

The Power of Prayer, Touch, and Words

Mark 1:40-45 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

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.”** ⁴¹ **Moved** with compassion, Jesus stretched out His hand and **touched** him, and ***said to him**, “I am willing; be cleansed.” ⁴² **Immediately** the leprosy left him and **he was cleansed**. ⁴³ And He sternly warned him and immediately sent him away, ⁴⁴ 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 commanded, as a testimony to them.” ⁴⁵ But he went out and 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.

Introduction

This morning, we are joining Jesus our Lord on a road trip. As we follow Him along, we see a certain leper approaching Jesus and begging on his knees for healing. We are shocked (or even offended) with such a daring and unconventional move from the leper—‘the unclean’—coming ‘that’ close to ‘the clean’ folks like us (it reminds me of social distancing during Covid). “Stop!” we cry out in our hearts, “You broke the rule of keeping a safe distance from us!” Our empathy went out the window. In our hearts, we already have judged and condemned the man for his unacceptable behavior. Let’s watch how Jesus reacts to this unsolicited situation.

Content

The Power of Prayer:

v. 40. The leper approaches Jesus, pleading, kneeling, and saying, “If You are willing, You can make me clean.” Let’s check out his prayer. Very succinct, isn’t it? To the point. Short and sweet! I am telling you this is the **proper way of asking anything from** the Lord. Make it simple. Don’t make your prayer 10 minutes long! Some people love to pray in three stages: *Introduction, content, and conclusion*. Don’t babble when you pray, Jesus commands (Matthew 6:7). Just *kneel and pray to the point*. That will do it.

Do you notice here that **before the leper asked for healing, he wanted it first**? Likewise, before we ask anything from God, we ourselves must want it first. Otherwise, we are not going to be happy about it when we get it. Let’s say, God makes something happen to me when I don’t want it. Would I, then, not only not appreciate it, but also call it the violation of God’s law—*free will*? God forces no one to accept anything against their wish or desire. Let me repeat: who will receive God’s deliverance and healing? Only those who

desire, ask, and believe (expecting that it will happen---Matthew 21:22). If any one of these three elements is missing in prayer, deliverance won't happen. E.g., Once Jesus came into His hometown, Nazareth: ²*When the Sabbath came, He began to teach in the synagogue; and the many listeners were astonished, saying, "Where did this man get these things, and what is this wisdom given to Him, and such miracles as these performed by His hands?"* ³*Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? Are not His sisters here with us?"* And they took offense at Him. ⁴*Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and among his own relatives and in his own household."* ⁵*And He **could do no miracle** there except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them.* ⁶*And He **wondered at their unbelief*** (Mark 6:2-6). If we don't believe, we won't get miracles from Jesus.

v. 41. Jesus, **moved with compassion**, stretched out His hand, touched the leper saying: *I am willing. Be cleansed.* The leper's plea surely moved the heart of Jesus. The original meaning of 'moved with compassion' is 'bowels were moved.' In the Bible, the 'bowels' refer to the innermost seat of emotions. E.g., The English expressions: 'a gut feeling' or 'guts.' Moved with compassion, Jesus healed the man. He still does today. He cares for the afflicted with compassion and delivers them from their troubles.

The Power of Touch:

Imagine someone at church starts coughing often and loud enough that you secretly hope that the person goes home. Remember we are still standing right next to Jesus and the leper. We want to stay away from the leper as far as possible, because we are afraid of catching this terrible disease. Yet, Jesus, unlike us, not only didn't mind talking to the leper, but also *touched* him. Stretching out His hand, He touched the man. *Intentionally. Lovingly. Compassionately.* His action speaks the volume, doesn't it? Even though the Bible doesn't specify where Jesus touched the leper, I believe He touched either the man's hand or eyes---the most visible places where leprosy attacks. E.g., Jesus touched the *tongue* of the dumb man (Mark 7:33), and the *eyes* of the blind (Matthew 20:34).

Touch has a special power. Jesus' touch imparted the man the healings, both physical and emotional. Jesus' touch transmitted the compassion from Him to the man. God's love and acceptance flowed through the heart of this outcast and healed the wounds deep inside of the man. I bet, at that very moment of Jesus' touching, the leper's eyes welled up. *Thank you, Jesus, for your touch. I needed it. Thank you.*

The Power of the Spoken Words:

v. 42. (After Jesus said, be cleansed), **immediately** the leprosy left him, and **he was cleansed.**

What do we see here? Jesus' spoken words had power to cure the man. Words spoken; Things happen. There's power in spoken words. E.g., In the beginning, God created the entire universe and everything in it with His spoken words: God **said**, "Let there be light and **there was light**" (Genesis 1:3). Then God **said**, "Let the waters below the heavens be gathered into one place, and let the dry land appear"; and **it was so** (Genesis 1:9). The same God has bestowed upon us the same power of the words that we speak. It is worth paying attention to

The Spiritual Law of Spoken Words: *The Lord will do to us as exactly as we have said in His hearing.* We ought to be careful of what we say with our mouths. Here's one example from the Bible. After the Exodus, the Israelites were ready to enter the Promised Land. Before they did, though, they sent out twelve men to spy out the land. After 40 days, the spies came back and gave the congregation the report.

What was the report? Numbers 13:27-33.

²⁷ Thus they... said, "We went in to the land where you sent us; and it certainly does flow with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. ²⁸ Nevertheless, the people who live in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified and very large;...

³⁰ Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses and said, "We should by all means go up and take possession of it, for we will surely overcome it." ³¹ But the men who had gone up with him said, "We are not able to go up against the people, for they are too strong for us." ³² So they gave out to the sons of Israel a bad report of the land which they had spied out, saying, "The land through which we have gone, in spying it out, is a land that devours its inhabitants; and all the people whom we saw in it are men of great size.... and we became like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight."

How did the congregation react to the report? Numbers 14:1-3.

Then all the congregation lifted up their voices and cried, and the people wept that night. ² All the sons of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron; and the whole congregation said to them, "Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness! ³ Why is the LORD bringing us into this land, to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become plunder; would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?"

What did the Lord say to the people of Israel? Numbers 14:26-30.

²⁶ The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, ²⁷ "How long shall I bear with this evil congregation who are grumbling against Me? I have heard the complaints of the sons of Israel, which they are making against Me. ²⁸ Say to them, 'As I live,' says the LORD, '**just as you have spoken in My hearing, so I will surely do to you;** ²⁹ your corpses will fall in this wilderness,...

³⁰ Surely you shall not come into the land in which I swore to settle you, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun.

Repeat: What did the congregation say in God's hearing? Numbers 14:2.

"Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness!"

Repeat: What did Caleb say? Numbers 13:30.

"We should by all means go up and take possession of it, for we will surely overcome it."

Both the Israelites and Caleb got from the LORD as exactly as they had spoken in His hearing. The Israelites perished in the wilderness and Caleb entered the Promised Land.

Remember: the words we speak make things happen *in us, out of us, and around us*. The words we have prescribed, either positive or negative, affect everyone who hears them including ourselves. We live with the consequences thereof, too. The leper spoke: *If you are willing, you can make me clean. His words were spoken. His life changed forever.*

The lesson? Speak with conviction that your words have power. Be careful of what you say. Don't speak out anything negative or destructive, or you may end up living in the environment that your own words have created: *I am miserable. I am sad. I am depressed. Nobody loves me. My life sucks. Nothing's working. It's not going to work.* Of course, it won't, because you have spoken so.

Whatever you say, it will happen to you as exactly as you have spoken. This is where the power of praise and thanks comes in. Say: *I am thankful. The Lord is good to me and He's awesome. He will heal me. He will see me through. He will help me and rescue me from my troubles. He loves me. I am His child. By myself I can do nothing, but I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.* It is more than positive thinking. It is God's law on the spoken words.

Conclusion

Remember the power of prayer: *Lord, if you are willing, You can make me clean.*
Remember the power of touch. *Reach out and touch other's lives as Jesus did to the outcast.*
Remember the power of words. The Lord will surely do to you *'just as you have spoken in His hearing.'* Let us pray.