot of instruction about doing that. And the priests function, in one aspect of what they did, as public health officials, if you will. So this was a straightforward, logical, righteous test of this man's faith. Remember when he came to Jesus, Luke says he called Him "Lord" (Lk. 5:12). If you call Jesus Lord, that means you are saying, "You are the Master, You are the Sovereign, You are the One in control. If You are the Lord, I am the servant, and what the Lord says, the servant does." If you believe Him, if you believe that He is Lord, you show it by your *obedience* to His Word (see Matt. 7:21; Jn. 8:31; Rev. 14:12).

Now, three points jump out to me here. First—there is another evidence here, kind of implied by Verses 43 and 44, that the healing was complete, because what was Jesus asking this guy to do? If he was full of leprosy, it was probably very hard for him to get around, but the leprosy had "left him." Jesus was asking this guy to travel about 75 miles each way to go to Jerusalem to go to the temple and show himself to the priest. Think about that; you had to be physically fit to make a journey like that. Think about it again; he probably would have had to take someone with him to bear witness to the fact that he had had leprosy, because he didn't look like it! It had left him. That was no small deal.

A second thing to observe here is that Jesus was rigorous about fulfilling the Law. He always was. He never broke any law in any way (see Jn. 8:29, 46; cf. Matt. 5:17), and this was no exception. He did not tell this guy, "You know, Jerusalem's a long way away and I'm God the Son, so, I'm just going to write you a note and you can have a pass on going to the priest." No, the Law says, if you have leprosy and you are healed, you go through this procedure to be restored. He was not excusing the man from obeying the Law, the He, too, was living out His own perfect righteousness, was Jesus (see Gal. 4:4).

A third thing to notice here is that there was another motive in sending this man to the temple. If He *did*, that would be a great "testimony to them" (vs. 44). Now, what's the antecedent of the pronoun "them"? "The priests"—"I want you to go down there as a *powerful* example of the proof that I am who I say I am." Pretty cool. What an exciting scene! What a spectacular healing! Now, if only the story ended there.

Sermon Title: Desperation Meets Compassion
Scripture Text: Mark 1:40-45

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 1-28-18

But, alas, this story has a tremendously disappointing finish. We've met the desperate man, the compassionate Christ, we've seen the miracle of healing, we've heard the test of faith—it was very straightforward. It wasn't dramatic, but it was very significant. Now, Number 5, the tragic failure. Verse 45—"But he went out and began to proclaim it freely"—what did Jesus say? Don't tell anyone. He "began to proclaim it freely and to spread the news around, to such an extent that Jesus could no longer publicly enter a city, but stayed out in unpopulated areas; and they were coming to Him from everywhere." Sometimes in your Bible, the little words are really important. A little three-letter word here begins this verse: "but." It's the word of contrast.

Sometimes, "but" is extremely encouraging. Right away, I always think of Ephesians Chapter 2; it says, "You were dead in your trespasses and sins...But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ" (vs. 1, 4-5). You were dead, *but* Christ can make you alive. In our text, the word "but" is profoundly disappointing. He told the man to head immediately to Jerusalem to give a powerful testimony to the priests, *but*—instead, the guy ran off into the countryside of Galilee, instead of heading south. Jesus told him keep quiet, take care of your own business with the priests first and foremost, and the guy said, "No, I'm going to blab about it." Jesus told him to go to the priests, *but* he didn't want to do it.

You see, Jesus—He's already told us—His intention was to keep preaching in the villages and the synagogues in Galilee (vss. 38-39). The synagogues aren't out in the woods, the synagogues are in the villages and in the cities. He wanted to send a powerful message down south to the priests, and He wanted to get on to all the other towns and synagogues, but the disobedience of this one man meant that Jesus had to modify His plans. At least for a while, He had to stay away from the cities. We don't know how long, but, He had intended to go to the people, but logistically it became impossible, and this guy made it worse. But notice, wherever He went, the people were "were coming to Him from everywhere." You can't thwart God's purpose, but by your disobedience you can make it more inconvenient. That's what this guy did.

The man's body was healed, but it appears that his soul was still lost. It's a tragic thing to cry out to Jesus from your distress and call Him Lord and rush to Him and bow before Him and fall on your face before Him, and then as soon as He relieves a little bit of your discomfort, you run off and disobey. Sad. As I said in our outline for today, this man's body was healed, but we don't know about his soul. The best I can do for this guy, is—we don't know. Now, I like to think that after he let his exuberance get the better of him and blabbed all over Galilee, I'd like to think that he repented and went down to Jerusalem. I like to think that he had the opportunity someday to meet Jesus in person again and appropriately give thanks. I like to think that, but the Bible doesn't say that it happened.

There's something really ironic about this incident, too. Before this incident, for years before this day, this leper had been an outcast, never able to be in a normal social context with regular people. Jesus, on the other hand, was the center of attention in the synagogues and in the villages. But after Jesus showed compassion to this desperate man and healed him, now

Sermon Title: Desperation Meets Compassion
Scripture Text: Mark 1:40-45

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 1-28-18

the former leper is running around making *himself* the center of attention, and Jesus has to go out to the unpopulated areas! He traded places with this leper, and kept doing the will of His Father.

Now, friends, please don't leave this in that part of your mind that has a picture of whatever that scene might have been like. Make it personal. Are you willing to come to Jesus and address Him as "Lord"? I hope so. If you do, He will forgive your sins, He will grant you eternal life (see Rom. 10:9); but He's also expecting that you not only *call* Him Lord, but you *treat Him as Lord*, and that means that you do what He says (see Matt. 7:21-27; 28:20). You say, "Well, how do I know what God wants me to do?" Well, learn the first 66 books of the Bible and then pray. It's all there! Every single thing you will ever need in any situation that has to do with living in this world and living a godly life—it's in the Word of God (see 2 Tim. 3:16-17; cf. 2 Pet. 1:3). And He's the Lord, so listen to His Word (Jn. 13:20; 15:20; 2 Pet. 3:2).

What is that compassionate Savior saying today? Well, this is in His Word. If you've never called Jesus "Lord" before, today is *the very best day you will ever have* to do that (2 Cor. 6:2). Matthew Chapter 11—this is also during that time in Galilee—Jesus says in a very public setting: "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden" (vs. 28). Now, that's describing the people who were under the teaching of the Pharisees—"Do this" and "Do that" and "Do this" and "do that" and "Follow this"—they had all these rules and regulations, all these works of self-righteousness; it was a *heavy burden*, it was *wearying* to be under that kind of moralistic gobbledygook (see Matt. 23:4; cf. Acts 15:10). He says, "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." Pharisees said, "You want to know God? Work harder." Jesus says, "You want to know God? Come to Me—I'll give you rest." Then He says, "Take My yoke upon you"—the *yoke*? That's what the oxen get in to pull! Yeah—that's because He's Lord! "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (vs. 29).

You know, if you're struggling, thinking, "You know, I just can't seem to be good enough," let me put you out of your misery: *you can't* (see Rom. 3:23; Gal. 3:10; Jas. 2:10). You can't possibly come *close* to being good enough for God to accept you—you need a righteousness you are totally incapable of generating. You need His righteousness (see Phil. 3:9). Is your soul at rest by faith in Jesus Christ? And does it show by how you live (1 Jn. 2:3-5)? Other words of Jesus: Luke 6:46—"Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?" He calls you to Himself, and then He wants to use you for His glory (Ps. 50:15). I called this "Desperation Meets Compassion"—you know what else you could call that? Every single evangelistic opportunity in the world: you have a *desperate* sinner who needs to know the compassion of God, which is only in Christ Jesus (Jn. 14:6).

And so, Heavenly Father, thank You for meeting us in our desperation and our sinfulness. Thank You for Your amazing compassion poured out upon us in Christ. Use us as You would design to, that we might speak Your truth in love to desperate souls all around us. And we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.