



# Looking for Jesus

October 4, 2009

***BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE:***

***MARK 1:21–45***

***PRINTED TEXT:***

***MARK 1:32–45***

*When they found [Jesus], they exclaimed: “Everyone is looking for you!”*

*—Mark 1:37*

## Opening Song

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### Apostles' Creed

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried; the third day He arose from the dead, He ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Church Universal, the communion of the saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting

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### Opening Prayer

*MARK 1:32-45 (NIV)*

**1**<sup>32</sup>That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. <sup>33</sup>The whole town gathered at the door, <sup>34</sup>and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was. <sup>35</sup>Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. <sup>36</sup>Simon and his companions went to look for him, <sup>37</sup>and when they found him, they exclaimed: "Everyone is looking for you!" <sup>38</sup>Jesus replied, "Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come." <sup>39</sup>So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons. <sup>40</sup>A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, "If you are willing, you can make me clean." <sup>41</sup>Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" <sup>42</sup>Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cured. <sup>43</sup>Jesus sent him away at once with a strong warning: <sup>44</sup>"See that you don't tell this to anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them." <sup>45</sup>Instead he went out and began to talk freely, spreading the news. As a result, Jesus could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside in lonely places. Yet the people still came to him from everywhere.

**INTRODUCTION****A. TO WHOM DO WE LOOK?**

Athletic stadiums and arenas are packed with fans who want to catch a glimpse of the stars in action. The crowd roars with delight to see a winning touchdown or slam dunk in the last few seconds of the game. Even though these sports heroes cannot heal, save souls, or answer prayers, they receive so much attention and devotion that an outsider might wonder what special powers they have! If Jesus walked our streets today, what would be our expectation of him? The people of Jesus' day expected that Jesus would work miracles for those who were either physically ill or demon-possessed. What faith they had! While Jesus is not present in human flesh in our midst today, we can still take hope in John 20:29: "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

Consider also 1 Peter 5:7. That passage encourages us to cast all our anxiety on Christ, for he cares for us. Many people of Jesus' day did just that. Jesus did the seemingly impossible for those afflicted in body, mind, and spirit. To be sure, not everyone who sought Jesus had good motives (example: John 6:26). But many did. Do we have an eager expectation today that Jesus can transform lives? Do we still revere him and gather in his presence, looking to him for blessings? Or has our faith grown complacent over time, lacking the initial flame that once burned within our souls?

**B. LESSON BACKGROUND**

The Gospel of Mark is a fast-moving account of Jesus' actions in his ministry. While other Gospels spend a lot of time describing what Jesus *said*, Mark likes to focus on what Jesus *did*.

Today's text—a text of action—takes us into Jesus' initial preaching tour of Galilee. By the time we get to today's text, John the Baptist already had prepared the way (Mark 1:1–8). Jesus had been baptized and tempted (1:9–13). He had called his first disciples (1:14–20). He had taught; he had performed exorcisms (1:21–28). He had healed Peter's mother-in-law, who had been bedridden with a fever (1:29–31). So much action in only 31 verses!

News of Jesus had spread throughout Galilee (Mark 1:28). His fame was growing as people flocked to the one who seemed to have the solutions.

**I. JESUS HEALS (MARK 1:32–34)****A. ACTS OF FAITH (VV. 32, 33)**

**32. *That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed.***

When we take a bird's-eye view of Mark 1:21–38, we get the idea that the events described in these verses take place within a 24-hour period of time. It had been the Sabbath day according to verse 21. But since it is now *evening after sunset*, the Sabbath is over. Old Testament regulations forbid

carrying loads on the Sabbath (example: Jeremiah 17:21, 22). Now, however, the people may freely bring their loved ones to the feet of Jesus.

What desperation the people must feel! Their desperation leads to faith, and faith leads to deliverance. We see this desperation and faith elsewhere in Mark (example: 2:1–5). This should cause us to ask ourselves if we have this same kind of outlook today. Do we bring to Jesus the cares and concerns of ourselves and of our loved ones? And when

we do, is Jesus our last resort or our first priority?

The faith of the people in this verse challenges us to refocus our eyes on our Savior and behold his glory for what it truly is: life-changing. While our problems may not instantly vanish before our eyes, we can rest assured that Jesus hears our prayers. We take hope that he can deliver us out of the depths of despair.

**33. *The whole town gathered at the door,***

The *town* in question is Capernaum (see Mark 1:21), located on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee. The population of Capernaum at this time probably is somewhere between 1,000 and 2,000 (the lower number is more likely). The phrase *whole town* need not signify exactly 100 percent of that population. But it's clear that quite a crowd is present! This gives us a sense of the desperation of the people to have Jesus answer their needs. They are eager with expectation to meet Jesus and be in his presence.

**B. ACTS OF DELIVERANCE (V. 34)**

**34.... and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was.**

The people do not wait in vain. The sick are *healed*. The *demons* are driven out of the afflicted.

We may find it fascinating that Jesus does not allow the demons to *speak*. They know who he is (see the parallel account in Luke 4:41). But Jesus does not want his identity revealed. He wants to keep a lid on things, at least for a while. We may find this curious. Doesn't Jesus come into the world to make himself known (compare John 7:4)? Jesus has a plan of revealing his identity according to his own timetable. Bad things happen when that timetable is violated, as we will see when we get to Mark 1:45.

**II. JESUS PRAYS (MARK 1:35–37)**

**A. ALONE (V. 35)**

**35. *Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.***

Jesus needs to break away from the crowd to seek some solitude. Consider Jesus' words for us to do the same in Matthew 6:6—when we pray, we are to go into a room and shut the door. Jesus withdraws to a lonely place in order to free himself from distractions. We are encouraged to do likewise.

There are many around Jesus who will try to co-opt him for their own purposes, as time will tell (example: John 6:15). Mark often notes that Jesus retreats from the public arena and the pressure of the crowds (Mark 1:45; 3:13; 6:31, 32, 46; 7:24; 9:2, 30). Solitary prayer will help him keep his mind clear and stay focused. If Jesus has a need to do this, can we say that we do not?

I once knew a minister who was in charge of Adult Life-Changing Bible Study (also known as Sunday school) at his local church. I asked him how he spent his quiet time with the Lord. He gave me some wise advice when he said that he tithed a tenth of his time each day to God. That is, every day he specifically gave God about two and one-half hours of time. This time included studying the Word of God and communing with the Lord in prayer.

Many of us do not have such an amount of time at our disposal on a daily basis. Even so, we may be able to invest that much time on a weekly or biweekly basis. Time spent with the Lord is time well spent. While it may involve sacrifice or having to rearrange priorities, we can rest assured that our time spent seeking our Father is never wasted. It yields fruit in due season (see John 15:4).

**B. NOT ALONE (VV. 36, 37)**

**36. *Simon and his companions went to look for him,***

This particular *Simon* is also known as Peter (Mark 3:16; 14:37). Naturally, he is

not to be confused with the other Simon of Mark 3:18. Simon and his companions are looking for their leader, desperate for the company of Jesus. Despite the fact that Jesus wants to be alone, can we blame Simon and his friends for trying to stay close to him? After all, Jesus has just healed Simon's mother-in-law (Mark 1:29–31). No one seems to be content to allow Jesus to return on his own initiative.

**37.... and when they found him, they exclaimed: "Everyone is looking for you!"**

Simon and company are not the only ones *looking for* Jesus. Jesus has become a popular figure. Because of the miraculous acts, Jesus has achieved instant fame. Simon and the others probably urge Jesus to return to Capernaum because of the impact that he already has had on that city. That's the natural way to think, isn't it? "Keep building on the momentum you've already achieved" may be the idea. But as we soon find out, Jesus has other plans.

### **III. JESUS PREACHES (MARK 1:38, 39)**

#### **A. DESIRE EXPRESSED (V. 38)**

**38. Jesus replied, "Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come."**

Jesus has a larger vision than what his followers may have for him. Jesus' goal is not to *preach* and minister only to the people at Capernaum, but to go to neighboring *villages* as well. Sometimes our vision may be clouded by the opinions of others. Others' expectations of what we are to do with our lives or our personal circumstances may not always be what the Lord has in mind for us. What are we to do?

Consider Jesus' example. Before Jesus makes this ministry decision, he spends time with his Father. His decisions are birthed in prayer, and this venture into the nearby towns can be seen as an answer to his prayer in verse 35. Are our decisions in life birthed in a context of prayer? Or are we more

susceptible to the whims of others? One thing is certain: we must be able to discern God's will for ourselves. Sometimes we will need to take a stand against the desires of the crowd to pursue the will of God.

#### **B. DESIRE FULFILLED (V. 39)**

**39. So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.**

This verse summarizes Jesus' first preaching tour *throughout Galilee*. This is the first of three such tours. (Luke 8:1 notes the second preaching tour; the third tour is mentioned in Matthew 11:1 and Mark 6:6.) Jesus demonstrates the saving message of the gospel in both word and in deed.

### **IV. JESUS HINDERED (MARK 1:40–45)**

#### **A. REQUEST (V. 40)**

**40. A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, "If you are willing, you can make me clean."**

Following the general description of Jesus' itinerant ministry (v. 39, above), Mark now focuses on one particular *man* who makes a request. He has *leprosy*. This is a general designation in the ancient world for some kind of skin disease (not necessarily leprosy in the modern sense of Hansen's Disease).

The priests are charged with determining the severity of such problems along with the necessary course of action (Leviticus 13:1–46; 14:1–32). The afflicted person may be excluded from social contact and forced to warn all who come near with the words "Unclean! Unclean!" (Leviticus 13:45, 46).

Thus those with leprosy are isolated and ostracized from Jewish society. The banishment is not rooted in a medical concern of spreading infection, but rather in the religious impurity and uncleanness attached to such afflictions. To associate with a leper can cause one to become ceremonially unclean. Like touching a

corpse, any contact with a leper means religious contamination.

Therefore, lepers are left to take care of themselves. This particular leper wisely recognizes that Jesus is the one who has the power to cleanse him of his malady.

**B. RESPONSE (VV. 41, 42)**

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

Jesus isn’t appalled, and he doesn’t turn his back on *the man*. Rather, Jesus breaks the barrier of “no physical contact allowed” that separates him from the leper. Jesus touches that which is impure and unclean, which potentially means becoming unclean himself according to the Law of Moses (see Leviticus 5:2, 3; 13:45, 46).

**42. Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cured.**

No uncleanness transfers to Jesus, however, because Jesus’ touch and word result in cleansing. In contrast with some medical procedures today, Jesus does not just treat the disease. He cures it. When Jesus touches someone, there is no need to seek additional medical assistance. Today, people may need to go back to physicians over an extended period of time. Numerous visits are no guarantee of a cure, however.

Personally, I had a skin disorder that affected my foot for many years. I finally sought the help of a podiatrist, who prescribed medication that cost a pretty penny. And despite the pricey visits to this expert, my foot, he remarked, “only got worse.” It reminded me of Mark 5:26—the woman who spent all she had on physicians and only grew worse. However, it gave me hope as well because it opened the door to Jesus intervening in my life. When the doors are closed in the natural, the door is still open to the spiritual.

**C. SENT AWAY (VV. 43, 44)**

**43. Jesus sent him away at once with a strong warning:**

Isn’t it interesting that right after Jesus cleanses the man with leprosy, the man essentially is ordered to leave Jesus’ presence? The man is not invited to hang around. The man has received exactly what he came for: healing. So there is no reason for him to linger. In fact, there are some things the man needs to do. See the next verse.

**44. “See that you don’t tell this to anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them.”**

Before getting to what the man needs to do next, Jesus tells him what he is *not* to do: he is not to go around blabbing. Jesus is concerned that his own popularity may grow to a level that will hinder his ministry.

The man’s *testimony* is silenced in one regard, but not in another. Instead of running his mouth to anyone who will listen, the man’s testimony is to be that of showing himself to a *priest*. Leviticus 14:2–31 speaks of this important practice. The examination is to be followed by certain cleansing procedures and sacrifices. Whether the healed man carries out Jesus’ order in this regard is uncertain, for the text is silent on this.

**D. SOUGHT OUT (V. 45)**

**45. Instead he went out and began to talk freely, spreading the news. As a result, Jesus could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside in lonely places. Yet the people still came to him from everywhere.**

Just look at what happens because of the man’s disobedience: Jesus’ ministry is hindered. Perhaps it is hampered to such an extent that Jesus isn’t able to help all the hurting that he could otherwise. While people still come *to him from everywhere*, we are left to wonder who is not able to reach Jesus because of the disobedience. What about those who are completely paralyzed? Are they able to go and meet the healer *in lonely places*? Perhaps not.

We learn from this verse that Jesus knows best. When he gives us a task to do, we can rest assured that his way is perfect. We may

ask and pray for clarification, but we dare not think that we have a better idea than God.

### ***CONCLUSION***

It is often said that you can look at people's checkbooks or day planners and determine what or who is first in their lives. If a complete stranger got hold of yours, could he or she tell that you are a Christian? In other words, are our money and time prioritized toward earthy pursuits that have no heavenly significance? Does our money go toward laying up for ourselves treasures on earth while investments in the kingdom of God go wanting? Do we give Christ only our leftover time, or do we set aside sufficient time each day in conversation with our heavenly Father?

From this lesson, it is clear that we are to look to Jesus. This not to be an occasional glance, but a soul-searching pursuit. We need to become desperate to seek his face; desperate for deliverance from the cares of this life that weigh on our souls; desperate for answers that can come only from Jesus.

I dare you to pray the "impossible," to think the "unbelievable," and to recapture the hope that once burned within your soul. Resolve today to go deeper into your pursuit of God than you did yesterday. Determine to get closer to him. Modifying your routine will be critical. In other words, it is essential to carve out time to be with the Lord. I've heard it said, "Seeking the Lord morning and night will cause everything to be all right." Before we dismiss this as simplistic, remember that the Bible speaks much the same message (see Matthew 6:33).

This goes back to the basics. Are we seeking the Lord with a fervent pursuit of his presence? The Bible tells us that "the prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective" (James 5:16). Don't be afraid to "approach the throne of grace with confidence" (Hebrews 4:16). Tell God your concerns, your cares, and your worries. Expect him to give you answers that only he can give. Look to Jesus as your sole and soul provider.

### ***SUCCESSFUL AND UNSUCCESSFUL SEARCHES***

Adventurer Steve Fossett set numerous world records. These involved airplanes, gliders, and balloons. The records included the first solo around-the-world balloon flight and the first solo around-the-world plane flight without refueling. On September 3, 2007, he took off from a private airstrip in Nevada to seek a site for his next big attempt: he wanted to capture the world land-speed record.

When Fossett did not return, a massive ground and air search covering 20,000 square miles was launched—what the Civil Air Patrol called "one of the largest, most intensive searches for a missing aircraft in modern history." As of this writing, Fossett's body has not been found (he was declared legally dead on February 15, 2008). Thus both the searches *by* and *for* Fossett ended in failure.

Several searches took place in our text—all of them more successful than the searches by and for Fossett. In one, Jesus sought time alone with God. He found it—at least until another search intruded. That was his disciples seeking him. They felt their need for Jesus' leadership, based on yet another search that was taking place. As they told Jesus, "Everyone is looking for you!" According to Acts 17:27, God is easy to find. Will we make the attempt?

***NO LONGER “UNTOUCHABLE”***

The Western world has long known about India’s caste system. At the very bottom of the caste system are the *achuta*—the “untouchables.” They prefer to be known as the *Dalits*—the “broken and crushed ones.”

Millions of Dalits have turned to Christianity, finding in Christ their true value as human beings. This is a value they never found either in Indian society in general or in the Hindu religion in particular. The founder of the Gospel for Asia mission, K. P. Yohannan, observes that “You see a long, drawn-out, so-called awakening among the 250 million untouchables.... They see that unless you give up this caste system, there is no hope.”

In December 2007, India’s National Commission for Scheduled Castes gave an unintended compliment to the Christian gospel’s power. The NCSC ruled that since Dalits who convert from Hinduism to Christianity do not suffer the same disadvantages as those who are Hindus and Buddhists, they do not need special access to federal jobs or admission rights to government-funded universities.

Lepers were literally the first-century “untouchables.” The man with leprosy in today’s text knew that in Jesus he would find acceptance and the means to a better life. The leper was undoubtedly focused on the physical rather than the spiritual. Our task is to take Jesus to modern untouchables, whoever they may be, in both senses. Will we do it?

**LET’S TALK IT OVER**

**1. What are some benefits of praying in solitude? What about praying early in the morning? Should you do more of either or both?**

**2. Thinking about how Jesus both proclaimed the good news and healed people, what have you discovered about the relationship between words and deeds in your Christian experience?**

**3. What groups today feel as ostracized as the lepers of the first century? How does the church move from being “part of the problem” to being “part of the solution” in this regard?**

**4. Jesus told the healed leper to be quiet. Are there times today when Christians need to be quiet? If so, what would be the circumstances for this?**

**5. When Jesus acts in our lives today, how and to whom should we testify concerning what He has done?**

### **LET'S TALK IT OVER**

**1. What are some benefits of praying in solitude? What about praying early in the morning? Should you do more of either or both?**

The fact that Jesus chose to pray in a solitary place means that there must be some advantages to this practice. We benefit by being away from distractions, particularly the distraction of demands made on us by other people.

In some cases there may be a blessing simply in the change of pace that being in solitude provides. Great saints of the past have set the example that prayer in solitude is an appropriate strategy in developing a dynamic prayer life. If a person decides to pray outdoors, as Jesus did, he or she may find that being in touch with nature draws one closer to the Creator.

The time of prayer may not be as critical. Just as we can pray in any place, we can pray at any time of day. Even so, there can be something special about starting your day by communicating with God. This can clarify priorities for the day ahead.

**2. Thinking about how Jesus both proclaimed the good news and healed people, what have you discovered about the relationship between words and deeds in your Christian experience?**

It would seem that word and deed function best side by side. Jesus was both a preacher and a healer. In the eyes of the world, it is much easier to talk than to do. So Jesus put into action the messages He taught. His healings not only supported the proclamation of the lessons He taught about the godly life, they also (or especially) witnessed to what He taught about himself.

The church can take a lesson from this. As the church preaches, it should also be involved in benevolence. These actions verify the sincerity of the preaching. When someone does good deeds, it should be accompanied by preaching so people will know we do it in the name of the Lord (Matthew 25:35–40; Acts 6:1–7).

**3. What groups today feel as ostracized as the lepers of the first century? How does the church move from being “part of the problem” to being “part of the solution” in this regard?**

The church is part of the problem when it treats certain sins as unforgivable when the Bible does not. The church becomes part of the solution when it recalls those whom Jesus welcomed and forgave. Many of these people were considered to be the dregs of society by the “righteous” Jewish hierarchy. Such people included those who had committed adultery, who had been divorced, who were Samaritans, and who had acted dishonestly in the collection of taxes.

We should remember at the same time, however, that the isolation of lepers was in line with Old Testament law. Thus it was not a wrong practice at the time. The New Testament also establishes situations when people are to be ostracized (examples: 1 Corinthians 5:1–5, 11; 2 Thessalonians 3:14).

**4. Jesus told the healed leper to be quiet. Are there times today when Christians need to be quiet? If so, what would be the circumstances for this?**

Jesus was always concerned about doing things at the right time. He was not always ready to let everyone hear the whole story. In the case of the leper, Jesus did not want all the information about who He was to be released too soon. When it comes to evangelism, we are no longer under compulsion to keep quiet about what Jesus has done for us—quite the opposite in fact (Matthew 28:19, 20; compare Psalm 40:9, 10).

There may be times when we keep quiet as a sign of respect or to avoid getting involved in a senseless argument (compare Amos 5:13; 2 Timothy 2:16). We should keep quiet when doing things in an orderly way requires it (1 Corinthians 14:28, 40).

**5. When Jesus acts in our lives today, how and to whom should we testify concerning what He has done?**

Those who recently have been saved from lives of deepest sin and depravity sometimes make the best evangelists of the gospel—they're so excited about what Jesus has done for them! Even though they probably don't grasp many of the nuances of Christian doctrine at that point, their excitement is contagious (compare John 4:28–30, 39–42). Testimony to fellow believers is a blessing that edifies. Testimony to unbelievers can result in more people experiencing new birth in Christ.

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***PRAYER***

*Father, help us to keep our eyes fixed on your Son during the trials and tribulations in our lives. May he always occupy first place in our lives. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

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