

Mark 1v 40-45 "If you want to, you can cure me"

In today's Gospel we read of Jesus's encounter with a leper. Leprosy in the Bible is not the same disease which is still active in parts of the world today. It was any skin disease manifesting green or yellow spots that were held to be contagious. In the first Lesson from Leviticus we learn that sufferer must be taken to a priest for inspection who would declare him to be unclean, and wear ragged clothes and be shunned by society. He must live outside the camp until free of the disease. He must also keep his upper lip covered, does that strike a chord today?

There are several stories of Jesus healing lepers but in this instance the dynamics change a bit. Jesus is sought out by the leper, who is aware that he, himself is untouchable and humbly asks Jesus to heal him knowing that He has the power to do so, and he would allow Him to. Only these two are present and the compassionate Jesus reaches out to touch the untouchable and heals him. There was never any doubt that Jesus didn't want to heal him.

According to the Law of Moses again, Jesus tells the man to go and show himself to a priest, but also asks him not to tell anyone how the healing came about. Jesus has compassion on the sick but he doesn't seek them out to heal them, they need to come to Him. So Jesus the Healer withdraws Himself from society in case the crowds become too great. The reason for this is probably that Jesus' primary mission was to teach the Gospel of God and why He wanted the man's discretion.

It was compulsory for the man to show himself to the priest and make the required offerings as a fitting for healing and to fulfil the obligations of the Law which concerned hygiene and ceremonial Deut 28 v4. Many times during His ministry Jesus proclaims that He hasn't come to destroy the Law of Moses but to fulfil it.

However the delighted former leper, disobeys Jesus and tells everyone who he meets what has happened and they flock to Jesus compelling Him to withdraw from society as people were coming to seek signs, wonders, miracles and healing.

But these signs and wonders that Jesus performed throughout His ministry were intended to confirm the Gospel message that He was preaching. They were part of His ministry not the main event.

The Kingdom of God that Jesus proclaimed is not one that was to rule over us but rather gives us a place and offers us reconciliation to restore us to God. The Kingdom of God is open to all who will come humbly before Him and say Lord, "if you want to make me clean"

As we approach Lent we think of repentance. There is no sin too shameful to lay at God's feet in repentance and humbly say "If you will make me clean" and the resounding reply will be "I will, be clean"

Today in the midst of this pandemic we all need to show compassion and respect for each other and their feelings and to do our bit to ensure we will all emerge a bit more eligible for God's Kingdom.

Anne Davis