



## The Gospel of Mark, Part 5 Jesus Is Willing to Make You Clean Mark 1:40-45

David Sunday      November 4, 2018



We've come to the end of Mark 1 where we'll see the amazing compassion, grace and mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ. It's a wonderful story. Let's continue worshipping our great God as we read His Word to us, beginning at verse 40:

*<sup>40</sup> And a leper came to [Jesus], imploring him, and kneeling said to him, "If you will, you can make me clean." <sup>41</sup> Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand and touched him and said to him, "I will; be clean." <sup>42</sup> And immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean. <sup>43</sup> And Jesus sternly charged him and sent him away at once, <sup>44</sup> 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." <sup>45</sup> 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.*

May the words of my mouth and the thoughts of all our hearts be pleasing in the sight of God, as His Word is opened to us.

There are three words none of us wants to hear: "Shame on you." When's the last time someone said those words to you? Maybe you said them to someone in your life—maybe one of your children. We talk quite a lot about guilt in the church, but not as much about shame. But the Bible has a lot to say about shame. The Bible uses categories like nakedness, defilement, uncleanness, dishonor, disgrace and contamination.

If you consider how often these categories are spoken of in Scripture, you may find that the Bible has even more to say about shame than it has to say about guilt. God knows what a destructive and crippling influence shame has over our lives and He wants us to be released from

it. Ed Welch wrote this in his book Shame Interrupted: “Shame is life-dominating and stubborn. Once entrenched in your heart and mind, it is a squatter that refuses to leave.”

I remember a time in fourth grade when we had a substitute teacher named Mrs. Geezey. She wanted to get know the class, so she had us all write on a piece of paper something we wanted the class to know about ourselves. Then she collected all the papers and started reading them to the class. I was in the back row, near the door, and a student named John was up in the front—right in front of Mrs. Geezey. She read his paper first, without even realizing the impact his words would have on another student sitting in the classroom. What did John want the class to know about himself? “I don’t like David Sunday because he’s weird.”

When Mrs. Geezey read those words, every eye in the room turned to see my reaction. Now, if you said that to me today, it might sting a little bit. I might laugh. I might even agree with you. I’ve purposely left John’s last name out of this sermon, just in case he’s up in Kenosha listening on live stream. I want him to know, “John, I forgave you a long time ago for this.” But in fourth grade, the shame of that moment was more than my heart could bear, and I did what no fourth-grade boy wants to do: I burst into tears and ran out of the classroom. That’s one of the earliest times in my life when I remember that squatter named Shame taking up residence in my heart. It’s been awfully hard to evict him in the years that have followed.

Maybe you’ve had a similar experience. Maybe you were one of those who was left on the kickball field after both teams had been picked, but no one wanted you on their team. Finally the gym teacher said, “You’ve got to take him.” When you joined their team, they were all moaning, because their team was contaminated now. They were sure to lose. Shame.

Or maybe you were held back a grade. It’s 40 years later, but you still feel inferior to your peers because of Shame. Maybe it’s something about your physical appearance that makes you feel like you’re ugly and Shame whispers in your ear, “You are a big mistake. You are unacceptable. You aren’t worth being noticed or being paid attention to or loved. You’re a reject. You don’t fit in.” And you think that everyone around you sees you in the same way that Shame speaks to you.

Maybe you have an overactive, scrupulous conscience. So whenever a sordid, unclean or wicked thought passes through your mind—which happens to all of us, remember what Martin Luther said: “Thoughts are like birds. You can’t stop them from passing over your head, but you can stop them from building a nest in your hair.” But still you have these thoughts and you imagine yourself to be beyond hope of redemption. You think of yourself as outside the bounds of Christian fellowship, so you isolate yourself. You withdraw in shame.

Sometimes we can hide our guilt, but shame is different. Shame always makes you feel exposed. Long after the guilt of your sin has been objectively forgiven, shame can suffocate the joy

that forgiveness of sins was meant to bring into your life. Shame is also a master at attaching itself to us as a byproduct of someone else's sin that has been done against us. So shame is a big category in life and in Scripture, and the Gospels are full of stories of Jesus being a Savior Who sets us free, Who releases us from our shame and Who rids us of our disgrace. This story is one of the best of them all.

### **What's more contagious—cleanness or uncleanness?**

To understand how Jesus sets us free from shame, let's first consider a question. What's more contagious—cleanness or uncleanness? Think about it in real life. What happens when you buy a carton of plump and juicy raspberries (one of my favorite fruits) and you can't wait to eat them? You go home, open that carton and there in the middle is a moldy raspberry. Well, in the words of the author of a book called Home Comforts, "Even a spot of mold calls for action." That's because the good raspberries aren't going to make the moldy ones fresh again. Mold spreads.

Or I've thought of another story from my childhood. When I was a young boy, I was over at my mom's friend's house. I was outside with the other kids and we found a bird in the backyard—a dead bird. So with my clean hands, I picked up the dead bird and brought it in to show my mom's friend. I don't know—this might have been in fourth grade, which might be the reason John thought I was weird.

So I brought this dead bird into to show my mom's friend and I remember how horrified she was when she saw me touching that dead bird. She put on some rubber gloves and got rid of it. Then she made sure I didn't touch a thing until she had thoroughly cleansed my hands and arms. So what was more likely to happen? Were my clean hands touching that dead bird going to make the bird come alive again? Or was the dead bird going to contaminate my clean hands? Or even worse, if I touched my mouth or something else, that contamination would spread, right?

Or suppose you're in a less developed country and you're working in a sanatorium for tuberculosis patients. You go into a room of 50 very sick patients, but you're perfectly healthy so you don't wear a mask or a gown or do anything to protect yourself. What's more likely to happen? Will your healthiness spread to all the sick patients, or will their sickness spread to you? Uncleanness is more contagious than cleanness.

That's why the first six words of verse 40 are so provocative: "*And a leper came to him*"—to Jesus. This isn't just an unusual breach of protocol. This is a highly offensive move on behalf of an extremely defiled person. In the Bible, the term "leprosy" covers a whole variety of skin diseases, from things like eczema and psoriasis to the more severe cases like Hansen's disease. We know

this man had a severe case, because Luke tells us he was a man who was “full of leprosy.” He’s afflicted with one of the most loathsome diseases in the history of humanity.

We know now that leprosy is caused by a micro-bacteria attacking the nerves in and below the skin, destroying the body’s pain-warning system. You might think, “Well, that’s a great deal. I’d love to be free of pain.” But pain is the warning system for our body. Leprosy anesthetizes the skin and the limbs, causing numbness in the extremities. It starts spreading in all directions, so the eyebrows and eyelashes start to disappear. Eyelids stop blinking, thus causing blindness. Fingers and toes get reabsorbed into the body or fall off. Bones and extremities shrivel. Lepers can put their hands in a fire, grab something hot and hang on to it—not realizing their hands are burning, because they can’t feel the pain. So this made a very grotesque appearance in the life of lepers.

The worst part of having leprosy was the social isolation it would cost. Because it’s a highly communicable disease, lepers had to be quarantined away from the community. In the Bible, the law of Moses spoke about how the lepers were to be isolated and segregated from society. Listen to this from Leviticus 13:

*<sup>45</sup> The leprous person who has the disease shall wear torn clothes and let the hair of his head hang loose, and he shall cover his upper lip and cry out, “Unclean, unclean.” <sup>46</sup> He shall remain unclean as long as he has the disease. He is unclean. He shall live alone. His dwelling shall be outside the camp.*

So leprosy is not just a disease—it’s a relational death sentence. You’re cut off. You become an untouchable. You lose your job, your family, your friends and all your freedoms. Not only was it socially isolating, it was spiritually isolating as well, because it was assumed that leprosy was caused by someone’s sin. It contaminated your status as one of God’s holy people and made you ceremonially unclean, so you couldn’t go into the temple and places of worship. There’s hardly a more vivid picture of shame in the Bible than leprosy. It’s a stigma that demands isolation and makes you untouchable, unlovable, unclean and unwelcome in the community.

So imagine the shock and horror as this leper comes and approaches Jesus. People are running away. Mothers are grabbing their children, saying, “Stay away from that man!” But he bursts through every protocol of society and the stipulations of the law, falling down on his blistered knees before Jesus. He cries out, “Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.” He believes that Jesus is able to cleanse him.

The fact that he approaches Jesus in his defiled state indicates that this leper believes the holiness of Jesus is more contagious than the defilement of leprosy. Where did he get this idea? In the Old Testament, the pattern is always that defilement flows from the unclean to the clean. So if

you touch something that's unclean, you get defiled. It's not the other way around. Let me just give you one example from the prophet Haggai. This is in Haggai 2, beginning in verse 11:

*<sup>11</sup> "Thus says the Lord of hosts: Ask the priests about the law: <sup>12</sup> 'If someone carries holy meat in the fold of his garment and touches with his fold bread or stew or wine or oil or any kind of food, does it become holy?' The priests answered and said, "No." <sup>13</sup> Then Haggai said, "If someone who is unclean by contact with a dead body touches any of these, does it become unclean?" The priests answered and said, "It does become unclean." <sup>14</sup> Then Haggai answered and said, "So is it with this people, and with this nation before me, declares the Lord, and so with every work of their hands. And what they offer there is unclean.*

In the Old Testament, it's uncleanness that is contagious and holiness that is not. But this leper believes that Jesus' holiness will bring cleansing to his life. There were lepers in the Old Testament who were healed. God healed Miriam, the sister of Moses, from her leprosy. Moses didn't do it—God did it. During the time of Elisha, there was Naaman the Syrian who was a leper. He also was healed when he followed the word of the prophet and dipped himself in the Jordan River several times. It wasn't the prophet Elisha who healed Naaman—it was a miracle from God.

But this leper is on his knees before Jesus. He's looking at Him and saying, "You can! You can heal me. You can cleanse me. You're able, Jesus." He believes the holiness of Jesus will prove to be more contagious than the defilement of his leprosy.

I wonder if we believe that. Leprosy in the Bible is a picture of the problem all of us have. We don't have a skin problem—we have a sin problem. Our sin problem is not as obvious on the surface as leprosy. So a lot of people think, "I can ignore it, hide it, disguise it or somehow cover it up and not deal with it." But sin goes much deeper than leprosy. It goes to the core of our being, infecting every part of our personality—how we think, how we feel, the choices we make, our decisions, our relationships, our life in society. It's all tainted and contaminated and corrupted by our sinfulness. So sin is even more loathsome, defiling and revolting than leprosy was physically.

I ask you, friends, do you believe that through contact with Jesus everything that's been polluted and corrupted and contaminated in your life through sin can be cleansed and made whole? Do you really believe that the holiness of Jesus is more contagious than the defilement of your sin? Do you really believe the power of Jesus to cleanse you is greater even than the power of your sin to contaminate you? Do you believe the words of the song we sang, "Whiter than snow I can be today through the grace of Jesus"?

I heard someone say, “Jesus is a better Savior than we are sinners.” That’s wonderful. Do you believe that? Do you believe Jesus is a greater Savior than you are a sinner? If you do, think about what makes you feel most ashamed. It doesn’t take me very long to start thinking of things. Even though you believe you’re forgiven, every time you’re reminded of certain things in your life, shame covers your face. Think of it now. You wouldn’t dare speak it aloud, for the shame of everyone in this room knowing it would be more than you could bear. But in your heart, name it. Bring it to the Lord Jesus right now. Tell Him what it is. Can you do that? He sees into your heart. All things are naked and laid bare before Him. You can’t cover the contagion of your shame before Him. It can’t be disguised. So name it before Jesus and then kneel before Him figuratively. Do what the leper did. Implore Him, saying, “Lord, if You’re willing, You can make me clean. You can cleanse me of this shame.”

That’s an important place to start, but we can’t end there because the most vital question is not, “Is He able to cleanse me?” The more vital question is, “Is He willing to do so?” One of the commentators says, “It is sometimes easier to believe in God’s power than in His mercy.” So this is how we speak when we’re overwhelmed with shame: “I know God can cleanse me. I know He can restore me. I know He can love me. But will He? Will He cleanse me? Will He really restore me? Will He really receive me into His arms and love me as one of His own dear children? Will He accept me and honor me as His child? Is He willing?”

### **The direction of defilement is reversed.**

We see the answer in verses 41 and 42, as the direction of defilement is reversed. Verse 41 is probably the most precious verse in this story. Just imagine the scene. “*Moved with pity,*” it says. A better word I think would be the word compassion. But even that word doesn’t quite capture what’s going on here. The word in Greek is *splagchnon*. That’s where we get the word for bowels, guts. It’s why the King James Version sometimes talks about “bowels of mercy.” When Jesus sees this leper with his pain and isolation and shame, with all the people running from him, it provokes a visceral reaction in the heart of Jesus—in His gut. There’s a gut-wrenching agony and compassion that Jesus feels for this broken man who’s been living this prolonged death. He’s moved deeply. But it’s not just an emotional response. Jesus is able to do more than sympathize.

The next thing we read in verse 41 is, “*He stretched out his hand and touched him...*” Touch is such a powerful thing. I remember Kate and I going to the Spot Drive-in in Kenosha to get a hamburger, then for some reason we were walking back to her parents’ house, which was about a mile down 22nd Avenue. It was one of those nights when I was walking beside Kate in high

school, and I was feeling my hand getting close to hers. “Dare I hold her hand?” And I did it! It wasn’t the first time I’d touched Kate. We’d bumped into one another before. I had tapped her neck in psychology class and made her jump a little bit—that kind of stuff. But I’d never held her hand. That time, when I touched her in such a close, tender, personal way, something changed in our relationship that night. Once we started, we were hand holders from then on. Once we started, we didn’t stop—and we still haven’t stopped holding hands. The tenderness of touch.

Kent Hughes talks about when he was a pastor in Wheaton and someone recommended that a guy go and talk to him. He wasn’t part of Kent’s church. He wasn’t a Christian. Kent says, “This was the loneliest man I had ever met.” He described how painfully lonely and isolated he felt. The man said to Pastor Hughes, “You know what? I get my hair cut by the barber every week, just to feel a human touch.” That’s how lonely and isolated he was.

It’s been a long time since this leper in Mark 1 has felt the touch of a human hand. His wife? She’s not been able to hold his hand or embrace him or kiss him. His children haven’t been able to run up to him when he returns home from work and say, “Daddy! We’re glad you’re home.” His friends can’t do the Middle Eastern kiss-on-both-cheeks routine. Everywhere he goes he has to call out, “Unclean! Unclean! Stay away from me.”

Dr. Paul Brand, who worked with a lot of leprosy patients in the 20th century, said this: “Of all the gifts we can give a leprosy patient, the one he values most is the gift of being handled and touched. We don’t shrink from him. We love him with our skin by touch.” Jesus didn’t have to touch this leper in order to heal him. He touches him in order to show His compassion, His love, His tenderness, His identification with the shame and misery this leper was feeling. Jesus isn’t aiming just to rid him of a disease. Jesus is drawing him into a relationship.

I love all the words the Bible uses to describe our salvation, words like justification, sanctification, glorification, propitiation, reconciliation and redemption. These words are just packed with meaning. But let’s not forget that it’s also a relationship of tenderness and intimacy. What does it mean to be saved? Well, among other things, it means to have been touched by Jesus.

As I was thinking about this, I was reminded of a song we used to sing a lot in the church I grew up in. It’s not very rich in theology. Most of our songs were more emotional and experiential. But I can picture my Nana Hazel singing it with tears in her eyes, because she never forgot what Jesus did for her.

Shackled by a heavy burden  
‘Neath the load of guilt and shame  
Then the hand of Jesus touched me  
And now I am no longer the same

He touched me, oh, He touched me  
And oh, the joy that floods my soul  
Something happened and now I know  
He touched me and made me whole

[From "He Touched Me" by Bill Gaither]

That's what Jesus does for us. He says to us, "I see your defilement. I see your contamination. I see the contagion of sin and shame on you. I know it's there. But I'm not going to let that keep Me from getting close to you. I'm going to draw you in. I'm going to make you My friend, you who were once My enemy. I'm going to touch you and make you whole." If that's happened to you, never lose the wonder of it. Never forget what it means to be touched by Jesus.

Before Jesus even spoke the word to this leper, that touch dispelled all doubts. "Is He willing? Oh, yes, He is. If He would touch me, a leper, I know He's willing." Then Jesus said this in verse 41: "*I will; be clean.*" I think those are the most important words in this story. It's all it took—just a word of command. Jesus is willing to make you clean.

"*Immediately,*" it says, "*the leprosy left him.*" Can you just see the shriveled limbs growing back, the eyelashes and eyebrows instantly reappearing, sores all over his body now covered with healthy fresh skin, eyes that were infected with sores and blinded by gazing at the sun are now sparkling with life and vitality. Instantaneously, immediately, the shame that had covered him and isolated him can torment him no longer. That's all through the power of Jesus. He's willing to cleanse you.

I love how Betsy Childs describes this: "Anyone can take what is clean and make it unclean. I do it all the time accidentally when I dump my cup of coffee into a dishwasher full of clean dishes. Only Jesus can reverse defilement. He doesn't do it with bleach or burnt offerings or antibiotics. He does it by the sheer strength of His holiness." That's what He does. He reverses the order. Instead of the unclean making everything else unclean, when He touches you, you become clean. His holiness becomes contagious.

He can do the same for every one of us. That's what John says in 1 John 1:7-9: "*But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another.*" No more isolation. No more hiding from one another in shame. No, everything's open and united in Jesus, because "*the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*" "Grace that can pardon and cleanse within."

Do you notice in the story that it never says He healed the leper—it says He cleansed him. It's the language of cleansing. It's speaking of something that happens deep within our being that makes us new, that removes the stigma and contamination that isolates us and covers us with shame. That's what Jesus does.

### **A surprising command**

In verses 43-45, there's a surprising command. Let's look at it for a minute: "*And Jesus sternly charged him...*" The word there is very strong. It's literally "snorting" in the Greek. Jesus snorted, "*...and sent him away at once.*" Jesus sent him packing with a stern command: "*See that you say nothing to anyone.*" Now, everything in this leper is wanting to shout, "I'm clean! I'm clean!" Jesus says, "Don't do it. Don't go running around telling everyone."

Instead He says, "*Go, show yourself to the priest...*" In the law of Moses, there was a procedure that detailed how the priests were to declare a person clean who had been unclean. It was a process that took at least eight days, involving sacrifices of birds and then lambs. It was an elaborate procedure to bring the person back into fellowship with God and God's people. All of it is prefiguring what Jesus is going to do for us when He goes to the cross.

Jesus is saying, "You've got to go to the priest," because Jesus wants to show that He is under the law—He's fulfilling the law. It's also because Jesus doesn't want the leper going and blabbing this around, because so many people are misunderstanding His identity, mission and purpose as the Messiah. If this leper starts going around telling everyone what Jesus has done, every leper in the Middle East is going to come running to Jesus, then that's going to become the focal point of His ministry.

What did Jesus tell us He came to do? He came to preach the Kingdom of God (Mark 1:38). That's what He wants to do. He wants to do that broadly and freely. He doesn't want to provoke the ire of the authorities. So He says, "Don't go tell everyone right now." But the leper didn't follow Jesus' command. Verse 45 says, "*He went out and began to talk freely about it, and to spread the news.*" Now, we could say, "Who could blame him? If you just got healed of leprosy, wouldn't you want to tell a few people?"

Friends, realize too, Jesus has given a much more exciting command to us. He said to the leper, "Don't tell anyone." He says to us, "Go tell it on the mountain. Tell everyone what I've done for you. Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every nation" (Matthew 28:18-20). That's the command Jesus gives us, but that doesn't mean the only way to do it is by being loud and brash. Sometimes we Americans need to be reminded of that. We like being bold and loud and

brash, making a splash. Sometimes Jesus wants us to work for Him quietly and silently and patiently. There's more than one way to promote the gospel and it's not always by noisy zeal.

There's another important lesson for us here. It's never right to disregard Christ's commands—even if we think that by doing so we will be spreading His gospel. In the words of R.A. Cole, “Disobedience to the express command of Jesus, even if undertaken from the best possible motives, could lead only to a hampering and hindering of His work.”

Sometimes we rationalize by thinking, “As long as I'm getting the gospel out, it doesn't matter if I pay careful attention to what Jesus commands me to do in the Bible.” So we cut corners financially, or we manipulate people with gimmicks, or we get lax with our character and conduct. We say, “All that matters is that people are hearing the good news and people are coming into the Kingdom.” But Jesus says, “No, that's not all that matters. What matters is that you obey Me, that you do all I commanded you to do—because I'm the Lord and you're not.”

### **Jesus trades places with the leper.**

Look at what happened at the end of the story as a result of the leper's disobedience. “*Jesus could no longer openly enter a town, but was out in desolate places, and people were coming to him from every quarter.*” Jesus took a burden away from the leper, but now the leper has placed a burden on Jesus. The story began with Jesus on the inside and the leper on the outside. The story is ending with the leper on the inside and Jesus is on the outside. Jesus has traded places with the leper. Now Jesus is the outcast.

This is a picture of what Jesus came into the world to do. In a few short years, He is going to go outside the city gates, outside the camp, to a hill called Golgotha—the Place of the Skull. There He is going to bear shame and reproach as He dies naked on a cross for His sinful people. Why? So we could be freed from our shame, rid of our disgrace, accepted and welcomed into God's family. Because Jesus became an outsider and bore our shame and reproach, God can say to us in the words of Isaiah 54:4 (NLT), “*Fear not; you will no longer live in shame. Don't be afraid; there is no more disgrace for you.*” That's such good news.

As I was thinking about this, I was wondering about our church. Are we a culture of shame or of restoration? I heard about a lady named Marian who was a full-time stripper and was just miserable. She decided, “It's time for me to start going to church.” So she started going, even though she hadn't abandoned her job yet. She was welcomed with open arms. Sometimes she'd show up to corporate worship still in her “work clothes.” The pastor would just welcome her at the door and give her a coat to put on to cover herself.

When she decided to join the church, they began to press harder on her about leaving her job. They were very gentle, but they also explained how that kind of work was actually sinning. Their help and love didn't stop there. They gave her training so she could develop marketable skills for employment. The church surrounded her and supported her and welcomed her as she was, but they also loved her enough not to leave her where they found her. That's a recovery culture, not a shame culture.<sup>1</sup>

As I thought about that, I wondered if New Covenant would welcome Marian. I think we'd love to have her in our church, wouldn't we? But then I also thought, we're tested on this in smaller ways every week. What happens when someone confesses a shameful sin in our Gospel Communities? Are we embarrassed? Does it feel awkward? Do we just kind of do the silent treatment and pretend we didn't hear that? Or do we draw near and embrace and identify, saying, "I'm with you. I too need Jesus. We need Him together. Thank you for being open. Thank you for sharing. Let's walk this road together."

That's a recovery culture. In that kind of culture, shameful sins do get confessed. In a recovery culture, no one ever thinks, "My sins are more respectable than theirs." No, we have the compassion of Jesus and because we do, people who are full of shame are drawn toward us, even as the leper was drawn toward Jesus. They don't hide from us. They don't stay away.

Think about this in our church.<sup>2</sup> What about ethnic minorities? Do they see us as a safe place and people of compassion? What about widows, divorced, poor, homeless, people who disagree with your political views? Do you identify with people who are feeling alienated, invisible—"no one notices me"—or like they don't have a voice?

Are we the kind of church where people who are fighting an addiction to meth or opioids or alcohol are just as welcome here as people who are fighting against self-pity, anger and gossip? Because we're all broken and all covered in shame without Jesus. Do people who are wrestling with same sex attraction feel like this is a safe place—"I can actually talk about this and I won't be rejected. I won't be alienated or humiliated"?

What about in your home—those of you who are parents—what do you think your kids feel more deeply in your presence? Do they feel you're disappointed with them because of all the ways they fail to meet your expectations? Or does your presence continually remind them that they have a Father in heaven Whose arms of mercy are open wide and a Savior Who is willing to cleanse them again and again and again?

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<sup>1</sup> For more of Marian's story, visit <http://thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/tgc/2014/02/21/is-your-church-a-recovery-culture-2/>

<sup>2</sup> Questions suggested by Jason Meyer, <https://bethlehem.church/sermon/unclean/>

Realize this, friends: if you are carrying shame around, you will inevitably cast shame on those who are around you. Shame carriers become shame casters. That is why it is so vital that you realize that what Jesus did for you on the cross rids you of your disgrace and liberates you from your shame. An email Patrick sent me yesterday said this: “Shame breeds destruction, but mercy breeds transformation.”

Here at this Communion Table of mercy, Jesus is saying to all who trust in Him, “Come, get close to Me. Not only do I love you, I actually like you. I am willing to touch you. I want to welcome you in.” Every single person who is desperate for mercy, desperate for cleansing, who comes to Jesus and says, “If You are willing, You can make me clean,” Jesus says to you, “Oh, yes, I am not only able, I am willing. Doubt no more.” Come to the table and receive afresh from Jesus freedom from sin and guilt and shame, rejoicing in what He’s done for you.

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*All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.*

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