

LANGUAGE NOTES & TEXTUAL CONNECTIONS

The Gospel of Mark: *Author, Date, and Recipients*

The apostle Peter passed on reports of the words and deeds of Jesus to his attendant, John Mark, who wrote this Gospel for the wider church as the record of Peter's apostolic testimony. The book was likely written from Rome during the mid- to late-50s A.D. Mark's audience, largely unfamiliar with Jewish customs, needed to become familiar with such customs in order to understand the coming of Jesus as the culmination of God's work with Israel and the entire world, so Mark explains them.

a skin disease: most likely leprosy. [Leviticus 13:2-15:57](#) presents extensive regulations regarding leprosy which can be summarized in two principal points: 1. this disease is communicable (so touch should be avoided and is forbidden); and 2. A priest must preside over ritual cleansing, the public, and legal, declaration that the leper is now clean, cured, and able to return to normal public life.

Make clean:: καθαρίζω or katharizo meaning to cleanse, make clean, literally, ceremonially, or spiritually, according to context. It can also mean to declare clean, which was something that only a recognized priest can do. See [Leviticus 13:1-8](#). Could Jesus be doing something that the priest should have done already, or is he challenging them by doing their "job"?

Moved with pity:: σπλαγχνίζομαι or splanchnizomai meaning to to be moved in the inward parts (especially the nobler entrails – the heart, lungs, liver, and kidneys. These gradually came to denote the seat of the affections"), to feel compassion, to be moved, to have pity, to be angry (indignation). Is Jesus moved with pity at the suffering of the man? And/or is he angry because this man has already been to the priests, who for some reason had rejected his petition for help?

immediately:: remember that Mark very often uses this word εὐθέως or yutheós to emphasize the immediacy or efficacy of Jesus in a given situation.

sternly warning:: ἐμβριμάομαι or embrimaomai meaning to be moved with anger, to admonish sternly, to snort (or roar) with rage, to express indignant displeasure with some one. Is Jesus angry with the man? Or someone else? The priests? Society as a whole?

testimony to them:: μαρτύριον or marturion meaning witness, evidence, testimony, proof. Is Jesus saying this will be proof to the priests that the man is now healed?; or is Jesus saying that this will be a testimony, or bearing evidence *against* the priests for the action or inaction?

Mark 1:40-2:12

NEW REVISED STANDARD VERSION

⁴⁰ A man with a skin disease came to [Jesus] begging him, and kneeling he said to him, "If you are willing, you can *make me clean.*" ⁴¹ *Moved with pity*, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him and said to him, "I am willing. *Be made clean!*" ⁴² Immediately the skin disease 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.

¹ When [Jesus] returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. ² *So many gathered around that there was no longer room for them, not even in front of the door*, and he was speaking the word to them.

³ Then some people came, bringing to him a *paralyzed man*, carried by four of them. ⁴ And when they could not bring him to Jesus because of the **CROWD**, they removed the roof above him, and after having dug through it, they let down the *mat* on which the paralytic lay. ⁵ When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Child, your sins are forgiven." ⁶ Now some of the scribes were sitting there questioning in their hearts, ⁷ "Why does this fellow speak in this way? It is blasphemy! Who can

forgive sins but God alone?”⁸ At once Jesus perceived in his spirit that they were discussing these questions among themselves, and he said to them, “Why do you raise such questions in your hearts?”⁹ Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Stand up and take your *mat* and walk?’¹⁰ But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”—he said to the paralytic—¹¹ “I say to you, stand up, take your *mat*, and go to your home.”¹² And he stood up and *immediately* took the *mat* and went out before all of them, so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, “We have never seen anything like this!”

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION & EXAMEN:

- What engaged, enraged, or surprised you in the text?
- Why is Jesus so emotional in regards to the leprous man’s state? If the priests wouldn’t help him before why would Jesus send him back to them?
- Why are the scribes so mad about Jesus healing and remitting debts (forgiving sins)? Are they concerned more with protecting the sovereignty and power of God, or their religious order?
- What invitation do you hear the Spirit of God speaking to you – or to us, as a church – to act, speak, be, or change, through this word of scripture?

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testimony - notice that Jesus changes from “priests” to “them” in the phrase.

Mark 1:2 already quoted Malachi 3:1-5 which might also speak to this situation in regards to the priests and their seeming lack of help/empathy/justice for the leper. “¹See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight—indeed, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts. ² But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears?

For he is like a refiner’s fire and like washers’ soap; ³ he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the descendants of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, until they present offerings to the Lord in righteousness. ⁴ Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord, as in the days of old and as in former years.

⁵ Then I will draw near to you for judgment; I will be swift to bear witness against the sorcerers, against the adulterers, against those who swear falsely, against those who oppress the hired workers in their wages, the widow, and the orphan, against those who thrust aside the alien and do not fear me, says the Lord of hosts.”

a paralyzed man: the man’s lack of bodily wholeness would have been attributed to either his own sin, or, if a birth defect, inherited sin from his parents. He was thus denied full status in the body politic (or society) of Israel. He was considered a nobody with no place. In releasing him from his debt Jesus restores his social wholeness and thus his personhood. (Ched Myers)

CROWD: ὄχλος or ochlos meaning a crowd, mob, multitude, the common people (as opposed to the elites or ruling class). Mark uses the word ochlos 38 times (a lot!).

removed the roof above him :: καθαρίζω or a typical dwelling of the time would have an earthen roof covered by dried branches, which explains why the friends could dig through it in order to gain entrance to crowded single room

mat:: κράβατος or krabattos meaning a a camp bed (or bed roll), a mattress used by the poor.

Your sins are forgiven:: Only God could forgive sins (remit debts). And the scribes as the interpreters of the Torah and co-stewards (with the priests) of the religious order, seems to also have some power in this arena – at least way more than Jesus.