

As we heard last week, Jesus started a preaching and healing tour of communities near Peter's home. This passage is the beginning of that tour. What happens has something to say to people of faith and scouts as they seek to be faithful to their principles.

Mark 1:40-45

40 A leper came to him begging him, and kneeling he said to him, "If you choose, you can make me clean." 41 Moved with pity, Jesus stretched out his hand and **touched him**, and said to him, "I do choose. Be made clean!" 42 Immediately, the leprosy left him, and he was made clean. 43 After sternly warning him, he sent him away at once, 44 saying to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, as a testimony to them." 45 But he went out and began to proclaim it freely and to spread the word, so that Jesus could no longer go into a town openly, but stayed out in the country; and people came to him from every quarter.

A person with leprosy comes to Jesus, bows, and asks for healing. It is a strange kind of request for a person with leprosy because they were forbidden by their religion to approach people but were supposed to keep their distance. The person says to Jesus, "If you choose, you can make me clean."

While leprosy was not what is known today as Hansen's disease, it was any number of skin ailments that, according to that culture, made one unclean. These folks were excluded from society and had to live alone or with other people similarly afflicted and warn people who approached by shouting, "Unclean, unclean!" They were excluded from their society and communities and were to be avoided.

Many of us know the pain of being excluded. When I was in sixth grade, it was clear that I was not one of the popular kids. One way you could tell was at the Friday night movie; we went to the Heights theatre every Friday night. The popular kids sat together, and it was clear if you didn't belong, you didn't sit there on their row.

It remained that way all the way into eighth grade when one morning before jr. high, I was riding my motorcycle a Honda fifty and came across Larry, who was out riding his Honda one fifty. We talked for a minute, and he said, "I'm having a party tonight, why don't you come?" "Wow!" I thought he didn't know I didn't belong.

Larry was one of the popular kids, and he invited me to his party. When I got to the party, I was greeted by one of the kids, who was shocked to see me there and asked what I was doing there. I replied **I was invited** with a bit of bravado.

I will admit that being included was a good feeling.

Up to that moment, and even in that moment, I knew what it felt like to be excluded. While that was as serious as anything to me, it was nothing compared to the exclusion of people with leprosy from their community, although at that time, I would have said it was.

You may know how painful it can be if you have been excluded.

So, this hurting, excluded, skin-diseased person comes to Jesus and says, “If you choose, you can heal me, end my exclusion, and restore me to my people.”

So, this person with leprosy coming to Jesus is already breaking the rules by not keeping his distance. But Jesus doesn’t send him away.

Now, the printed text says, “Jesus was moved by pity,” but a better word from the best historical documentation says “moved with anger.” Both words let us see two aspects of Jesus’ response. He had compassion for the man and healed him, as we noted, by touching him. That simple act was unthinkable at the time. He was also angry that people would be excluded from the community.

Jesus risked being made unclean himself by contact with him; he reached out and touched him and healed him.

So, Jesus heals him and sets the stage for him to be restored to his family and friends. He belongs again.

After healing him, Jesus wanted him to do two things. The first was to follow the religious rule of their people. Jewish folks were required to show themselves to the priest, whose responsibility it was to declare that they were clean, for it was the priest who would declare them healed and able to return to their family and community. He was told to do that before anything else so that people wouldn’t think Jesus was bypassing the religious system and was not a faithful Jew. This would attract the wrong kind of attention.

And the second, “don’t tell anyone.” Jesus wanted to continue his journey of teaching and healing and knew that once people heard, he would be swamped with demands for healing, and there would be no time for anything else.

We know some folks who can keep anything but a secret, and that was this man, which is understandable. One of the surest ways to spread news and gossip is to say “don’t tell anyone.”

The healed man did neither. He was so overcome with joy because of his restoration and healing that he ran and told everyone he could what had been done for him by Jesus. The response was immediate and overwhelming, and Jesus had to move away from the villages and stay out in the wilderness. It was all because the man jumping for joy with his healing and restoration begins to tell everyone despite Jesus' request. The man’s action ruined Jesus’ plans, and he had to leave the villages he wanted to visit with God’s healing message.

I think he knew the likely outcome and that this would happen, or at least he had a feeling it would. So why would Jesus heal this person, knowing what the likely outcome would be and knowing it would disrupt his mission and plans?

He did it because showing God’s love was his guiding principle, **always** not just when it suited his plans. Love required him to sacrifice his plans for the needs of another.

That has something to do with scouting the law and the oath

A Scout is:

TRUSTWORTHY. Tell the truth and keep promises. People can depend on you.

LOYAL. Show that you care about your family, friends, Scout leaders, school, and country.

HELPFUL. Volunteer to help others without expecting a reward.

FRIENDLY. Be a friend to everyone, even people who are very different from you.

COURTEOUS. Be polite to everyone and always use good manners.

KIND. Treat others as you want to be treated. Never harm or kill any living thing without good reason.

OBEDIENT. Follow the rules of your family, school, and pack. Obey the laws of your community and country.

CHEERFUL. Look for the bright side of life. Cheerfully do tasks that come your way. Try to help others be happy.

THRIFTY. Work to pay your own way. Try not to be wasteful. Use time, food, supplies, and natural resources wisely.

BRAVE. Face difficult situations even when you feel afraid. Do what you think is right despite what others might be doing or saying.

CLEAN. Keep your body and mind fit. Help keep your home and community clean.

REVERENT. Be reverent toward God. Be faithful in your religious duties. Respect the beliefs of others.

And we heard:

On my honor, I will do my best

To do my duty to God and my country and to obey the Scout Law.

To help other people at all times;

To keep myself physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight.

The scouts know these things by heart, and many of us have heard them many times before.

The other day, I read about social media, and it said that Facebook is for older folks. If you want to reach younger people, YouTube and TikTok are the ways. I still don't get it, but to try to learn how to reach more people, so I tried TikTok. Not knowing what I was doing, I posted a picture. I think I was supposed to post a video, not a photo. It was a picture of my dog Gus, and I gave it a musical background of Rock Around the Clock by Bill Haley and the Comets, which I have heard many times in my youth and on swing videos on YouTube. My granddaughter, who is 13, heard about it and laughed at me doing TikTok. I am not really doing it because I don't know how. But I did see a video about pitties that I loved.

It starts with "We Are Pitties." Now, pitties are pit bulls and pit bull mixes. That video begins with a pit bull saying, "We're pitties," and it is filled with several cute clips and sayings like, "We have only one brain cell. No matter how heavy we are, we still weigh ten pounds and can fit on your lap. There is no such thing as personal space. The amount of toys we need doesn't exist. You'll give us a treat, and we will forget we ate it two seconds later. All the blankets in the house belong to us, and we will make you fall in love with us." All these things counter the notion that pit bulls and mixes are mean and dangerous. The pit bulls are saying, "This is who we are: gentle, sweet, loving and funny dogs. This is who we are."

Like pitties, we are scouts and people of faith; that's who we are, and one of the most important things you can know about us is that we will live up to our high calling even when it disrupts our best-laid plans. **We know it is easy to be faithful to our**

principles when it is convenient, but we also know that when it is a difficult, disruptive inconvenience, we must also live up to our principles. It's who we are. We are scouts, and we are faithful; it's who we are. It's who we are when times are easy and when they are difficult.

That is something we can all be proud of.