

Life Change: **A Life in Need of Healing** (Week 1)

Mark 1:40-45

Can you change when change matters the most? What if it was a matter of life or death? Could you change then?

A wife says to her husband, "If you don't change, I'm leaving."

A doctor says to his patient, "If you don't change, you're going to die."

A Warden says to an inmate being released, "If you don't change, you're going to be back in here soon."

I recently read a crazy stat taken from the medical field: **one out of ten people can change, even in a crisis.**¹ **In a recent study** of patients who have under gone major heart surgeries found that **two years after surgery**, 90% of them have not changed their lifestyle, **and soon found themselves** in the same **health crisis** as before.

When it comes to change happening in your life, the odds are stacked against you, but the good news is that change is possible... And what we're going to see tonight and for the next several weeks is that change happens when you live out this 3 step process:

1. **A NEW HOPE:** Establish an authentic relationship that inspires and sustains hope in your life
2. **A NEW WAY OF THINKING:** As a result of that relationship, you have a new way of thinking
3. **A NEW WAY OF LIVING:** As a result of your new way of thinking, you have a new way of living

Tonight, we're kicking off this series I'm calling, "Life Change" and this series is going to be a journey through the book of Mark. We're going to be introduced to several people... with unique stories and backgrounds: from a leper outcast to a blind beggar... and we'll discover how our lives and situations mirror theirs in a lot of ways.

Mark 1:40-45

⁴⁰ **A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, "If you are willing, you can make me clean."** ⁴¹ **Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!"** ⁴² **Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cured.**

Did you how that passage began?

⁴⁰ **A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, “If you are willing, you can make me clean.”**

This guy was **DESPERATE**:

When was the last time you were desperate? When you're desperate, it changes everything right?

***Lunch at Lupe's**—someone dared one of our Student Pastor's to eat this red pepper and because Youth Pastors are just grown up children, he took the dare. His face turned every shade of red and we had removed every drink from the table. Finally, he ran to another table and took the entire pitcher of water and began to chug it... he was desperate.

But his level of desperation was much greater than a pepper burning his mouth, this guy had a legitimate NEED that brought him to Jesus.

- His **NEED** brought him to Jesus

He was a leper. Dr. Luke tells us in his account that this man was “full of leprosy” which would be like an equivalent of a cancer patient today, identifying them as being “stage 4.”

Leprosy was a terrible disease because it not only attacked your body, but it made it where you were legally forbidden to have any contact with others.

Listen to Leviticus 13:45-46:

“The person with such an infectious disease must wear torn clothes, let his hair be unkempt, cover the lower part of his face and cry out, ‘Unclean! Unclean!’ As long as he has the infection he remains unclean. He must live alone; he must live outside the camp.”

So the law was clear; if you had leprosy and found yourself near other people, you had to scream, “Unclean... Unclean!” and then run away from them.

This guy was desperate... and his need brought him to Jesus. But that wasn't the only thing that brought him to Jesus; his **HOPE** brought him to Jesus as well.

You know as well as I do that it takes more than a need to seek change in your life. You have to have hope. Hope is something that allows you to move towards change... it's required for action.

This guy said in verse 40: **“If you are willing, you can make me clean.”**

His situation would have been considered hopeless right? There were no physicians, no treatments, no medicine or medical teams... but he had hope.

For some reason, there was no doubt in his mind that Jesus had the power to heal his disease. He said, "If you are willing..." not "If you are able." He believed that Jesus could heal him... He had HOPE.

His NEED brought him to Jesus... His HOPE brought him to Jesus... but that wasn't all; His **FAITH** brought him to Jesus as well.

Some people would look at that and say, "How do you know he had faith? How do you know it wasn't just hope... why do you think it was faith?"

Listen to Hebrews 11:6:

⁶ And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

This guy might have had the faith of a mustard seed, but just a little faith goes a long way with God.

This man, full of leprosy, was DESPERATE, and it was his NEED, his HOPE and his FAITH that brought him to Jesus.

[He was DESPERATE]

- He was **CLEANSED**

⁴¹ Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" ⁴² Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cured.

I love that phrase that says that Jesus was 'moved with compassion.' When you look at the original translation of that phrase it says, "to be inwardly disturbed with compassion."

What that tells me is that Compassion is more than concern, but it's LOVE in ACTION. Jesus demonstrated love in action in verse 41 when He said, "I am willing... be cleansed."

What would it be like to be a leper? Think about it... an outcast, someone who was shunned and not even considered human to most people. If you had leprosy, the majority of your body was an open wound and you would be seen as disgusting to the people around you.

Nobody would go near you, much less touch you... and then Jesus, being moved with compassion, cleanses you... and TOUCHES you. **⁴² Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cured.** He was cleansed.

[You may not have leprosy, but you may need to be cleansed...]

There are things in our lives that we know need to change: Sins that haunt us and continue to pop up in our lives. And you know what? We know they're wrong. We know we need to change. And our tendency is to TRY to CHANGE OURSELVES.

[Gossip, Pride, Greed, Worry, Sex, Cursing, Destructive Relationships, Drugs/Alcohol, Lust, Pornography]

And we say we're going to change... and we try to change... and sometimes we do change; for a little while, but then it happens again...

You cannot change your life by yourself!

Leprosy, in the Bible was a picture of sin. Just as leprosy separated the leper from society, sin separates a sinner from God.

A person wasn't a leper because he had horrible ulcers and sores on their body. Their ulcers and sores were the result of the disease that they had within them.

Just as leprosy began on the inside and worked its way to the outside where it could be detected ... the sin in our heart works its way to the outside where it can be detected as well.

The same is true for us today. You're not a sinner because you sin; you sin because you are a sinner.

And just as there was no cure for leprosy except by the power of God ... there is no cure for sin except by the power of God. You cannot change yourself!

And the question wasn't **COULD Jesus cleanse him** .. the question was **WOULD Jesus cleanse him**. And so it is with us today. The question is not ***"is Jesus ABLE to cleanse me?"*** ... the question is ***"is Jesus WILLING to cleanse me?"***

And His answer to that man with leprosy is the same answer to every one of us today: ***"I am willing; be cleansed."***

Now did you notice He didn't say, ***"I am willing; be healed?"*** In fact ... the leper didn't seek healing .. he sought cleansing. ***"If you are willing, You can make me clean."***

Remember what we read back in Leviticus 13 a few minutes ago? Those with leprosy were considered unclean. And remember that leprosy was an emblem of sin. So when it came to the removal of leprosy ... like sin: it was never said to be cured or healed, but always cleansed.

*The One who was able to cleanse his sickness is able to cleanse your sin.

Isaiah 1.18, “Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord, though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow, though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”

1 John 1.9, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to (not cure us or heal us, but to) cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

And you may hear that tonight and say, “Okay, I get that, but can Jesus really change me? Listen, not only is he ABLE... He’s WILLING! **“I am willing... be cleansed.”**

You see, Christ is the ultimate agent of change and He, more than anything, wants to see us DESPERATE for Him and Him alone.

For the Leper, it was his NEED, his HOPE and his FAITH that brought him to Jesus. For us, he desires the same.
