

Jesus' Secret

"Follow Me as Savior" Series, October 26 & 27, 2024 | Mark 1:40-45

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Why would Jesus do that?

Last week, we read that Jesus got away from the crowds.

In Capernaum, Jesus healed Simon Peter's mother-in-law of an illness.

That drew a crowd of people looking to see a miracle or for Jesus to heal her.

Jesus did heal many. He cast out many demons, but Jesus told each one to be silent and not speak openly about who He was. That's a surprising note that keeps showing up.

Very early in the morning, Jesus rose and went out to the desolate places to pray.

Simon and some of the others came to find Him. They wanted Jesus to come back into town to keep teaching, healing, and working miracles. Jesus had drawn a crowd, and the disciples were convinced that this was the start of a movement that might become a revolution that would kick out the Romans and install Jesus as the Warrior Messiah King of Israel who would restore the nation and conquer the world.

Jesus said no. Flatly. That's not why He came. Instead, it was time to go to other towns, to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, and to keep confronting evil.

Why would Jesus do that?

This week, we read that Jesus is telling a healed man to keep the secret.

Jesus healed a man with leprosy then told the man to leave immediately so that the crowd wouldn't notice. Jesus added that the man should tell no one other than a priest.

Jesus didn't want people to hear what He had done. Why would Jesus do that?

We have to get used to Jesus surprising us.

Jesus doesn't always do what we expect.

He is Lord and in charge and doesn't need our permission or our approval.

We have to get used to Jesus surprising us.

Still, why would Jesus do that?

Why would Jesus avoid the crowds?

Why would Jesus tell demons to be silent when He casts them out?

And why would Jesus tell a leper to keep quiet when Jesus healed him?

It's as if Jesus is keeping His identity as Savior and Son of God secret. Why?

There is a profound reason, and it matters deeply to us. Let's find out why.

A leper shows us what faith looks like.

We meet the leper and see what faith looks like in Mark 1:40:

And a leper came to him, imploring him, and kneeling said to him, "If you will, you can make me clean."

To be a leper was a horrible experience.

True leprosy is a terrible condition that can lead to lesions, nerve damage, disfigurement, paralysis in places, and the loss of digits. True leprosy is awful.

But in the ancient world, the term "leprosy" covered a host of skin problems including psoriasis, ringworm, boils, and just plain itching.

Anyone with leprosy was considered "unclean." That means they were not able to worship God with other people. In fact, they were required to leave camp or leave town and dwell alone.

People with leprosy were required to dress in rags that identified them. To come in contact with them, even to pass under a tree they had stood under would make another person unclean. So, they were required to announce their presence by declaring, "Unclean!"

This leper came in the right posture before Jesus.

First, just understand that coming to Jesus broke all the rules. He came right up to Jesus without announcing himself, "unclean!"

He did that because he was desperate. He had lost everything. He needed help. Something.

So, he came and knelt down before Jesus. Kneeling is the thing a slave does before a master, it's the thing subjects do before a king, it's the thing a person does before a god. This man knelt down before Jesus.

And he called out to Jesus. He implored Jesus.

He said, "I know. If you are willing, you are able. You CAN make me clean." Will you?

It's the opposite of what I saw at a farm stand this fall.

I was at a farm stand to buy apples and pumpkins.

Okay, it was a kind of idyllic location. There was a small apple orchard out back. There were goats and alpacas to pet. It was a nice farm stand.

But I was surprised to find so many families there to take photos and make social media posts.

And as I was trying to shop, there was a blogger taking movies and narrating the scene.

Outside, there was another social media influencer there with a film crew.

Too many people were posing. They were saying, "Look at this perfect scene! Look at this perfect life!" Of course, that's what too, too much social media is like.

On social media we portray ourselves as living our best life now.

That's not how the leper came to Jesus. He was desperate. He was reaching out for help. He knelt before Jesus. He acknowledged that he couldn't do this himself, but that Jesus could.

What is your posture before Jesus?

Are you posing before Jesus? Or are you kneeling before Jesus?

There is a wrong way and a right way to come before Jesus.

Jesus shows us what God looks like.

Jesus shows us God's character and nature in Mark 1:41-42:

Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand and touched him and said to him, "I will; be clean." And immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean.

Jesus showed compassion, or anger, or both.

The New Testament was originally written in Greek, and there are multiple manuscripts still in existence today that were written down in the first few centuries after the originals.

The beginning of Mark 1:41 represents a rare case in the New Testament where there are two traditions among the manuscripts and that we can't tell which was original and which wasn't.

There is one manuscript tradition that says in Mark 1:41 that Jesus was moved with anger. There is another that says that Jesus was moved with pity or compassion.

How do you make this call? Scholars are conflicted. Which was it? Both make sense.

We know that compassion is at the heart of God. We've read that since the beginning of the Bible. And we see it repeatedly in Jesus. Jesus is moved with pity and compassion for His people. Was Jesus moved with compassion here?

And we get glimpses of the fact that God gets angry. Jesus gets angry. Sin makes God angry, and sin makes Jesus angry. Was Jesus moved with anger here?

Anger makes sense. Jesus was looking at a man ravaged by the consequences of sin. That could make Jesus angry to see someone suffer. And that man lost everything and was ostracized by society rather than being loved and served and helped. That could make Jesus angry. That SHOULD make Jesus angry.

Compassion makes sense. Jesus could easily have felt pity for the man.

Perhaps it's both! Both give us a deep look into the heart of God. Sin and its consequences make God—make Jesus—angry. When His people suffer from the ravages of sin, it makes God—it makes Jesus—compassionate.

The puzzle here is the answer. We are looking deeply into the heart of God. He is angry and wrathful with sin, AND He is compassionate toward His people who suffer.

Jesus touched the leper.

Think about that. To touch a leper is to become unclean. Jesus touched the leper.

That's the nature of the Incarnation, though. Jesus—the Son of God and God the Son—took on human flesh (became one of us) that He might touch us.

And the leprosy should have made Jesus unclean.

But the leper touched Jesus, and Jesus made the leper clean.

Notice that Jesus didn't just heal the leper. He didn't just make the leprosy go away.

Jesus cleansed the leper. That's so much more than healing.

The leper was unclean, and Jesus touched him. Jesus took the leper's uncleanness and gave the leper His cleanness, His righteousness, His holiness and made the leper whole. And clean.

Isn't that beautiful? That's what Jesus does. That's who Jesus is!

Mark doesn't give us the famous golden arches.

The golden arches today symbolize McDonald's. McDonald's has had a rough go lately.

But the golden arches are part of our cultural history.

The first golden arches weren't connected in the letter "M" as a corporate logo.

Instead, the founders simply wanted something to attract attention. It was all about motorists.

McDonald's founders theorized that giant lit golden arches could be seen from a distance, and that they would get motorists thinking about their food. They were right. The golden arches drew attention. They said, "food here" and called customers.¹

Can you start to see Jesus?

Mark doesn't give us golden arches pointing us to Jesus and saying, "Hey, look at this!"

Mark is much subtler. He doesn't put up a shiny sign and TELL us what we're supposed to see about Jesus; he just SHOWS us Jesus. And that's what Mark is doing here.

What do YOU see when you look at Jesus? Mark doesn't do all the work for you; he expects YOU to do some of the work to see and understand Jesus.

Why would Jesus want to keep any of this secret?

Jesus told the leper to keep what had happened secret in Mark 1:43-44:

And Jesus sternly charged him and sent him away at once, and said to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone, but go ...

Why?

The crowds were not ready.

The crowds wanted to see a show; they saw something entertaining and wanted more.

The crowds wanted a miracle-worker who would fix their problems. He would heal their diseases, cast out their demons, fill their bellies, and tell them what to think and do.

The crowds wanted their best life now.

The crowds were not ready.

The disciples were not ready either.

The disciples still thought Jesus should want to draw a crowd.

The disciples wanted Jesus to work the crowd, build the crowd, and turn the crowd into a movement that would become a revolution.

The disciples will repeatedly disappoint Jesus and us as we watch them throughout Mark.

Their failure helps us to learn, so I guess it's a good thing.

But the fact that Mark records their failures should help us to have more and more faith in the truthfulness of the Bible. The Bible tells us the truth. The Bible tells us the things we want to know and the things we don't want to know. The Bible tells us about the good days and the bad days. That's what

¹ <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/the-golden-arches-of-mcmodernism-17494328/>

truth is like, and the fact that the Bible tells us the truth always should give us more and more faith in the Bible.

The disciples were not ready for what the leper would tell and show them.

Sometimes we're really not ready for something.

When I was around five years old, one night my family was staying up to watch a movie.

It was a suspenseful movie with car chases and guns and bad guys. It was a late movie too.

My parents sent me to bed because it was past my bedtime and the movie wasn't right for me.

I protested. I thought I was very ready for both.

But they insisted that I go to bed. So, I did. For a while.

Then I snuck out of bed and laid in the hallway near the room where they were watching the movie and watched the movie from the dark.

And there were car chases and bad guys and shootouts, and I was freaked out.

I went to bed at the end of the movie, and I could not sleep for hours.

It turns out that I was not ready for a suspense-filled movie at five years old!

And Jesus was right about the disciples; they weren't ready. Neither were the crowds.

How do we know that we're ready to come to Jesus?

It seems like we're ready to come to Jesus when we're ready to let Jesus be Jesus.

When we want to come to Jesus on our own terms, we're not ready.

When we want to come to Jesus with a list of demands and expectations, we're not ready.

There are right and wrong reasons to come to Jesus.

We're ready to come to Jesus when we're ready to let Jesus be Jesus.

Jesus calls us to come to Him the right way for the right reasons.

Jesus is not a divine vending machine.

You know the drill with a vending machine. You walk up to the vending machine. You put your money in, hit the button, and out comes what you want.

If you don't get what you want, you gripe, and you may even shake the vending machine.

Why? Because you've got an implied contract with the vending machine. You give the vending machine what it wants, and the vending machine gives you what you want.

Sometimes we think of God like that.

We go to God with a list of wants. We want God to give us a spouse, we want God to give us a happy family, we want God to give us a good job, we want God to give us a big house, and we want God to heal the people we love. We want God to give us our best life. NOW!

We want God to be like a vending machine.

Jesus doesn't give us everything we want.

Jesus doesn't always give us the spouse, the family, the job, and the big house.

Jesus doesn't always heal the people we want healed the way we want when we want.

Jesus doesn't always give us our best life now.

Jesus gives us exactly what we need.

In His life, death, and resurrection, Jesus cleanses us from sin.

He offers us forgiveness, reconciliation with God, adoption as children of God, new life, filling with God the Holy Spirit, hope that is concrete, resurrection, and eternal life.

It may not be what we want in the moment, but it's exactly what we need.

THAT's the right reason to come to Jesus.

Jesus doesn't answer all of our questions.

Jesus doesn't fulfill all of our curiosity about God, divinity, creation, and eternity.

Jesus doesn't tell us the "when" and the "how" about the future.

Jesus doesn't even show up when we wonder, "Is all of this real? Are you sure? I'd love to see and touch." Jesus doesn't show up in those moments in the flesh to work a miracle that tells us beyond a shadow of a doubt that everything we think is true.

Jesus doesn't answer all of our questions.

Jesus expects us to have faith.

Jesus expects us to listen to God the Holy Spirit convicting us of sin and calling us to Him.

Jesus expects us to believe Him; that He is Who He says He is.

Jesus expects us to trust Him; there is always a sense of risk when we do that.

Jesus expects us to believe IN Him; that means obeying Him sometimes even before we understand.

For the leper it meant breaking every social norm and expectation, it meant coming before Jesus, kneeling before his King and God, and saying, "I know you can do it."

That's what faith looks like, and Jesus expects us to have faith.

THAT's the right way to come to Jesus.

Jesus calls you to come to Him the right way for the right reasons today.