

Our Compassionate Christ

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[0 : 0 0] Well if you could, with the Lord's help and for a short while this morning if we could turn back to that portion of scripture that we read in the Gospel according to Mark and chapter 1.

Mark chapter 1 and we're going to read again at verse 39. Mark 1 and verse 39. We were told, and he, that is Jesus, he went throughout all Galilee preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons. And a leper came to him imploring him and kneeling sent to him. If you will you can make me clean. Moved with compassion 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. And Jesus sternly charged him and sent him away at once and 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 for a proof to them. But he went out and began to talk freely about it and to spread the news so that Jesus could no longer openly enter a town but was out in desolate places and people were coming to him from every quarter.

Mark chapter 1 and verse 39. Life shouldn't feel normal right now. Life shouldn't feel normal right now.

That was the message from the Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon this past week. Life shouldn't feel normal right now. And for many of us it doesn't. Life doesn't feel normal.

Life doesn't feel the same. Life as we know it has completely changed. And in the space of only a few short weeks the landscape of our nation has dramatically and decisively shifted to the point that life doesn't feel normal right now at all. Because you know it's not normal for us to live in isolation. It's not normal for us to have our nation in lockdown. It's not normal for us to have church closed on the Lord's Day. It's not normal for us to have our routine so rapidly and so radically different. It's not normal for us to see the world in chaos and confusion. And it certainly isn't normal for us to receive a daily press release from our Prime Minister. Life doesn't feel normal right now. And because so much has changed in such a short space of time from what was our busy life with all our work and school and hobbies to everything is now it's now closed and everything's shutting down and grinding to a halt. And you know all these sudden changes they make us nervous.

[2 : 5 4] They create within us fear. They create alarm. They bring about worry of what the future could hold for any of us. Because as the days go by well we're being encouraged and in some cases we're being enforced to to self-isolate to increase social distancing to be realistic about the risks of catching or even spreading the coronavirus. And of course we're already living in fear because all that we've heard about the coronavirus spreading and affecting other nations in our world.

And we're well aware of the fact that as the virus spreads the death toll rises. And as we see with our NHS it's already on our knees. There's already anxiety. There's fear. There's worry.

There's panic as to what this virus could do and the impact it could have upon our homes and our families and our communities. You know my friend it's not for good reading is it? It's not for good reading. But you know as we hit rock bottom as a nation and as our backs are now against the wall and all our resources are reaching their limit. Life as we know it is being turned upside down.

And the question we need to ask ourselves is well to whom else can we go? Who else can we turn to? Who else can we look to for our help in this time of trouble? Who else can we turn to but to Jesus?

Because you know what our chaos, our crisis and even our confusion what it all ought to reveal to us is that no one else can speak into our situations and circumstances like Jesus can.

[4 : 38] No one else has anything of substance to say apart from Jesus. No one else is able to bring comfort and consolation when we feel lost and at our lowest but this Jesus. And you know that's what I want us to rediscover this morning as we come to this passage in Mark's Gospel. Because it's here that we see and witness this leper having an encounter with Jesus Christ. I want us to see that there are some similarities to our situation which we can throw out from this passage. But I want us to see three things from this passage. I want us to see a contagious condition, a compassionate Christ and a confessing Christian. A contagious condition, a compassionate Christ and a confessing Christian. So first of all a contagious condition. We see that in verse 39 we're told that Jesus went through a doll galley preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons and a leper came to him imploring him and kneeling said to him, if you will you can make me clean. Now Mark chapter 1 it sets this scene and the trajectory for the rest of the Gospel. Because Mark tells us from the outset what he's writing and he tells us who he's writing about. Because he says as we read earlier in verse 1 of chapter 1 he says the beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God. And with that

Mark informs us that his message is good news. He has a Gospel message for us and it's a good news message because it's all about Jesus Christ the Son of God. But you know what Mark makes wants to make absolutely clear is that his message is not simply that the Gospel is about Jesus Christ.

No Mark wants to tell us that the Gospel is Jesus Christ. Because as you know my friend the Gospel isn't a set of rules to follow. The Gospel isn't a denomination to believe in. The Gospel isn't a creed to recite. The Gospel isn't a prayer to repeat. No the Gospel is a Persian. The Gospel is a Persian to love and look to and lean upon. The Gospel is Jesus Christ. The Gospel is a Persian to love, look to and lean upon. And you know as Mark sets the scene for us he tells us that when the Gospel appeared, when Jesus Christ appeared, he appeared proclaiming the Gospel. The first words of Jesus that Mark records in his Gospel are in verse 15. Where Jesus says the time is fulfilled the kingdom of God is at hand repent and believe in the Gospel. Turn from your sin he says and believe in Jesus Christ. And you know what's so beautiful about that statement is that when Jesus

Christ appeared he appeared preaching Christ. Christ was preaching Christ. My friend the greatest preacher that ever lived. When he appeared he appeared proclaiming the greatest Persian that there is Jesus Christ. Jesus was both speaker and subject. He was preacher and proposition. Jesus was expounding and expositing himself. Christ was preaching Christ and he appeared proclaiming to those who were in the hearing he proclaimed repent and believe in the Gospel. Turn from your sin and believe in Jesus Christ because the Gospel is Jesus Christ. The Gospel my friend is a Persian to love, look to and lean upon. And the wonder is he's the remedy to our ruin and he's the solution to our sin. But what's more is that Mark emphasizes throughout his Gospel that as the Son of God Jesus has all authority in heaven and on earth. And his authority is such that when you read through his Gospel you see that Jesus has authority over Satan, sickness, sin, storms and sorrows. My friend that's why Jesus is good news. Jesus is the Gospel. And that's what we see in this passage as a man with a contagious condition has an encounter with the Gospel. He has an encounter with Jesus Christ. And as we read the contagious condition of this man was leprosy because as a disease leprosy is infectious. It can be spread from one person to another. And as a contagious condition leprosy it causes nerve damage and when left untreated it will often result in disability or loss of limbs or even blindness. And although there's an effective cure that has been produced for leprosy it has only been around since 1982. But you know in the ancient world there was no cure for leprosy and in the ancient world there was no cure for this man who had a contagious condition. And because leprosy is and was a contagious condition lepers were often stigmatized and they were often made to be outcasts in society. In fact if you contracted leprosy it robbed you of everything. It robbed you of your family. It robbed you of your home.

It robbed you of your friends, your occupation and even your identity. Because if you were diagnosed as a leper you were required according to the book of Leviticus. You were required to wear torn clothes to have unkempt hair to cover your face just like a mask and you were to live all alone.

[10:59] You were to in many ways to self isolate from your family and your friends and your work colleagues and the rest of your community. But you know what a leper with a contagious condition he was not only required to self isolate they were also to exercise social distancing. Because a leper as a leper would move from place to place throughout the community they were required to alert people to the fact that they had this contagious condition and they were to alert them by repeatedly crying unclean, unclean, unclean and for the leper it would have been very hard for them not only to isolate themselves from their family but it would have also been very hard and very degrading to announce to everyone that they came into contact with to stay away from them because they were unclean.

And you know in some measure we can relate to all this with all that we're going through with the coronavirus because as we've been repeatedly reminded by our government and even the media the coronavirus is a contagious condition and we're to exercise social distancing with people we're to keep that two meter distance apart at all times and I'm sure you're well aware of all these government restrictions that have been tightened further and further they've insisted that we have to reduce our contact with people we're to reduce our contact with our family and with our friends and even our work colleagues by staying at home and working from home we're not to go shopping just for the essentials we're only to leave home if it's to care for someone who's vulnerable or to get medical care or if it's absolutely necessary but you know even if we start showing symptoms of the coronavirus just like this leper we're to declare that we're unclean and we have to self-isolate for two weeks and you know with all that's going on with this coronavirus in a way we can understand how this leper with a contagious condition would have felt in themselves because having to ensure social distancing and declare yourself unclean and then self-isolate for a period of time those physical measures they would inevitably have an impact mentally because you know there's always a danger that lengthy periods of isolation and a lack of physical contact it can have an impact upon our mental health and even for a leper a leper who was often self-isolating and socially distant from everyone and always shouting unclean a leper often had low self-esteem they also often had feelings of unworthiness they often felt that they were unwanted and that they were unclean and you know that's the worry many people have about the coronavirus and the need to self-isolate because if people are isolated from their family and their friends and their community for a long period of time the worry is that it can it could affect their mental health especially for those who are elderly or those who live on their own or or those who are vulnerable and they're confined us the government guidelines give us that they're to be confined for up to 12 weeks my friend this contagious condition of coronavirus it may have an impact upon us not only physically but also mentally and yet you know what I love about this passage and what I'm reminded in this passage is that even though we are being confronted with a contagious condition the gospel always presents to us a compassionate christ and that's what we see secondly we see a compassionate christ a contagious condition and then a compassionate christ a compassionate christ we read again in verse 40 in verse 40 and a leper came to him imploring him and kneeling said to him if you will you can make me clean 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 now I don't know about you but I find these words some of the most comforting words in the bible because here you have this lonely leper and he's now stigmatized and he's an outcast in his society all because of his contagious condition and he's doing as the law

requires he's exercising social distancing he's announcing that he's unclean he's living in self isolation away from his family and his friends and his work colleagues and because of all that he feels completely unworthy and unclean and unwanted but you know what's so beautiful is that just like you my unconverted friend just like you this lonely leper has heard about the gospel in fact you could even say that like you he came to discover that Jesus is the gospel and like you he witnessed what Jesus is able to do in the lives of others because I'm sure that for yourself you've witnessed what Jesus is able to do in the lives of others I'm sure that maybe even for those you're living with in your own home and in your own family you have witnessed Jesus change their life and their experience of course you might question whether Jesus could do the same in your life and with you because maybe like this leper did you feel unworthy to come to Jesus you feel unwanted because well you know you're a sinner a filthy sinner and up until today you can say that you haven't lived a life you should live and you haven't attended church the way you should attend church but you know my friend when it comes to the good news of the gospel and when it comes to having an encounter with Jesus Christ you know it's today that matters it's today that matter the past doesn't matter because the past is the past today is the day of opportunity today is the day of salvation and as your bible affirms to you now is the accepted time to come to Christ now is the accepted time to close in with Christ and you know that's what this lonely leper came to discover because there were many who would have made this leper feel unworthy and unwanted and they would have been unwilling to help him but when this leper heard the gospel when he heard that Jesus was passing by he took today's opportunity he took the opportunity that was afforded to him that day and he came to Jesus and how did he come he came and bended me calling out to him and asking for cleansing saying Lord if you're willing you can make me clean

Lord if you're willing you can make me clean and my friend what this lonely leper realized was that it wasn't about him being unworthy or unwanted or Jesus being unwilling it was all about the good news that Jesus is a compassionate Christ and he's compassionate towards lost sinners do you know what a prayer Lord if you're willing you can make me clean Lord if you're willing you can make me clean and Mark tells us in verse 41 moved with pity or moved with compassion Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him and sent to him I will be clean I will be clean you know my friend Jesus is more willing to forgive you and cleanse you and make you his than you are to ask him that's how compassionate this Christ is he's more than willing to save you if you will only ask him if you will only ask him and you know this word compassion it's more than just pity compassion is an expression of love it includes emotions and feelings emotions and feelings of sympathy and empathy and we're told about Jesus he moved with compassion don't you just love that phrase he moved with compassion he moved with compassion I had a great auntie who lived next door to my parents and she had been a Christian for for many many years and I remember going to visit my great auntie one night to have worship with her and as I sat with her she handed me her

Bible to find a suitable passage to read from and have worship with her and you know as I turned the pages in the gospels and as I turned the pages in our Bible we went through the gospels and I noticed as I turned the pages that she had repeatedly highlighted this phrase he moved with compassion he moved with compassion he moved with compassion and when I pointed it out to her she said to me and I'll never forget it she said Mardo don't you just love that phrase he moved with compassion and you know my friend that's the good news of the gospel that's who the gospel is the gospel is Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ he moves towards the unworthy and the unwanted and even the unwilling and he moves towards us how with compassion he moves towards us with compassion and we you know we see that time and time again in the gospels where Jesus moved with compassion not only towards this lonely leper with a contagious condition but Jesus he moved with compassion towards a tax collector he moved with compassion towards the sick and the suffering he moved with compassion towards the dying and even to the prostitute my friend Jesus moved with compassion he moved with compassion towards the multitudes Matthew tells us he moved with compassion because they were like sheep without a shepherd my friend there's nowhere and there's no one to whom Jesus is not willing to go no one is exempt no one is excluded no one is rejected no one is refused because the glory of the gospel is that this compassionate Christ he doesn't turn anyone away he won't turn you away because that's his promise he who comes to me I will in no wise cast out my friend this Jesus he moves with compassion and there's no boundary and there's no barrier that will keep him from you not even the boundaries and barriers of your own home will keep this Jesus from you you might feel like this leper today my friend you might feel far away from your family or your friends or even the community that we're in you might feel far away from your church family you might feel all alone in self-isolation exercising social distancing and being cooped up in your own home but you know the wonder of the gospel today is that Jesus is passing by your home Jesus is passing by your home and with Jesus he's not bound by barriers he's not confined by coronavirus he's not restrained by all the restrictions that are upon us no this Jesus my friend he's able to meet you at your point of need because he's more than willing to forgive you he's more than willing to cleanse you he's more than willing to make you his he's more than willing to move towards you this morning with compassion and have mercy upon you if you will only ask him if you will only ask him or my friend ask him ask him as he passes by ask him as he passes by my friend it was only when this lonely leper with a contagious condition it was only when he came to a compassionate Christ that he became a confessing Christian and that's what I want us to consider lastly a confessing Christian we've seen a contagious condition a compassionate Christ and a confessing Christian a confessing Christian look at verse 43 and Jesus sternly charged him

[24 : 47] and sent him away at once and said to him see that you say nothing to anyone but go show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what moises commanded for a proof to them but he went out and began to talk freely about it and to spread the news so that Jesus could no longer openly enter a town but was out in desolate places and people were coming to him from every quarter you know as soon as this lonely leper was healed from his contagious condition we see there in verse 43 that the character of Jesus changes and it changes from being a compassionate Christ to being a concerned Christ because as we read Jesus in verse 43 Jesus sternly charged him and sent him away at once and that phrase he sternly charged him it doesn't mean that Jesus was angry with the leper just after he had cleansed him it means that Jesus was concerned Jesus was concerned that this new

Christian convert was going to wasn't going to follow his command he was concerned that he was going to ignore his command and just do what he wanted because Jesus his command was simple verse 44 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 for a proof to them Jesus urged this new Christian convert not to say anything to anyone but go to the priest and follow the prescribed protocol for cleansing because according to the mosaic law that the law of Moses the first five books of the Bible there was a prescribed protocol when a leper was cleansed from their disease and you can read about this prescribed protocol it's set out in Leviticus chapter 14 you can read it for yourself where a lonely leper would have to go to the priest in order to be declared clean and then slowly reintroduced to society but you know of course the glaring question which comes to everyone's mind when they read verse 44 the question that comes to everyone's mind is why did Jesus command this new Christian convert not to tell anyone about him why did Jesus say that to him because surely as Christians that's what we're meant to do surely as Christians were meant to tell those in our homes and in our families and in our community were meant to tell them about Jesus surely as Christians were to testify to what Jesus has done in our lives so why did Jesus command this new Christian convert not to tell anyone about him well it was actually by going to the priest that the leper would have verified to his whole community and his family that Jesus was indeed the Christ but instead what we see is that this new Christian convert who once had a contagious condition he now had in many ways you could say he had a contagious confession where he couldn't keep it to himself he wanted to tell everyone and anyone that he was now a Christian that he had been healed he had been cleansed and that Jesus is this wonderful Savior that everyone needs to know and come and trust in for themselves and you know my friend you look at the the zeal and the passion of this man and you ask yourself well do you remember those days my Christian friend do you remember those early days of your Christian experience when you had that passion and that zeal to tell everyone and anyone about Jesus where do you remember those days where you were faithful and fearless and telling people about their need of a Savior you know that's what we need more of we need more of that in our day and generation we need more confessing Christians to their salvation we need more confessing Christians who are willing to stand up and speak out for Jesus we are we need more of people who are willing to to say something to nail their colors to the mast and speak a word in season we need more confessing Christians to have a contagious confession where they can't keep Jesus a secret because they want everyone and anyone to know about him so that they will come and follow him and you know my friend I believe that that's why

Mark explains what happened between Jesus and the leper because he explains it in the closing verse in verse 45 he said that the leper went out and began to talk freely about it and to spread the news so that Jesus could no longer openly enter a town but was out in desolate places and people were coming to him from every quarter you know in that concluding verse Mark tells us that Jesus and the leper they exchanged places Jesus and the leper exchanged places because the leper who had at the beginning of the passage he had been lonely socially distant and self-isolated and now he is free he's free from all restrictions but with the leper now a confessing Christian who's spreading the good news of the gospel the good news that Jesus Christ is the gospel it's then that we see and as Mark explains in verse 45 we see that Jesus could no longer enter into communities

Jesus had to then become socially distant he had to self-isolate he had to become lonely go to lonely places and you know what mark is doing he's explaining to us that Jesus and the leper have changed places and mark is showing us that this is all because Jesus is the gospel Jesus is the gospel and the gospel is good news because Jesus he willingly and voluntarily exchanges places with sinners and it's not where the climax and culmination of mark's gospel is going to bring us it's going to bring us to the cross to the place of the great exchange my friend the climax of mark's gospel is going to bring us to Calvary's great transaction where sinners sinners can say at the cross the worst about me was laid upon him and the best about him was laid upon me my sin was transferred to Christ his righteousness was transformed to me my friend we can say today there was at the cross it was at the cross that bearing shame and scoffing root in my place condemned he stood sealed my pardon with his blood oh hallelujah what a savior my friend that's the good news of the gospel today that Jesus Christ is the gospel

Jesus Christ is the gospel and what the gospel is calling you today my unconverted friend it calls you to be a confessing Christian the gospel calls you to confess Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior because my friend your Bible promises you that if you believe in your heart and you confess with your mouth that Jesus Christ is Lord then you will be saved that's what the gospel promises you today that if you believe and confess you will be saved the gospel is calling you to be a confessing Christian but you know and with this I will conclude it was only when this lonely leper with a contagious condition it was only when he came to a compassionate Christ that he became a confessing Christian but what if this lonely leper with a contagious condition what if he hadn't come to this compassionate Christ when he did well he wouldn't have been a confessing

[33 : 33] Christian and he would have probably died in his condition and because you know because of the contagious condition of leprosy in the ancient world the death toll was always rising just like the death toll of the coronavirus is rising daily but you know what was so sad about lepers in the ancient world and those with coronavirus in the modern world what we often hear these news reports what we're hearing and what's so sad is that they're dying alone they're dying alone because of their contagious condition they're not allowed their family or their friends near them and they're left to die alone of course we all know that we have to face death alone because we can't take anyone with us but you know it must be awful to die alone and yet the good news of the gospel to us today is that not even death is a barrier to Jesus because it's Jesus the good shepherd it's Jesus the compassionate Christ who promises us that when we trust him and when we confess him when we confess him as our Lord when we confess him as our shepherd he assures us that even if we have to walk through the valley of the shadow of death he will be there he will be with us because he's with us as David said in Psalm 23 he's with us with his word and his staff and they are there to comfort us my friend that's why you need to be a confessing Christian that's why you need to confess Christ as your Lord and Savior because you'll never have hope in life and you'll never have peace in death until you confess Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior so my friend you come to this compassionate

Christ you come to him on bended knee and you come and confess your sin and you're need of this wonderful Savior you come as this leper did saying Lord if you are willing you can make me clean and I assure you my friend when you come to him wholeheartedly this Jesus will move towards you with compassion and he will say to you I will be clean you come my friend you come I'm in the Lord bless these thoughts to us let us pray oh Lord our gracious God we give thanks to thee for the wonder of the gospel that the gospel is good news and it's good news about a wonderful person a person who moves towards us with compassion and we thank thee oh Lord that his name is Jesus that they called his name Jesus because he would save his people from their sins and we marvel Lord that even today that we have this wonderful opportunity for Jesus to move move towards us with compassion and cleanse us from all our sin oh Lord we ask that thou would us create within us that clean heart and renew our right spirit within us all that we may come to

Jesus and know him and love him for time and for eternity all Lord do us good and we pray bless as we ask take away our inequity receive us graciously for Jesus sake amen