

94-12-04 Mark

There is a potential danger that exists in our lives, which is to expose ourselves to the Word of God, to associate ourselves with the name of Jesus Christ, and yet to not have it result in the kind of obedience and the kind of transformation that God is looking for. This is the point in the section of Ezekiel chapter 33 that we read this morning. And we don't always like to focus on things that have a negative element like that, and yet it is essential that we be warned and we be alert and that we do not drift into complacency or assume that everything is fine when perhaps it is not.

This is exactly what happened to Israel. And this tendency neutralized many generations in the nation of Israel. They came and offered the sacrifices.

They associated themselves with Yahweh, the God of Israel. And yet, God in Hosea chapter 6 verse 6 says, I desire mercy and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings. And this was where Israel slipped and Israel failed.

We want to benefit from their example and not make that same mistake and not only hear the Word of God, not only associate ourselves with the name of God, but have that genuine transformation and the genuine fruit in our life that comes as our heritage by being believers in Jesus Christ. Turn with me to Mark chapter 1 where we pick up the story of Jesus' ministry. In verse 39 of chapter 1 of Mark, He was preaching in their synagogues throughout all Galilee and casting out demons.

Now a leper came to Him, imploring Him, kneeling down and saying to Him, If you are willing, you can make me clean. Jesus moved with compassion, said to Him, actually He stretched out His hand and touched Him and said to Him, I am willing, be cleansed. As soon as He had spoken, immediately the leprosy left Him and He was cleansed.

And He strictly warned Him and sent Him away at once and said to Him, See that you say nothing to anyone, but go your way, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing those things which Moses commanded as a testimony to them. However, He went out and began to proclaim it freely and to spread the matter so that Jesus could no longer openly enter the city but was outside in deserted places. And they came to Him from every direction.

Now this seems like another in several healing episodes in the gospel of Mark and yet by its placement in the book here at the beginning, it is a reminder and it sets a tone for the theme of this gospel, the reason for which Mark set these things down under the supervision of the Holy Spirit. And one of the things that we know about the gospel of Mark is its place in the section of gospels that we have in the New Testament. We have four gospels, right? And each of them has a particular emphasis.

Do you remember what they are? Matthew, the gospel according to Matthew, presents Jesus as King, the King of Israel. It's full of Old Testament prophecy and passages that resonate to the nation of Israel in particular. It doesn't mean that it has no... The gospel of Luke, what does that present? Jesus Christ as the Son of Man.

It's written from the humanity standpoint of Jesus Christ. What better person to talk about the human... who understands the loyalties of the human frame and so forth. The gospel of John, the Son of God.

So we have the Son of Man in Luke, the Son of God, the Deity, the place in God's plan. Mark presents Jesus as the servant of God. He is the servant that wraps the garment about His waist and washes the disciples' feet.

He is about the work of the Lord. And this is a place where we can really benefit from Jesus' example. We are not the Son of God, and so there are some elements that we learn about Jesus Christ in John that gain us appreciation for who He is and what He has done.

But in the gospel of Mark, Jesus as the servant of God, we can very closely identify that that's our role. We are to be servants. The cornerstone, it is required in a servant, it is required in a steward, that a man be found faithful.

So what is the nature of that faithfulness? What is the nature of the obedience as His servants, as His children? There is no better place to see that distinction than in this episode. We covered the details of this last Sunday. But you will notice, if you have your Bible red letter edition here, that verse 44 is nearly all in red.

These are the words of Jesus Christ to the healed leper. And what does He say? He says, See that you say nothing to anyone. Now this is a very strong imperative.

This is a command. There is no doubt. There is no confusion.

There is no cloud in the mind of the leper as to what Jesus wants. He says, See to it that you say nothing to anyone. It cannot be more clear.

Now, second imperative. Go your way. Third imperative.

Show yourself to the priest. Fourth imperative. Offer for your cleansing those things which Moses commanded as a testimony to them.

Four commands. Four clear, direct, unmistakable places where the leper can comply. Faithful to the one who has just delivered him from a living death.

Leprosy is a picture of death. Death, physical death, leprosy, all of these things suggest to our minds the spiritual helplessness, the spiritual hopelessness when we were without Christ, when we were dead in trespasses and sin. Not only has the Lord Jesus Christ come and saved us, but He has challenged us to be servants of God, to be obedient.

What higher calling, what more important purpose could we have than to fulfill that desire that God has for our lives, to be truly obedient, to be truly transformed. There is nothing more important in life, and we cannot spend enough time looking at it as truly obedient, truly pleasing God in the areas that God considers important. What it is that He should have done that He did not do.

He had four commands. Say nothing. Go your way.

Show yourself to the priest. Offer for your cleansing what Moses prescribed. Now, how many of these commands did He fulfill? We know we are in trouble with the very first word.

However, by way of contrast, Jesus said say nothing to anyone. He went out and began to proclaim it freely. Jesus said go your way and show yourself to the priest.

He spread the matter so that Jesus could no longer openly enter the city, but was outside in deserted places. He was given four commands, and instead He did two incorrect things. Now, let's try to put ourselves in the mind of this leper.

Imagine for a moment that you have some terrible physical affliction. Some of you may have a terrible physical affliction, and it will be easy for you to put yourself in the leper's position. We all have our aches and pains.

We took the girls down to see the parade last night, and I was telling some of you earlier this morning, after you hold a 30 or 40 pound child up like this for about 45 minutes, you begin to notice muscles and joints in your body that you didn't even know were there. And I woke up this morning and could not think why I felt so bad. But imagine that you have an affliction.

It's a terrible affliction. It is a mortal affliction. It's one that is going to ultimately lead to your death.

It is one that keeps you from associating with other people. You have to be taken away and set aside. This is a condition that has gone on for years.

You've been deprived of fellowship. You've been deprived of opportunity. You've been deprived of worship life.

You've had to live outside the gates. Now here comes a man, and you recognize him. You say, I know that that man is from God.

Who else but God has the power to heal leprosy? This hasn't been seen in Israel in hundreds of years. What is the first fruit? Jesus is moved with leprosy. Disappear.

He has the best skin of anybody in Israel. He is whole. He is clean.

And his whole life in an instant is transformed. He has new opportunities, new potential. He can now be restored to fellowship and to function in the nation of Israel.

He can live in the town. He can go to the synagogue and worship. All of the things that he has dreamed about for years are suddenly within his grasp.

And he owes it all to this wonderful man, this Jesus Christ. And in the euphoria, he hears Jesus break through that excitement with a very stern command. It's a strong commanding word.

It was the word that was used of a horse, snorting. Now, there's nothing that will get your attention, particularly if you're riding the horse and hearing the horse snort. If a horse snorts

and jerks his head back, if you're sitting on him, you will pay attention if you don't want to find yourself snorting.

Backing him up and saying, now listen, don't get so caught up in your excitement that you fail to hear what I'm about to say. He says, look, go your way. Say nothing to anyone.

Show yourself to the priest and offer this sacrifice. There are two ways that the leper can go here. He is full of gratitude.

He thinks Jesus Christ is the greatest person he's ever met. But now he has a choice. Is he going to express that enthusiasm in his own way, what seems good to him, or is he going to follow the commands of Jesus Christ? Leaving out for the moment the fact that the Mosaic Law specifies that you must do these things to be truly clean.

His physical affliction has disappeared, but he is not legally, ceremonially clean in Israel until he shows himself to the priest. That is God's law. Jesus reminds him of that and says you've got to do this God's way.

Your physical affliction is gone, but unless you obey, you are not truly prepared for function. You are not ceremonially permitted to be in the synagogue and so forth. But he allows this enthusiasm to carry his attention in a different direction.

And he says this man is the greatest man I have ever met. He has done the greatest thing for me that anyone has ever done for anybody, and I am fit to bust. And so he immediately rushes out and begins to tell this good news.

Now if someone were to come up and hear this leper telling this story, would he accuse the leper of sin? Let's say he wasn't there on the day that he was healed. What man in Israel has a better testimony than the leper? He has a good testimony, doesn't he? He can glorify the Lord Jesus Christ. He is a man that did something that nobody else can do.

He must be the son of God. He's got a terrific testimony. Terrific opportunity to proclaim.

Wonderful story to tell. The problem is that's not the mission that he was given. That is not his assigned role.

He has an area of obedience to fulfill first. In fact, this is in contradiction to what he has been commanded to do. And yet he allows his euphoria to carry him into an area of activity that he can justify many different ways.

Nobody is going to come up and say, shame on you for telling this wonderful story, except maybe the Pharisees. But people are going to hear that and say, oh, what a blessing. What a wonderful thing.

Maybe I'll take my sick friend to that same healer, this same Lord clearly. Jesus snorted in his face, grabbed him by the lapels as it were, and said, look, do this now. Four commands.

He didn't fulfill any of them. How easy it is for us to let our enthusiasm and our idea of what would be a good thing carry us away from obedience. Carry us away from the manifestly clear word of the Lord.

And we can justify it. We can make sense of it. Other people will agree that we're doing the right thing.

And yet, for us, we have to be so careful. This is what we saw in Colossians. Remember the three areas of deception? Human tradition, philosophy, religion.

Everyone does it this way. It has always been done this way. We've done it this way for centuries.

This is what constitutes the Christian way of life. This is what constitutes fruitfulness. This is what constitutes success.

This is what constitutes spirituality. How do we know what we are supposed to be? How do we know what is supposed to take place in our lives? It is not tradition. It is not experience.

It is not anything we've heard or anything we've seen. It is contained in the pages of this book. It is our duty to not be carried off and not be deceived like this leper was.

We see the opportunity that this leper missed. Leviticus chapter 14 contains the prescription of the Mosaic law for someone who is healed of leprosy. Jesus told him, go and offer that sacrifice.

Go and perform that ritual that the law of Moses prescribes. It would be helpful for us to see exactly what that was. So we go to Leviticus chapter 14.

And in black and white, here are the instructions. Chapter 14 begins by saying, The Lord spoke to Moses. The Lord spoke to Moses.

This is the word of the Lord. These are the instructions. This shall be the law of the leper for the day of his cleansing.

He shall be brought to the priest. Well, that sounds familiar. And the priest shall go out of the camp, and the priest shall examine him.

And indeed, if the leprosy is healed in the leper, then the priest shall command to take for him who is to be cleansed two living and clean birds, Cedarwood, Scarlet, and Hyssop. Now those three things go together. Keep those in your mind.

Cedarwood, Scarlet, and Hyssop. The priest shall command that one of the birds be killed in an earthen vessel over running water. As for the living bird, he shall take it, the Cedarwood, Scarlet, and Hyssop, and drip them and the living bird in the blood of the bird that was killed over the running water.

He shall sprinkle it seven times on him who is to be cleansed from the leprosy, and shall pronounce him clean, and shall let the living bird loose in the open field. Now let's stop here and take a look at this. If this man had done what Jesus commanded, what would he have done? He would have gone and sent word to the priest.

Now he could not go see the priest because he has not yet been ceremonially declared clean. Even though Jesus has healed him, as far as the law is concerned, he's not clean until the priest says you're clean. So he would send word to the priest.

I believe that I qualify for the cleansing of someone who's healed from leprosy. And what happens? The priest comes to the leper. The priest brings the two living birds.

He brings the cedarwood, the scarlet string, and the hyssop, and he brings this running water or this living water, this fresh water, or locates himself in a position where this water can be obtained. Now up to this point, who has done all of the work? The leper or the priest? It's the priest that comes. It's the priest that brings.

It's the priest that performs every part of this ritual. The leper does nothing. Now what does this remind us of? Dead in trespasses and sins.

Who accomplishes the work of salvation? Not us. We send the message in faith, I want to be cleansed. God, in the person of Jesus Christ, our great high priest, performs everything for us, doesn't he? Now look at the elements that are involved in this ritual.

We have living animals. We have these two birds. When you think of a dove, you think of a pigeon, you think of something that is graceful and something that is free, something that is lovely.

And yet in the course of this ritual, that very beautiful, graceful animal will have its head wrung off. The priest will take his two hands and insert them in the neck portion and will tear the bird apart. He doesn't completely sever it but he mutilates this bird by ripping it open and of course the blood that's contained in his body cavity will spill out.

That's the purpose for the running water here. How much blood is there in a bird, in a pigeon? Not very much. And this ritual centers on blood.

So this blood is going to go into this bowl of living water and this is going to multiply the use of the blood. This is going to give enough liquid to perform the rest of this ceremony. So this blood is mixed with water.

And in that form it will contain this ritual. What does John say about Jesus Christ? He came not by blood only but by water and by blood. Remember that? Here we have the water and the blood.

Now just as sort of a vague idea, who do you think this ritual is pointing to? Our Lord Jesus Christ. Think about the time when Jesus Christ is actually walking the earth and the leper goes. This ceremony has probably not been performed in Israel for hundreds of years if at all.

He goes to the priest. He says nothing. The priest comes out.

A crowd is going to form and now we see this beautiful ritual, the two birds, the running water, the blood from this bird going into the bowl and all of these things are being performed. What are people going to think? They're going to think the same thing we think.

What does this all mean? Why two birds? Why the blood? Why the bowl? Why the string? Why the hyssop? What does this all mean? Now here is a testimony.

If you want to give a testimony of Jesus Christ, here is God's testimony of Jesus Christ. Every single element has meaning. Remember the blood that is in the bowl and in the water and the scarlet string and the cedar wood.

The cedar wood and the hyssop. The hyssop is like a sperm's like. It's a very fine branch plant that was good for using like a sponge.

You could dip it in water and transfer water over to something and sprinkle it. So he's going to take this hyssop, the scarlet string. The scarlet string reminds people of salvation.

They think back to Rahab who hung a scarlet string in her window. Scarlet is the color of blood. It's a reminder that this is going to be the applicator for this blood and the priest is going to then take that applicator, the hyssop, tied to that cedar wood.

Cedar, by the way, was the most durable wood in the ancient world. That's why it was used for many of the components of the tabernacle. The table and the Ark of the Covenant were made of cedar wood because it was durable.

It was very sturdy. The applicator. It says he sprinkles it in verse 7. Seven times on him who is to be cleansed.

That's seven times. Seven is the number of completions. Seven is the number of perfection.

You do it seven times and you're all done. How many times did the leper Naaman, the Syrian general, how many times did he dip himself in the Jordan River? Now, this is the picture of salvation. This is the picture of it saves, it cleanses.

You do it once, it never needs to be done again. What a beautiful picture of the work of Jesus Christ. Notice also, what does he do with that second bird? We had two birds, didn't we? What happened to that second bird? Now, if you can't resurrect a dead bird, what is the next best thing? Identify a living bird with the dead bird.

Put the bird of the life, the death, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. That second bird, marked with the blood, is identified with the resurrection. If this leper had gone and offered it to people in Israel, he would have had no doubt.

The priest would have had no excuse for not believing in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Here is the ritual that pictures it, that communicates it so clearly in graphic terms. Notice now in verse 8. Now we get into the second phase of this ritual.

Now we're going to see a different actor. We're going to see the leper start to participate, start to be responsible to do things for himself. All of this first part was done by the priest.

But after this phase, now he gets active. He who is to be cleansed shall wash his clothes, shave off his hair, and wash himself in water that he may be clean. He washes himself.

He shaves his hair. This isn't done by the priest. This is his responsibility, his action.

His energy goes into this function. Shaves his hair, washes himself that he may be clean. After that, he shall come into the camp.

He's not carried into the camp. The camp doesn't come to him. He goes to the camp.

He goes where healed, healthy, functional people live. He goes there under his own power. And he stays outside his tent seven days.

Now, if you remember the story of Uriah the Hittite, remember when David had done a bad thing there and had slept with Bathsheba and she became pregnant. David called Uriah back from the battle. And he was hoping that this pregnancy would be covered up by Uriah's return from the battlefield.

But Uriah did not go into his tent. He did not go into his habitation. He stayed outside.

In fact, he slept at the gate of the palace. He went to where he could find the soldiers. Avoids ritual uncleanness.

To go into the tent has the idea of going in and having normal relations with one's life. Total separation from anything that defiles. This should be our encouragement to new believers, people who have been cleansed in the blood of Jesus Christ, to rid themselves of those things that defile, those things that are a part of the old life.

But we cannot do it for them. We can't go to somebody and say, let me shave your hair, let me wash your body, let me remove these elements of your old life. It's the leper himself who washes himself and shaves himself.

There can be encouragement nobody else in Israel could do because the leper had to do it. Now look in verse 10. On the eighth day, this is after seven days of purification, completeness, wholeness.

On the eighth day, he shall take two male lambs without blemish, one ewe lamb of the first year without blemish, three-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil as a grain offering and one log of oil. Then the priest who makes him clean, the same priest, not a different priest, because we have a picture going on here. How many priests are there in Israel? Many, many.

The same priest that started out carries through because he's picturing the work of Jesus Christ. We don't have interchangeable saviors, do we? The same priest who made him clean shall present the man who is to be made clean and those things before the Lord. What a wonderful picture.

Jesus gave himself that he might present for himself a glorious church without spot or wrinkle or any sign of which Jesus saved us, not as an image. We have a purpose in our salvation. There is a purpose after salvation.

And we decide whether or not we fulfill it. Jesus wants to present us. He shall kill the lamb in the place where he kills the sin offering and the burnt offering, in a holy place.

For as the sin offering is the priest's, so is the trespass offering. It is most holy. Now, this sacrifice that is offered by the leper benefits the priest.

And that's pointed out in this section. It benefits the priest when the leper performs this function. And in the same way, when we are obedient, when we do what God commands us, when we cleanse ourselves, sanctify ourselves, Jesus Christ is glorified.

There is when we are truly obedient. Now, look in verse 14. This is very interesting.

The priest shall take some of the blood of the trespass offering and the priest shall put it on the tip of the right ear of him who is to be cleansed, on the thumb of his right hand and on the big toe of his right foot. What a strange ritual. He is going to, first of all, take some of the blood and put it on the tip of the ear, on the thumb, and on the toe of the big foot.

On the right foot, rather. Then the priest shall take some of the log of oil and pour it into the palm of his own left hand. Then the priest shall drip his right finger in the oil that is in his left hand and shall sprinkle some of the oil with his finger seven times before the Lord.

Every one of these details has meaning. Let's think, first of all, about this ear and thumb and big toe of the right foot idea. Now, there are only two or three places in Scripture where blood is applied to people.

Hebrews reminds us of the fact that everything was sanctified by blood. It was sprinkled on the altar. It was sprinkled on all of the things that were part of the tabernacle.

Blood was sprinkled everywhere. It was sprinkled on the Ark of the Covenant. But this is one of only two places where we see blood applied to a human being, sprinkled right on the person or smudged on the person.

We know that blood sanctifies. Turn back just a couple of pages to Leviticus chapter 8. He, Moses, brought the second ram, the ram of consecration. Then Aaron and his sons laid their hands on the head of the ram and Moses killed it.

And he took some of its blood on the thumb of his right hand and on the big toe of his right foot. Then he brought Aaron's sons and Moses put some of the blood on the tips of their right ears and on the thumbs of their right hands. And Moses sprinkled the blood all around on the altar.

Then he takes the fat and the entrails and does some other things with those. And skip down to verse 29. Moses took the breast and waved it as a wave offering before the Lord.

It was Moses' part of the ram of consecration as the Lord had commanded Moses. Then Moses took some of the anointing oil and some of the blood which was on the altar and sprinkled it on Aaron, on his garments, on his sons, on the garments of his sons with him. And he consecrated Aaron.

What's the idea here? This blood applied to a person sanctifies, consecrates, sets them apart to a special kind of service. Now ordinary people in Israel, newborn babies, people that got married, soldiers returning from war, nobody else in Israel got sprinkled with this

blood except the Levitical priests. Ordinary Israelites, they weren't in line for this type of consecration.

Leper. And what's the idea? If God is going to cleanse leprosy, if he is going to cure this magnitude of disease, there must be a purpose. This person is set apart for the work of the Lord.

This is a special person. This is a person on a par with the Levites, on a par with the sons of Aaron. They're consecrated in the very same way.

They're cleansed in the very same way. Set apart for service in the very same way. This blood of consecration, consecration, sanctification, what do you listen to? What do you take in? What do you heed in your life? You're set apart.

We're sanctified. What do you do? What actions do you perform? What activities do you engage in? What goals do you pursue? You're sanctified. The blood is on your right hand.

Where do you walk? Where do you go? What travels do you take in your life? What path do you follow in your life? You're sanctified. You're set apart. Each of us in this death that is pictured by this leprosy, each of us has had the blood applied to our lives, to our souls, and we have this same level of consecration.

We have a responsibility ourselves. Nobody can do it for us, and the high priest is not going to come down and do it to us. We ourselves are responsible to sanctify and to consecrate what we take in, what we do, the path that we walk in life.

This is us. What a tremendous testimony. Think of what this leper's testimony could have done in the day when Jesus Christ was right there among the people, and what a sorry second best his personal testimony turned out to be.

Every bit of it is true, but it pales into insignificance next to the focus on the person. And it goes on from here, but I think you get the idea that he settled for a very shallow second best. Here he was in love with the Lord Jesus Christ and was grateful for what Jesus had done.

We as believers are in this same position, and we face this same choice. Let's direct our enthusiasm. It is not enough to look and say, yes, I love the Lord, and I am going to go out and do great things because I love the Lord.

We have to be sure that our actions, our thoughts, what we take in, what we perform, the path of our life is sanctified and constant. We have to let it in to those hard rocks in our soul, to break down the habits that we may have developed over years, that we may have seen everyone else in our experience follow. It's not good enough.

We have to obey. We have to listen to the word of the Lord at first hand. Let it transform each of us individually.

We bear the responsibility individually, just as this leper did. Opportunity. When I see the beauty of God's construction of this ritual, our lives can be this same kind of testimony.

Our lives, by pursuing obedience, can glorify Jesus Christ in ways that we have never even dreamed of. A simple verbal testimony, something that goes way beyond anything that we can ask or think or conceive. We have to pursue that form of obedience, that we will be sanctified and be transformed.

We often quote Romans 12, 1 and 2. I beseech you brethren, therefore, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies. We call that in Romans chapter 12. The interesting thing is to read on down in Romans chapter 12, just a little bit further.

It says do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. God's word renews our mind. It changes us on the inside.

It changes our motives. Now, let me ask you this. Most of you, particularly the ladies, in fact we were talking about these very beautiful poinsettias that we have Mrs. Tincher to thank for up here.

I will confess to you, I have very limited knowledge of plants. But I do know one thing. If a plant is healthy and it's growing, you can see it change.

Patty's got a green plant of some kind in our bin there. And it's got this little kindle. I think Mr. and Mrs. Taylor have one in their apartment.

It's one of these where if you don't watch it, you look up there one day and this huge thing has grown and wrapped around the bookcase halfway around the wall, wrapped itself into your Venetian blinds and so forth. If a plant is healthy and it's growing, you can see it. There is a visible change.

It's bigger than it used to be. It's got more leaves. It's got flowers on it and so forth.

You have to put it in a bigger pot and so on. If I look at a plant today and I look at a plant a year from now and it looks exactly the same, I can't really say that that plant is growing and producing anything from it. Well, the same test applies to us.

How can we know that we are performing in obedience, that we are acting in faith? We look at ourselves. We don't have to look at other people. We don't have to try to judge, as well as that person put out a new leaf here in the last week.

We have our hands full looking at ourselves. Now, this is where we get into this sensitive area where toes get stepped on. The only comfort I can offer you is at least a week ahead of it stepping on.

It's going to transform us and if it's going to change us, it's going to step on our toes. We need correction. And we ought to be looking for that correction and not shy away when it tells us something we don't want to hear.

Well, here's the word of the Lord. God's word will change us. It will transform us.

Be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Each of us has the responsibility with that leper head. And we have to look and say, am I being transformed? Am I changed? Am I different this month than I was last month? Has the word of God that I have heard and have

acclaimed and have said, it's like a musical song, it's like a wonderful melody, let's go hear the word of the Lord, I encourage others.

Am I an Ezekiel 33 person? I hear it, I acclaim it, I acknowledge it, I associate myself with it, but I am not changed. If we're growing, we're going to be like a plant. There will be a change.

There will be something different. Mr. Bushry this morning in his Sunday school class was talking about what it means to be in Christ. If any man is in Christ, he is a new creation.

He grows, he's transformed, he's changed. Now this, I don't know about you, but for me this is a convicting thing. I study the word of God as my vocation.

I have to look at myself. Am I being changed? Am I getting better? Is sin becoming less a part of my life? Am I better at seizing opportunities and using them? Am I being changed? Am I being transformed? If I'm not, I'm an Ezekiel 33 guy. And I'm doing what this leper did.

I'm off doing some activity that I think is great, but that doesn't serve the Lord's purposes. It's a very convicting principle. And this is the message of the Gospel of Mark.

Jesus is here saying, I am here to sanctify you. I am here to transform you. I am here to change you into something that is useful and that glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul says, I say through the grace given to me to everyone who is among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think. This is what we do. I'm sure the leper, three weeks after this experience, said, I'll bet the Lord is really proud of me because I've been proclaiming his name.

I've been telling everyone what a wonderful thing that he did and so forth. Thinking of himself more highly than he ought to think. He should have been rebuking himself.

He should have stopped his mouth and gone down to the priest, which he did not do. Not think more highly than oneself than he ought to think, but think soberly as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. We have many members in one body, but all the same members don't have the same function.

Members don't have the same function. I may go out and perform a certain function, and it may be God's will for me, and it may be a wonderful thing. But if people start pointing to me and say, there's the example we should all follow.

Every one of us should do what Pastor Ho just did. That's not necessarily the case. Anyone can behave the way another person behaves.

And we let ourselves off the hook. Not everyone is a hand. Each part of the body is a hand, and a hand can't look at the foot and say, I'm going to go do what the foot did.

That's not our responsibility. We can't judge one another. We can't judge the manifestation of God's love.

God took the first step when we were hopeless and helpless and useless, unable to help ourselves. In love, God said, I am willing, be clean, and made it possible for us to have eternal life, for us to be cleansed, for us to be made righteous, to be restored to function and to fellowship.

And our contribution is just like that of the leper. In the initial phase of that ritual, he does nothing except ask. He does nothing except receive the ministry of the high priest.

And that's our responsibility. If you're here today without Jesus Christ, he is standing by waiting to perform the cleansing that all of us so desperately need. He is standing by to infuse each of us with his power, with his grace, the expression of his compassion.

All that is required of us is to accept, to trust in Jesus Christ, to exercise faith toward him, to look at him and say, I accept Jesus Christ as my savior. I want his work to be applied to my account. And in that moment, God cleanses, God transforms, God transfers us from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light, the kingdom of his son.

Faith in Jesus Christ is the single and only requirement for eternal relationship with God. If you've never made that decision, I encourage you to do so this morning. Father, we thank you for the standing that we have before you because of Jesus Christ.

We know that there's nothing that we could ever have done to attain that standing, to be acceptable in your sight. And what we could not do, Jesus Christ has done for us. And by accepting his work on our behalf, we now stand before you as your children.

And we know that you have saved us for a purpose. And we pray that the truth that we have looked at in your word this morning will transform us, will change us and make us different and give us the opportunity to fulfill our potential to live in a way that pleases you and glorifies Jesus Christ. For we ask it in his name.

Amen.