# "I Knew Jesus (Before He Was A Star)" Mark 1:40-45 26 November 2017

So we're continuing in our series *Binge-watching Jesus* and today's episode is a good one. You might be tempted to watch it twice. This episode begins and if it was a show on *Netflix*, I picture the episode beginning and we see Jesus walking down the road and there's a song playing. The soundtrack of this episode is perfect. The episode begins and we see Jesus walking down the road with His disciples and this funky, 70's song comes on and it goes a little something like this...

# \* PLAY FIRST 30 SECONDS OF "I KNEW JESUS (BEFORE HE WAS A STAR)" AFTER THE CHORUS AND THEN FADE OUT

That's how I imagine this episode beginning. Jesus is walking down the road with the disciples and this song is playing. And, if you're like me and you watch a show and a song from the soundtrack grabs your attention, you go look it up to see who it's by. So when you hear that song come on and research it, you find out that it's a song by the late guitar genius Glen Campbell. The song is titled "I Knew Jesus (Before He Was A Star)." And that funky bass line was played by legendary bass player Carol Kaye. This song was written in the 70s following the success of the rock opera *Jesus Christ Superstar*. And Glen Campbell wanted the world to know that he knew Jesus before all the hippies in Hollywood made Him popular.

Here's a snippet of the lyrics:

I've known his goodness and mercy for all my days I've seen his blessings around me in every way In times of trouble when I had no hope in view Who brought the sunlight, the one light that I knew

Oh yes I knew he was always there answering every prayer Fame will not change him much he won't be out of touch

That's what we will see in Mark's gospel today. Because of what happened in the village of Capernaum when Jesus healed many people and cast out demons, His fame was increasing. And in this episode today, after a leper runs his mouth all over town about how Jesus healed him, Jesus cannot go anywhere without the paparazzi harassing Him. So what we saw a few weeks ago is still true of Jesus. He is fame-shy. He doesn't want the spotlight. As Glen Campbell sings, "Fame will not change him much, he won't be out of touch."

Jesus is not seeking popularity. Jesus knows that some people will only want Him for His miracles, and not for His mission, not for His message, which was that God loves sinners so much that He sent Jesus to live and die for them. And that's what Jesus is focused on: His message and His mission. And that's why He will have to stay in the *Motel 6* on the outskirts of town. His popularity is growing so much that He can't enter a town without drawing a crowd.

So what Mark will remind us of today as we binge-watch Jesus is something that we all need to be reminded of daily, and if you're like me, to be reminded of many times daily, and it's this-

### YOU ARE FORGIVEN. YOU ARE CLEAN. SO ENJOY YOUR FORGIVENESS.

Christian, you are clean because Jesus has made you clean. Not because of your religious duty, not because of your devotion, not because of your effort. Not even because of your repentance. Our repentance does not cleanse us. Did you know that? Our repentance does not wash away our sin. Only the blood of Jesus does. We are forgiven through His works, not ours. And what Jesus wants us to do today is to enjoy our forgiveness. And to enjoy Him as we binge-watch Him in this episode today.

# LOOK AT VERSES 40-42...

And a leper came to him, imploring him, and kneeling said to him, "If you will, you can make me clean." Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand and touched him and said to him, "I will; be clean." And immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean.

Leprosy was a widespread disease in the ancient Near East, especially as seen by the numerous lepers that approach Jesus in the gospels. But when the Bible speaks of leprosy, it is not limited to what we know today as Hansen's Disease, or leprosy. It probably included this. But leprosy in the Bible, both the Hebrew (*tsara'at*) and the Greek (*lepros*) words refer to all kinds of skin diseases: boils, bumps, dry scalp, ringworm, etc. And the Hebrew scribes had counted up 72 different forms of leprosy or skin conditions, which could make someone unclean.

Now, to us, with modern medicine, having some sort of skin condition doesn't seem like that big of a deal. I mean, yeah, no one likes pimples, no one likes "bacne," but for an Israelite, this was a death sentence. To be declared "unclean" because of some skin condition was a death sentence. And here's why: you would be declared "unclean" and therefore excluded from worshipping with others, excluded from community, excluded from fellowship. To be declared unclean meant that you had to live alone, isolated. It ruled out deep, meaningful relationships with family and friends. Not to mention any sort of pain your illness caused you.

And in the Old Testament, the book of Leviticus devotes 2 whole chapters (ch. 13-14) to dealing with unclean people and the procedures required to initiate them back into community. It's like a dermatology manual on dealing with skin diseases.

Leviticus 13:45 says this-

"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.' 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 a leper was excluded from community and had to walk around covering up his mouth and cry, "Unclean! Unclean!" Actually the Hebrew says that he had to cover up his moustache. So a leper had to give this warning as people came near, "I am unclean! I am unclean! I also have a mustache and it is a hideous moustache, so look away!" He had to warn others that they would become unclean and contaminated if they touched him.

Jospehus, the Jewish historian, said that there was no difference between a leper and a corpse (*Antiquities 3.264*). So lepers were really like zombies, the living dead. Now, what's very interesting is that the *Mishnah*, which is an ancient Jewish commentary, gives all kinds of rules and regulations about dealing with lepers. It says if a leper entered a house, it would be contaminated (*Negaim 12-13*). If you were standing under a tree, or leaning up against a tree and taking a nap under a tree, and a leper came by, "BOOM!" you were unclean (*Negaim 13.7*).

So imagine: It's hot outside. There's no air conditioning in ancient Israel, like there's no A.C. in our homes here on the Central coast. So you go stand under a tree to cool off. You pull out your iPhone and start checking your email and then a leper walks up. BOOM! You're unclean. "Oh, come on, Bob! I was checking the score of the Cowboys and Redskins game and you had to walk up and stand under the same tree as me? Come on, bro! Now I'm unclean and can't go to church next week!"

That was life for a leper and everyone he came in contact with. So this guy here in verse 40 approaches Jesus but Mark doesn't tell us that he covered up his moustache and cried "Unclean! Unclean!" All we know is that this leper falls before Jesus and implores Him. He asks Jesus to make him clean. Somehow, while living in the outskirts, this leper heard about Jesus, and he found Him and begged Him to make him clean. He knew that Jesus *could* make him clean, but he didn't know if Jesus *would* make him clean.

And then Mark gives us 3 of the most remarkable words in the entire Bible, which begin verse 41: "Moved with pity..." What wonderful words, y'all! Look at verse 41 again and underline this in your Bible, because this is your Savior, your Redeemer: "Moved with pity..." Jesus comes to us in our sin, our mess, our brokenness, our struggles, our weaknesses and He is moved with pity! He doesn't come with our internet history to shame us. He is moved with pity toward weak, helpless sinners.

This is what Jesus' ministry was characterized by. This is what Gospel-centered ministry is all about! This is who Jesus is! He is mercy personified! As a young man, Jonathan Edwards, after having an encouraging conversation with his father about theology, said this-

"and when the discourse was ended I walked abroad alone, in a solitary place in my father's pasture, for contemplation. And as I was walking there and looking upon the sky and clouds, there came into my mind so sweet a sense of the glorious majesty and grace of God as I know not how to express. I seemed to see them both in a sweet conjunction; majesty and meekness joined together: it was a sweet, and gentle, and holy majesty; and also a majestic meekness; an awful sweetness; a high, and great, and holy gentleness." (Personal Narrative)

That's Jesus. That's who this leper fell before and implored that day. Majesty and meekness. Power and pity. Joined together in the Person of Jesus. And how sweet and glorious this thought is, Grace! The most powerful Person in the universe is also the meekest Person. The most majestic Person in the universe is moved with pity toward sinners like us. He has all the power in the world and yet He is compassionate and

merciful and gentle and kind. He is gentle with bruised reeds. He doesn't snuff out flickering wicks. Incredible. Simply, incredible.

Mark tells us in verse 40 that Jesus was moved with pity. His compassionate heart went out to this man, this leper, this ostracized individual. So far from being the "angry Christ" that Martin Luther saw on a wood carving every week as he entered church, with His veins popping out of His forehead, this Jesus, the Biblical Jesus is moved with pity toward sinners. Jesus saw the misery that this leper lived with and in mercy Jesus touched him. Think about that! Jesus touched this unclean leper! Jesus touched the unclean man and instead of Jesus becoming unclean, this man is made whole, made clean!

Imagine what this man suffered for however long he suffered and then he heard Jesus utter these words, "I will; be clean" and the man was! Right before his eyes, his skin condition, whatever it was, just disappeared! Poof! Gone! "I will; be clean." Such beautiful words. I will. Be clean. Incredible. This is what Jesus does for us in the Gospel. He comes and tells us that we are clean. Forgiven. Whole.

You can't miss the imagery here. What's happening in this episode of Mark is a picture of what Martin Luther called the "great exchange" or the "wonderful exchange." He said-

"That is the mystery which is rich in divine grace to sinners: wherein by a wonderful exchange our sins are no longer ours but Christ's and the righteousness of Christ not Christ's but ours. He has emptied Himself of His righteousness that He might clothe us with it, and fill us with it. And He has taken our evils upon Himself that He might deliver us from them... in the same manner as He grieved and suffered in our sins, and was confounded, in the same manner we rejoice and glory in His righteousness." (Werke, 5:608)

This is the good news. This is what Jesus was preaching and why He said in verse 38 that He could not stay in Capernaum. Jesus *had* to get this message out. Jesus was compelled and driven by His mission and His message: the great exchange, the wonderful exchange is free for sinners if received by faith!

But notice that Jesus is different from the priests of the day, because He can actually *make people clean* whereas the priests could only examine someone and then declare them clean. Jesus can heal instantly. The priests could declare you clean after you used *Neosporin* and alcohol and *Band Aids* for a few weeks. They'd look you over and tell you that you were clean, because you used the whole tube of *Neosporin*, but they could not *make* anyone clean. Only Jesus could. And this fact is going to start setting up the issues that the religious leaders in the south, in Jerusalem, have with this backwoods redneck Rabbi named Jesus who's from the north. The scribes and the Pharisees are not going to take to Jesus going around and healing people, making them clean, and telling them that their sins are forgiven. That's going to rub them the wrong way.

And one of the reasons that Jesus comes up on their radar is because people can't stop talking about Jesus and what He is doing! And this leper will be one of Jesus' biggest fans, even though he doesn't do what Jesus tells him.

# LOOK AT VERSES 43-45...

And Jesus sternly charged him and sent him away at once, 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." 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.

After Jesus heals the leper, He warns him very strongly not to tell anyone what happened. Jesus tells this guy, "Don't tell anyone about this. Capeesh?" All that Jesus wants this guy to do is to go show himself to a priest and have the priest look him over and then declare him clean again. Jesus wants the leper to follow the protocol laid out in the book of Leviticus. Jesus wants this guy to obey Scripture. And this is what he should have done. Per the book of Leviticus, the leper should have gone down to Jerusalem, to the temple, to see a priest and the priest would look him over and then declare him clean. He's supposed to go see a priest and get a clean bill of health.

But we're not sure if he does this. If he travelled all the way down to Jerusalem and told the priests about what Jesus did, this would have added to the religious leaders curiosity about this redneck Rabbi from the backwoods of Galilee who was gaining in popularity. We're not sure if he did this. But we do know that he did one thing: he did the one thing that Jesus told him not to! He began to tell everyone freely what Jesus did. This leper is the one who is primarily responsible for making Jesus a superstar! And you can't blame the guy! He's been a banished leper. No he is free. Now he can go home. Now he can to church again. Now he is clean.

So how does all of this effect Jesus? Jesus could no longer just roll into some village without being

recognized. Now Jesus has to wear a baseball cap and sunglasses. He can't go into a Starbucks and order a drink without the paparazzi bugging him. So Jesus has to stay out in desolate places. Peter has to go to Starbucks and get a drink for Jesus. And when the barista says, "Can I get a name for that drink?" Peter replies "Jesus." And the barista says, "Oh, yeah! I've heard of this Jesus guy. He's that new miracleworking rabbi, right?" And Peter tells the barista behind the bar, "Yep. And I'm one of His disciples. And I knew Jesus before He was a Superstar."

Word is spreading all over *Facebook* about Jesus, so He's got to find a *Motel 6* on the outskirts of town. He can't go anywhere without drawing a crowd. But even on the outskirts of town, people find Him. The workers at the *Motel 6* are like, "*The continental breakfast is for guests only!*"

Now stop and think about what has happened here. Jesus healed this leper and restored him to health and wholeness (*shalom*) and now he has peace. But Jesus can't enjoy a peaceful moment anymore. The leper has peace now, but Jesus has no peace. The leper was once on the outside and the outskirts of town and that's where Jesus is now. Jesus heals and restores peace but His popularity is keeping Him from experiencing peace.

But why does Jesus want to keep all of these miracles under wraps? Here's why: Jesus did not want His *miracles* to detract from His *message* and His *mission*. Scholars call it the "Messianic Secret." Jesus knows that people will want to crown Him as king and overthrow Rome if they figure out that He is the promised Messiah. Jesus did not want His *miracles* to detract from His *message* and His *mission*. Jesus did not come to just do miracles. Jesus came with a message: the Gospel. And Jesus came with a mission: the Cross. He doesn't want His miracles to detract from His message or His mission.

Jesus didn't come to give you a diagnosis. The law does that. God's law declares that you and I are sinners. God's law, which is holy and good, it diagnoses us, it declares us as unclean. So Jesus came not to diagnosis, because the law does that. Jesus came to declare to those who are united to Him by faith-

#### YOU ARE FORGIVEN. YOU ARE CLEAN. SO ENJOY YOUR FORGIVENESS.

In John 15:3, Jesus said, "Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you." Jesus has spoken the word of the Gospel over us. We are clean.

I know this is hard to believe some days. We know it's *true*, but we don't feel it deep down in our souls. And part of the reason why is because every clean thing in our world eventually gets dirty again. Everything about our lives follows this cycle: Clean. Dirty. Clean again, Dirty again. It happens with our homes, and if you have kids, then you know that this cycle is never-ending and it occurs with a rapid-fire tenacity. Our Cars. Our bodies. Clean. Dirty. Clean. Dirty. We take showers and we're dirty again, especially if you have young kids! Parents are like, "I just showered and my sick kid just threw up on me. Now I have vomit on me!"

This is how our world functions, so when we hear the good news that Jesus has made us clean, it's hard to believe that it will stick. Hard to believe that we stay clean. So we begin to experience shame over the dirty things that we think, say, and do. And we get amnesia. Elyse Fitzpatrick says-

One reason we don't grow in ordinary, grateful obedience as we should is that we've got amnesia; we've forgotten that we are cleansed from our sins. In other words, ongoing failure in sanctification (the slow process of change into Christlikeness) is the direct result of failing to remember God's love for us in the gospel. If we lack the comfort and assurance that his love and cleansing are meant to supply, our failures will handcuff us to yesterday's sins, and we won't have faith or courage to fight against them, or the love for God that's meant to empower this war. If we fail to remember our justification, redemption, and reconciliation, we'll struggle in our sanctification. (Because He Loves Me: How Christ Transforms Our Daily Life, p.44)

We forget the Gospel and that's when we lack comfort. That's when shame comes a knocking. The leper here in Mark 1 lived with shame. Everywhere he went, he was not welcome. Everywhere he went he heard, "You're not welcome here, bro. Get out!" He didn't belong anywhere. So he most likely lived alone with shame. Cut off from family. Cut off from God's word. Cut off from God. He couldn't hold his new grandbaby. He couldn't hug his wife. He needed good news. He needed Jesus. And Providence orchestrated him to meet Jesus one day on a dusty road. And by the way he responded, he did not forget the Gospel. He ran his mouth all over town and was turning Jesus into a reluctant superstar!

But we sometimes forget the Gospel, don't we? And when we do we answer the door and we invite Shame inside. We allow Shame to enter and we sit down for a cup of the. We invite an unwelcome guest into our hearts. But understand that shame has one goal: to humiliate you, to embarrass you by bringing up forgiven sins. That's shame's intent: to literally humiliate you to death. And that's why the Devil uses it.

So how do you know when shame is working in your life? When you feel like these things are true about you: You feel unclean. You feel like something is wrong with you. You feel dirty. You feel like you've not measured up. You can't seem to get your act together. You feel worthless. You feel embarrassed, rejected, inadequate, humiliated, filthy, disgusting, repulsive, disgraced, unlovable...all because of things that you have done, or things you haven't done, or things that have been done to you. That's shame.

Here's a sign that shame has intruded in your life and you opened up the door and let him in: You try to hide things. You cover up. You feel exposed. You never feel good enough. You feel like you can't be loved, even by God. These are all tale-tell signs of shame. Let me ask you: What do you want to hide today? What do you want to cover up? That will help you identify where shame has a grip on you. What is it that you wish you could hide? What is it that you wish you could just go back and rewind the tape? That will help you identify where shame has a grip on you.

Another way that shame is at work is when you feel wrong, but you're not sure why. You feel wrong but you're not sure why. When you always have this nagging feeling of being dirty and filthy. You have this nagging feeling of being unclean. You know that shame is at work when you feel just as horrible about something as the day it happened.

Christian, it doesn't matter what you've done, what you haven't done, or even what has been done to you. Jesus loves you, He accepts you, and He says to you today, "You are accepted. You are forgiven. You are clean. You are washed. You are loved. My past is your past. And your past is mine. Your past doesn't belong to you anymore. It belongs to me now. It's not yours. Let it go. I nailed it to the cross. I threw it into the depths of the sea. There is no trace of it anymore. It's gone. You're mine. Rest. Enjoy your forgiveness."

If Jesus were here today, He'd stand right next to you, in front of every person that you have ever known in your life and He'd put His arms around you and say, "I love you. You belong to Me." In public. In front of everyone that you have ever known.

Jesus comes and says to you, "You bring your internet history and I'll bring the bread and wine." That's what we celebrated last week with the Lord's Supper. You bring your internet history, Jesus brings the bread and wine. You bring your past- that thing that haunts you and you can't seem to shake- and Jesus brings the bread and wine. You bring how you yelled at your kids as you got ready for church and Jesus brings the bread and wine. You bring that bitterness that is eating away at you, that hatred, that jealousy, that resentment, and Jesus brings the bread and wine.

Horatius Bonar, a Scottish pastor, said, "It is with our sins that we go to God, for we have nothing else to go with that we can call our own." All that we can bring to God that we can call our own is our sin. That's it. And Jesus receives it. That's why He came. That's what the leper did here. He went to Jesus with his disease and he was made whole. He was healed. He was clean.

Through Jesus' work on the cross, through His wounds, we are healed, we are made whole, meaning, we are made right with God, we are justified, we are declared righteous in God's eyes because Jesus died in our place, as our Substitute, as our Savior, as our Redeemer. When we trust in the perfect life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, we will never experience shame! The shame and guilt of our sins no longer have a hold over our lives. There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1)! We will never be put to shame! God will never come to us and say, "Shame, shame. Shame on you for what you have done. I can't believe you did that! Shame on you!"

God will never say that to us because of Jesus. God said that to Jesus on the cross, though. That's exactly what God the Father said to Jesus on the cross: "Shame, shame. Shame on you for what you have done. I can't believe you did that! Shame on you!" God will never say that to us because of Jesus. The great exchange has taken place at the cross.

And that means that even when we stand before God one day, he will not shame us! Tom Schreiner says, "What is true of Christ is also true of his people. They will not experience the embarrassment of judgment but the glory of approval. The phrase 'will never be ashamed,' therefore is another way of saying they will be honored."

We will not experience the embarrassment of judgment. We will not have a movie of our sinful lives played before us as we stand before God! What a terrible way to start eternity! Who wants that? Not me! That's not the Gospel. That's not good news. We will not experience the embarrassment of judgment. We will not have a movie of our sinful lives played before us as we stand before God! That is the Gospel! That is good news! That's proof that God is good! 'Cause I have done and said and thought some pretty wicked, evil things in my life. I've said some things that I'm embarrassed about. I've done some things that I'm

embarrassed and ashamed of. I've said, thought, and done so many- so, so, so, so, so, so many things that I am flat out ashamed of! Awful things! Embarrassing things! And the good news of the Gospel is that record of mine is all gone! Poof! Gone! Poof! Gone! It's gone because I am in union with Jesus by faith. And He has declared me clean.

And that is true of you if you are in union with Christ. All of the awful, embarrassing things that you have done that you are ashamed of, if you trust in Jesus, they are erased from your file. The hard drive has been wiped clean. The internet history of your entire sinful life is erased. And now when God sees you, He sees His Son Jesus.

When the leper asked Jesus to heal him, Jesus told the leper in verses 41, "I will; be clean." And Jesus says that to us as well. Jesus says we are clean. And Jerry Bridges says one of the most glorious things that could be said in a book written by a sinful human being- he says-

"It is not our contrition or sorrow for sin, it is not our repentance, it is not even the passing of a certain number of hours during which we feel we are on some kind of probation that cleanses us. It is the blood of Christ, shed once for all on Calvary two thousand years ago but appropriated daily or even many times a day, that cleanses our consciences and gives us a renewed sense of peace with God." (The Discipline of Grace, p.58)

It's not our contrition that makes us clean and forgiven. It's not our sorrow for sin that does it. It's not us waiting for a few hours and then God will forgive us. Do you ever do that? You wait a few hours to approach God and ask for forgiveness, as if His mercy has to be heated up! "I'll just wait a few hours before I ask for forgiveness. Maybe He will be cooled down by then." Wrong. That's not the Gospel.

Listen, we're not on probation, Grace. We don't have to wait a few hours. Our repentance does not cleanse us. Our sorrow for our sin doesn't do it. Only one thing does: the blood of Jesus. Jesus came to wash you with His blood. To cleanse you. To welcome you. To love you.

If you're not a Christian, you are a mess, you are dirty- stained with sin. You need to washed and cleansed. Will you repent and believe today? Come to Jesus. He will have you. Jesus specializes in saving the worst and making them new.

For those who are trusting in Jesus, you are perfectly accepted in Christ. You have His righteousness. You are clean! He has spoken this over us. His voice has declared these things true of us. It's not a fairy tale! And if this is true- if we are perfectly accepted in Christ and we have His righteousness- then here is what it means: we are secure. Secure in Him. We are safe. He will never let us go. We are clean.

Here's your homework today, Grace:

Go enjoy your forgiveness!

Let's pray...

"I Knew Jesus (Before He Was A Star)" Mark 1:40-45 Sermon Study Questions

- 1. Read Mark 1:41. How do we see both power and pity, majesty and meekness in the person of Jesus? Do these words "Moved with pity..." move you?
- 2. Why did Jesus want to avoid the crowds? Why did He hide out in desolate places? What was His mission? His message?
- 3. Explain what Martin Luther referred to as "The Great/Wonderful Exchange." What verses in the Bible show us this?
- 4. What is the goal/intent of shame? How does shame manifest itself in our lives? Is God going to show a movie of our lives for the whole world to see?
- 5. Quotes to discuss:

Jonathan Edwards

"and when the discourse was ended I walked abroad alone, in a solitary place in my father's pasture, for

contemplation. And as I was walking there and looking upon the sky and clouds, there came into my mind so sweet a sense of the glorious majesty and grace of God as I know not how to express. I seemed to see them both in a sweet conjunction; majesty and meekness joined together: it was a sweet, and gentle, and holy majesty; and also a majestic meekness; an awful sweetness; a high, and great, and holy gentleness." (Personal Narrative)

#### Martin Luther

"That is the mystery which is rich in divine grace to sinners: wherein by a wonderful exchange our sins are no longer ours but Christ's and the righteousness of Christ not Christ's but ours. He has emptied Himself of His righteousness that He might clothe us with it, and fill us with it. And He has taken our evils upon Himself that He might deliver us from them... in the same manner as He grieved and suffered in our sins, and was confounded, in the same manner we rejoice and glory in His righteousness." (Werke, 5:608)

#### Elyse Fitzpatrick

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#### Jerry Bridges

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