

11 FEBRUARY 2018

Sunday Message

SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

THE WORD

Year B • Season Colour: Green • Psalter week 2



SAY

Whatever you do, do it for the glory of God.

REFLECT

The story of the healing of the leper is more than Jesus' curing of a sick person. It involves the restoring of that person to normal human society. Instead of being excluded from every place where others live and gather, the person now can join in all the activities of the town or community: in this case, he has been given his life back. In some medieval churches we can still see *leper windows*: certain towns and villages had asylums for people who were afflicted with this disease, and there were windows set low in the back wall of the parish church so that they could follow the services at a safe distance from the rest of the congregation. In English, we sometimes talk about people being treated like lepers, shunned by others for one reason or another. The gospel stories are not just about Jesus and the people of his day: they also have a message for us, and often that message is uncomfortable. Perhaps Mark is asking us, *who are the lepers in your society or church?* Who are the people who are shunned, pushed to the margins? And why are they treated in this way? If Jesus was prepared to ignore the social and religious customs of his day so that he could reach a person in need of his touch, would he let the rules we have in place today stop him? There is a tendency among some people to think that the gospel criticisms of the Law, the religious practices and the leaders of the time apply only to the historical situation of Jesus and the early disciples. But the word of God has an enduring value: it applies to us and our situation today. It may well be that Jesus' healing of the leper needs to be translated into terms which apply to our time and Church. ■

The gospel tradition contains a single story of Jesus healing leprosy, though the accounts differ in the number of people cured on the one occasion.

In Mark's version there is one person mentioned, and the narrative shows Jesus in a very human, emotional light. To say that Jesus *feels sorry* for the man hardly does justice to what Jesus felt. Mark tells us that he was *moved in his very depths*, in the seat of his emotions, his heart, or another part of his anatomy which it might be better to avoid mentioning here. To suffer from leprosy was, in some ways, to endure a living death. The term covered a wide range of disorders of the skin, but because the person's skin would dry up and flake off, other people thought that they were crumbling before their eyes. Such sick people were considered unclean and so were excluded from normal society: to come into contact with a leper meant that the other person was considered unclean as well: we might call it *guilt by association*. This makes Jesus' gesture of touching the man even more impressive: it goes against all the accepted social and religious conventions of the day. Once again, Jesus gives the order not to talk about what has happened, an instruction which is not obeyed, and his fame as a healer grows, attracting large crowds. His mission seems to be going well. ■

LEARN

To suffer from leprosy meant that the person was excluded from normal social life.

To come into contact with a leper meant that the other person effectively became a leper, even if they were not physically affected

Leprosy was a blanket term, covering a wide range of skin ailments, many of them not serious.

Jesus actually says to the leper, *be cleansed!*: in this way he removes the stigma of ritual uncleanness.

DO

Is there someone whom you have been treating like a leper? If so, do something about it.



ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Be my protector, O God,
a mighty stronghold to save me.
For you are my rock, my stronghold!
Lead me, guide me, for the sake of your
name.

GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you,
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,
have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

COLLECT

O God, who teach us that you abide
in hearts that are just and true,
grant that we may be so fashioned by your
grace
as to become a dwelling pleasing to you.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of
the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

FIRST READING Leviticus 13:1-2.44-46

A reading from the book of Leviticus.

The Lord said to Moses and Aaron, "If a
swelling or scab or shiny spot appears on a
man's skin, a case of leprosy of the skin is
to be suspected. The man must be taken to
Aaron, the priest, or to one of the priests who
are his sons.

"The man is leprous: he is unclean. The
priest must declare him unclean; he is
suffering from leprosy of the head. A man
infected with leprosy must wear his clothing
torn and his hair disordered; he must shield
his upper lip and cry, 'Unclean, unclean.' As
long as the disease lasts he must be unclean;
and therefore he must live apart; he must live
outside the camp."

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 31

Response:

**You are my refuge, O Lord;
You fill me with the joy of salvation.**

- Happy the man whose offence is forgiven,
whose sin is remitted.
O happy the man to whom the Lord
imputes no guilt,
in whose spirit is no guile. (R.)

- But now I have acknowledged my sins;
my guilt I did not hide.
I said: 'I will confess
my offence to the Lord.'
And you, Lord, have forgiven
the guilt of my sin. (R.)

- Rejoice, rejoice in the Lord,
exult, you just!
O come, ring out your joy,
all you upright of heart. (R.)

SECOND READING 1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the
Corinthians.

Whatever you eat, whatever you drink,
whatever you do at all, do it for the glory of
God. Never do anything offensive to anyone
- to Jews or Greeks or to the Church of God;
just as I try to be helpful to everyone at all
times, not anxious for my own advantage but
for the advantage of everybody else, so that
they may be saved.

Take me for your model, as I take Christ.
The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!
May the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ
enlighten the eyes of our mind,
so that we can see what hope his call holds
for us.
Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Mark 1:40-45

A reading from the holy Gospel according to
Mark.

A leper came to Jesus and pleaded on his
knees: "If you want to" he said "you can cure
me." Feeling sorry for him, Jesus stretched
out his hand and touched him. "Of course
I want to!" he said. "Be cured!" And the
leprosy left him at once and he was cured.
Jesus immediately sent him away and
sternly ordered him, "Mind you say nothing
to anyone, but go and show yourself to the
priest, and make the offering for your healing
prescribed by Moses as evidence of your
recovery." The man went away, but then
started talking about it freely and telling the
story everywhere, so that Jesus could no
longer go openly into any town, but had to
stay outside in places where nobody lived.
Even so, people from all around would come
to him.

The Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with
the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,

(all bow during the next three lines)

and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the
Virgin Mary,
and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under
Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,
the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored
and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.
I believe in one, holy, catholic and
apostolic Church.
I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness
of sins
and I look forward to the resurrection of the
dead
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

May this oblation, O Lord, we pray,
cleanse and renew us
and may it become for those who do your will
the source of eternal reward.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

They ate and had their fill,
and what they craved the Lord gave them;
they were not disappointed in what they
craved.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Having fed upon these heavenly delights,
we pray, O Lord,
that we may always long
for that food by which we truly live.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.