

Mark 1:35-45

“Unclean to Clean”

All Saint’s Day

November 4, 2018

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church

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Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God, our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen! Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

[*Unclean*]

A man was running down the road shouting, “Unclean, unclean.”

And as he passed the man walking a donkey, he shouted, “Unclean, unclean.”

And as he passed the woman carrying her infant, he shouted, “Unclean, unclean.”

And as he passed the old men sitting under a shade tree, he shouted, “Unclean, unclean.”

He shouted because it was ordered, and he was supposed to keep a distance.

The trumpet blasts and the voice cries out, “Hear ye, hear ye, in all the land.”

“The citizen who has leprosy or the white sickness

may not come into a town or consort with other Persians.”

That is what the great Greek historian Herodotus tells us!

And he lived 500 years before Jesus.

Even 1500 years before Jesus, things weren’t any different!

Pharaoh said, “Let the people go.” And they went.

They went across the Red Sea.

And they camped at Mt. Sinai.

And they heard the voice of God.

And they received the moral law.

According to the Law, a leper had to isolate himself from society.

had to live outside the camp.

had to cry out, “Unclean! Unclean!”

Furthermore,

***“The leprous person who has the disease shall wear torn clothes***

***and let the hair of his head hang loose,***

***and he shall cover his upper lip***

***and cry out, ‘Unclean, unclean.’***

***He shall remain unclean as long as he has the disease.***

***He is unclean. He shall live alone.”***

(Leviticus 13:45-46)

According to *The Jewish Study Bible*:

“[Leprosy, was] seen as a gradual erosion of the skin,

[and] was thought to culminate... in the ultimate disintegration of the flesh,

which was taken as a manifestation of the gradual escape of life.

The person afflicted with it was looked upon as potentially dead,  
death itself having begun to consume his body.  
This 'leakage' of life ... creates impurity."

In 21<sup>st</sup> century terms, someone who had leprosy was the walking dead,  
Someone who had leprosy was a zombie.

[*Scandal!*]

So in Jesus' day... They had to shout, "Unclean, unclean!"

That is what makes Mark 1 so scandalous!

***"Jesus is proclaiming in the synagogues – into the whole of Galilee  
– and expelling the demons. And a leper comes to him..."*** (Mark 1:39-40a)

What a scandal!

Where was the shouting, "Unclean, unclean!"?

Where was the distance that should be kept?

The leper just walked ... right up to Jesus

and pleaded and knelt and said, ***"If you desire it, you can make me clean."***

The unclean wants to be clean!

So he comes to the one who can't be anything but clean,  
the sinless Son of God.

***"And Jesus upon having deep, heartfelt compassion,  
he extended his hand and touched and says to him,  
'I do desire it – be cleansed.  
And immediately his leprosy departed from him,  
and he was cleansed.'" (Mark 1:41-42)***

[*Difference*]

Now this account is found in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark and Luke.

They all tell of the Leper coming and not shouting.

They all tell of the immediate healing.

They all tell of the command of silence.

But only Mark tells of the rebuking.

***"And immediately his leprosy departed from him, he was cleansed.  
And upon rebuking him with a harrumph,  
immediately he threw him out.'" (Mark 1:42-43)***

Only Mark mentions the harrumph.

Now harrumph can best be described

as the snorting of war horses,

as the groaning on the gridiron,

as the grunting needed to lift a piano over the threshold.

So why His perturbed reaction?

MAYBE Jesus was angry ...  
at the leper breaking the Law,  
at the interruption of His preaching,  
at the doubt of Jesus' will to heal.

MAYBE Jesus was angry ...  
at the horrible nature of the disease,  
at Satan's corruption of God's creation,  
at, .....well, we just don't know.

What we know is that it is scandalous for the Leper to come to Jesus.

And in return, the scandal deepens as Jesus' reaction isn't what we would expect!  
And we are left asking, "Why?"

BUT Just like we cannot answer why – why things happen in this world.  
Here we cannot answer "Why,"  
but change one letter and you can answer, "Who."

#### [*Clean to Unclean*]

Jesus *WHO* is clean becomes unclean, and the leper *WHO* is unclean becomes clean.

The clean becomes unclean,.....and the unclean becomes clean.

***"For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin,  
so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."*** (2 Corinthians 5:21)

Again Jesus who is clean becomes unclean.

Taking all of our sin into Himself.

Taking all the corruption of creation into Himself.

AND Silently He stood before the Pharisees and Pilate and the people.

Diligently He stood before the cracks of the cattail's whip,  
the cackles of the crowd,  
the crushing weight of the cross.

Upon Him was the sin of the whole world.

Upon Him was the wrath of God that we deserve.

Jesus who was clean became unclean, and we are the leper who becomes clean.

And ultimately this is the greatest scandal!

#### [*Unclean to Clean*]

For without Jesus,

we are the ones who need to shout, "Unclean, unclean."

And as we board the public bus,

we need to shout, "Unclean, unclean."

And as we go into the grocery store,

we need to shout, "Unclean, unclean."

And as we walk by the kids playing on the playground,

we need to shout, "Unclean, unclean."

We shout because we have fallen short of the glory of God.

We shout because we have broken the Law.

We shout because we have not done what we should do,  
and because we have done what we shouldn't have done.

We are unclean. Yes, we are unclean, but in Christ, we become clean.

The first time we believed,  
when faith entered our hearts,  
when faith received God's grace,  
Jesus extends His hand and touches us  
and we who were unclean became clean.

There at the baptismal font,  
when the water was poured,  
when the sign of the cross was placed upon our foreheads  
and upon our hearts to mark us as one redeemed by Christ the crucified,  
Jesus extends His hand and touches us  
and we who were unclean are clean.

There at the communion rail,  
when the very body and blood of Christ is placed into our hands,  
when we cry out with a certain voice, "Amen,"  
Jesus extends His hand and touches us  
and we who were unclean are clean.

And on that day when the trumpet blasts and the voice cries out,  
***"Well done, good and faithful servant!"*** (Matthew 25:23)

We will know the depth of our cleanliness.

We who are now clean, yet know unclean ways,  
will be changed forever. Forever clean!

### [***Conclusion***]

Like the leper, we who are unclean become clean in Christ.

After Jesus finishes with us, we are, in fact, 'clean' in every way  
– not only healed, but also purified  
and now properly in communion both with God and with man.

That makes you a saint! Happy All Saints' Day! Amen!

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REJOICE always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances;  
for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. AMEN! (1 Thess. 5:16–18)

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