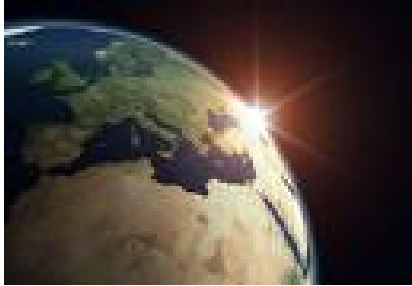


October 25, 2009
Mark 1:40-2:12

The Good News: A Sermon Series through the Gospel of Mark
The Good News That Jesus Chooses
Rev. John Sowers

There's Good News for the world . . .



Jesus chooses to heal – physically and spiritually.

Jesus is willing to be outside to bring us in. He abandons his place of comfort so the leper can come back into fellowship.

The four friends do something crazy to bring someone else into the presence of Jesus.

Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!"

Mark 1:41

Are you feeling isolated and lonely? Share this with your group. Let them bring you into the presence of Jesus through their compassion and prayers.

The scripture this week is two stories of people who were outsiders in the culture of that time. Write down a list of people you would label as outsiders in our culture. Think of people who experience loneliness, frustration because of their circumstances and isolation.

READ Mark 1:40-2:12

Look through the list of outsiders you wrote down. Do you withhold your help to any of these groups because you feel their circumstances are a result of their sinfulness?

Read John 9:1-3. According to their cultural norms the disciples thought blindness, and other physical ailments, was a result of sinfulness. Do you think this might have kept the disciples from thinking Jesus should heal persons with physical disabilities? How would Jesus forgiving sins along with healing impact their thinking? How does it impact your attitude toward outsiders?

In Leviticus 13 we see that the priests had the role of declaring someone as clean or unclean. Making someone an outsider or not was dictated to them by the rules of the circumstances. Jesus, on the other hand, didn't just declare the man clean or unclean. He changed the circumstances of the man's life. In what ways has God given you the power to change the circumstances of a person's life so that they no longer feel like an outsider? Jesus' choice to do this resulted in him being forced outside the villages. In what ways can you choose to sacrifice your own status, resources, or well being to change the circumstances of another person?

The men in these two stories were outsiders because of their physical circumstances and the constraints put on them by their culture. Our culture has developed the means to help people with similar circumstances function more within the norms of society and therefore be less on the outside. Look at the list of outsiders your group came up with. Which group do you feel compassion towards? What are some practical things you can do to change the circumstances of someone in this group?

Is there a commonality to where your group feels compassion? What is something you can do together as a group to move out of your places of comfort to work toward changing the circumstances of someone for whom you feel compassion? Think radically – like breaking through the roof. We are called to band together like the four friends: Who are others (individuals and organizations) that have already responded because of the compassion God has given them for a similar group of outsiders?

If you don't feel compassion toward any of these groups then start by asking God to give you compassion. Then, listen for issues that make you frustrated or angry; or situations or people that catch your attention in a new way.

PRAY TOGETHER!

Ask God to give you compassion for outsiders, desperation to seek healing through Jesus, and radical, tangible ways to respond.