

Mark 1:21-28 Then they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and taught. **22** And they were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. **23** Now there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, **24** saying, "Let *us* alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are--the Holy One of God!" **25** But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be quiet, and come out of him!" **26** And when the unclean spirit had convulsed him and cried out with a loud voice, he came out of him. **27** Then they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, "What is this? What new doctrine is this? For with authority He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him." **28** And immediately His fame spread throughout all the region around Galilee. (NKJV)

Mark is the only Gospel that includes this event at this time. So we don't need to get the updated backdrop of what has happened in the meantime.

Jesus had left Nazareth after his town had attempted to toss Him off a cliff. He is now making Capernaum his headquarters for ministry.

Capernaum was an important town with a Roman garrison and it was on a main road. It would make a good center for operations.

So what does Christ do? He began to teach. He went to the place where spiritually minded people would go to hear about truth. He went to the synagogue. The word, **synagogue**, has its roots in the word "gathering" and began to be used in the Babylonian captivity.

We have already seen some of what Christ was teaching. He was teaching that people must believe in Christ and repent of their sin. He was focusing on the **need** we have as **being so great**, simply reforming ourselves is not enough. We need to be born again. We need a miracle of spiritual transformation. Nothing else would do. And Jesus supported this teaching with a very clear and direct use of the Old Testament.

Now, look at the response to this teaching.

22 And they were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

The scribes and the Pharisees were known for teaching scripture mixed with traditions that had been passed down by the elders. There is one truth you can be sure of. When you grant authority to the **teaching of men** along with **the teaching of scripture**, it won't be long until the teaching of men will have **more authority** than the scripture itself. You need only follow the history of the catholic church to see a clear example of that.

Mike used to emphasize that **solo** scriptura is better than **sola** scriptura. These are terms theologians use to describe the place that scripture holds in the church.

Solo scriptura holds that nothing holds any authority but scripture alone.

Sola Scriptura holds that Scripture is the supreme authority but views that stem from its teaching logically hold authority as well.

Mike held no trust in what would happen if men had any sway in determining for other men what scripture means. A good example is that in many reformed churches you will suffer some negative consequences if you do not believe and practice infant baptism. It is not a practice you will find commanded anywhere in scripture. But the reformers viewed it as a logical extension of what scripture teaches, therefore it is part of what the church holds to.

Those who resist the implications of Solo Scriptura do so because they say it takes away the authority of the church as a whole, even the local church, and puts the responsibility on the individual believer. And without a doubt, there is that danger. But ultimately, there is no partaking of this project called Christianity without danger of individuals abusing what scripture says. Scripture seems to lean, in my opinion, to risk the danger of **individuals refusing the proper authority of scripture over them**, rather than the danger of **teachings that are added to scripture that then take the place of scripture**.

Let me explain it another way. We'll use the example of infant baptism- the teaching that a child should be baptized at birth and that baptism actually extends a special grace upon the child that is baptized.

Solo scriptura says this teaching is not directly from the pages of scripture.

Therefore it holds no authority in the church.

Sola scriptura says that this teaching is a logical extension of scripture and has been held firmly by the church, so therefore it is a doctrine with authority over the church's members.

Solo scriptura has its dangers, but it is not as dangerous as establishing man-made doctrines that then are given authority over the church. When this happens people are always excluded from the church that Christ would include. And that is awful, given what Christ did to include them.

22 And they were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

So the people were astonished. They were hearing teaching that held authority. They were hearing the words of God. And they were hearing them from the Son of God. They heard the Son explaining His Father's words. It is no wonder they were astonished. The word for astonished is **glad amazement that the people were stricken with**. It is a very powerful word.

Have you ever notice how your heart resonates when it is hearing the heart of God explained to you. It may even be **piercing your heart**, but you know it holds the authority of God so you welcome it. It is often like a breath of fresh air.

We have a lot of forces telling us what to do. Our culture tells us what to do. Political correctness tells us what to do. The norms of those around us tell us what to do. The government tells us what to do. Hollywood tells us what to do. But to a Christian, none of those messengers bring anything worth hearing. They just leave our hearts starving.

But when someone starts quoting God's word accurately, and when they apply it the way it was clearly intended to be applied, **there is life there** to the believer's heart.

David states this changed state of heart very well.

Psalm 119:97 Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day.

98 You, through Your commandments, make me wiser than my enemies; For they are ever with me. 99 I have more understanding than all my teachers, For Your testimonies are my meditation. 100 I understand more than the ancients, Because I keep Your precepts. 101 I have restrained my feet from every evil way, That I may keep Your word. 102 I have not departed from Your judgments, For You Yourself have taught me. 103 How sweet are Your words to my taste, Sweeter than honey to my mouth! 104 Through Your precepts I get understanding; Therefore I hate every false way. 105 Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path. (NKJV)

So the listeners at that synagogue were in glad amazement. They were finally hearing something that hit them where they lived. They were hearing piercing words and hopeful words. They were hearing the words that strike joy into the soul of the person that God is working on. They weren't hearing the torturing words of one more thing I need to do that I cannot do. They weren't hearing the impossible demands of the law with no way out.

They weren't hearing the Pharisees message that, as Jesus said,

Matthew 23:4 For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. (NKJV)

They were hearing Christ's message of

Matthew 11:28 Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." (NKJV)

You see, scripture addresses our human need at its deepest level. It addresses our real need with accuracy. And it addresses us in the only way that will grant true

hope. Scripture cannot be **improved upon**. The best we can do is expound it in a way that makes it **clearer** to the listener. That is what a preacher's job is.

There are many in our day that think that we must make the church culturally relevant. Now if what they mean is that we must explain the gospel in a way that our culture can understand the words and illustrations, we should agree. But that is often not what they mean. What they mean is we must change the gospel to make it more appealing to our hedonistic and narcissistic population. We need to be better salesmen to make a product **they really don't** want more appealing to them. We can learn something from our text about this. Jesus didn't do this. He simply spoke what was true with authority.

Think about it. If your house is on fire, and you believe your house is on fire, how picky are you about the language your neighbor yells through your window about how to get out of your house? Would you yell down to that person-, "that metaphor is insulting to me?" Would you yell, "friend your negativity about my situation is really distracting to me?" Would you refuse to come out of your house because you were not impressed with the presentation of the message? Would you think, those instructions are really not appealing to my sense of inner peace?

No. There is nothing more relevant to a person in a burning building than clear instructions of how to get out of the fire.

The same is true for the gospel. If God grips you with your need, you don't need a message that is crafted to make you feel good about some minor point of truth.

You need clear instructions for how you can avoid God's punishment and find yourself in God's favor. You need clear instruction for how you can avoid eternal punishment and gain eternal reward.

And you will only find that instruction in God's word. You don't need to add to it. You don't need to detract from it. You just need to explain it.

Understand from the start that it will not appeal to everyone. It can't. It will only appeal to those people who God has chosen to work on. And when you cast out that net, it is only going to catch one kind of fish. The fish that God has chosen to catch.

You are **not failing** if people reject a well delivered presentation of the Gospel. You only fail if you fail to deliver the true Gospel. The results are of God's choosing. The goal in proclaiming God's message is to quote God, to define and describe what He says accurately. That is the presentation of God's word with authority. And you are following a wonderful example. You are following the example of our Lord Himself.

At one point someone asked George Whitefield how he knew if he preached a good sermon. He replied that it was easy to know. Either someone got saved or someone got angry. That's about right. That is what you can expect when you present the gospel clearly.

Let's move on.

23 Now there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, 24 saying, "Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are--the Holy One of God!"

Notice what this says. There was a man with an unclean spirit, a demon, and he was in the gutter somewhere.... No. there was a man with a demon in the local tavern....no there was man with a demon in Herod's palace....no

There was a man with an unclean spirit in the gathering designed to worship God. Think about this. If you were the devil and you hated God, where would you spend most of your energies? Wouldn't you be trying to pervert His worshippers? And wouldn't the best way of doing that be to infiltrate them with your people? There is very little fun about church leadership, or Christian leadership of any kind. Because, just like shepherds, we find that the sheep are always in danger from within or without. And we are sheep too. Danger is true of us individually, as married couples, as families, and as a church. Satan's greatest targets are those things that are sacred.

So we don't need to throw our hands up in despair when we discover evil in the church. But we must deal with it.

We can learn a lot from Christ about that process.

The process starts by preaching with authority. It starts by believing God's Word and attempting to live by it. When you do that evil will get flushed out.

Now in this instance evil was flushed out in a very dramatic way. The word for **cried out** is to raise a cry from the depth of the throat. This is a cry that has some lung behind it. It is only used 5 times in the New Testament and 3 times it describes a demon's cry. When the disciples saw Jesus walking on the water they cried out in this fashion. And when the crowds cried out to swap Jesus with Barabbas, this word was used.

How would you like that in one of our worship services? Suddenly someone starts screaming at the top of their lungs. That would have been what happened in the synagogue.

Now, what was the demon saying?

"Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are--the Holy One of God!"

Let US alone. Evidently this demon was speaking for his clan. This demon is telling Jesus that this demon, and all his kind, want to be left alone. The word used here denotes indignation mixed with fear.

The demon is upset that Jesus has interfered with the demon and his workplace. And at the same time the demon shows a keen awareness and awe of who he is

dealing with. So while he screams, let us alone, I suspect it is like when a rebellious child screams at competent parents. There is an awareness that this behavior will not pass without some negative repercussions.

Then it goes on to say **What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth?** The wording here is a little difficult. It can mean what do we have to do with you or what have you got to do with us. It looks like it is asking, what is the relationship between us? Based on what we saw earlier in the temptation of Christ, the demon might be puzzled as to how to think about this encounter. He knows he is in the face of superior power and authority, but clearly the chasm between them is great. There is nothing that they have in common. The demon wants nothing to do with Christ. But Christ does have something to do with the demon.

The translation **Did You come to destroy us?** could just as easily be the statement, "You have come to destroy us."

And the demon would have been correct.

1 John 3:8 He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. (NKJV)

Christ **did** come to destroy the devils work and power, and ultimately the devil himself. The demon knew that nothing good could come of this encounter with the Son of God.

It is amazing in scripture how the ones who respond most accurately and dramatically to the ministry of Christ are the demons. They know who Christ is. They know what He has come for. They declare boldly who Christ is. And they submit quickly to His authority. And they hate every second of it.

The Pharisees and Saducees, the scribes and the priest, they were all confused and befuddled. They didn't know how to discern who Christ was. Our world, for the most part, don't know who Christ is. They think of Christ in a way that is convenient for them.

But the devil and his demons had none of this confusion, none of this error. They knew who Christ was instantly every time. Their theology was in many ways better and clearer than the followers of Christ. But they hated Christ passionately. We should always keep this in mind. The **most informed** about the topic of spirituality are not always **the most friendly** toward God. Some of the best skeptics are the most informed. Don't ever draw the conclusion that the more a person **is informed** about God, the **more right** they are about God. The demons know a lot but that knowledge will never lead them to a relationship with God.

Then the demon blurts out- **I know who You are--the Holy One of God!"**

This is the part that always surprises me. And there are two parts to it that are befuddling. First, why do the demons do this? What do they hope to gain? Why do they think **they can harm Christ** by revealing His identity? Or are they simply

powerless at this point. Are they like some people who in a stressful situation simply can't shut up?

Look at what they are saying. They are saying **Jesus is the Messiah**. Jesus is the chosen one of God. **He** is the one that is separated out for a special purpose. It is essentially what Peter said about God, yet when Peter said it, it was a really good thing and showed great spiritual insight that was provided by God. When the demons say it, it is always received badly.

And that is the other befuddling thing. Christ always tells the demons to shut up. Christ goes through and finds 12 guys to spread the message of the kingdom of God, and it takes a while for them to get it straight. And here a demon blurts it out as clear as day and he gets a "Shut up" from Jesus. If that were today's evangelistic organizations, they would have done an interview with the guy on the latest Christian talk show. But Jesus would have none of it.

25 But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be quiet, and come out of him!" 26 And when the unclean spirit had convulsed him and cried out with a loud voice, he came out of him.

Literally Jesus said, "Be muzzled". Shut up. Enough said. Now come out of the man.

Now demons are never good natured at obeying God. This one threw his person into a convulsion, maybe just for good measure. Because demons love nothing more than creating misery for humans. And then he cried out. There were no words mentioned so maybe his actions technically conformed to the command Jesus had given him. But one thing is sure. When Jesus gave a command to a demon, the demon had to obey. They had no other options. They were powerless against Christ.

The same is still true today. We are told that greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. We still have the ultimate authority over the devil and his demons in the person of Jesus Christ. And by faith in the person and name of Christ, we can withstand the devil and his cronies.

Now, back to the question of why do demons speak the truth about Christ and why does Christ make them shut up?

If you were an Iranian nationalist and there was a candidate for a US president that you did not want in power, what is likely a very good way to undermine the confidence of his constituents? What would happen if you very publically supported that president and made sure everyone in the US knew you put a lot of money toward his campaign? What is the likelihood of that candidate keeping his credibility? Once that news got out, I think it is likely that chances for election would unravel.

Well maybe **that dynamic** describes both why demons were so quick to proclaim the identity of Christ and Christ was so quick to shut them up. It isn't that He was

running for election. But He did not want confusion in the minds of His followers about his relationship to the Devil. Jesus did not want, nor would he accept, any help in His proclamation-al ministry from the devil. In fact, we wanted or needed no help at all. It was clearly understood, by the way Christ dealt with demons, that He wanted their influence silenced right here and right now. No one who saw these encounters could ever be confused that Christ was against the demons and the demons were against Christ.

As it was, the Pharisees still put on a smear campaign, accusing Jesus of doing His ministry by the power of the devil. But all of the records that we have show us very clearly that these people were making this up. Anyone who saw Christ minister knew better.

27 Then they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, "What is this? What new doctrine is this? For with authority He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him." 28 And immediately His fame spread throughout all the region around Galilee. (NKJV)

This was turning out to be one amazing worship service. First they were amazed at **the authoritative teaching** of Christ. Then they were amazed at the ultimate **authority and power of His ministry**. Not only did he **preach like God, He acted like God**. He told demons to do and they did. He flushed out evil and evil was powerless to hide or resist. He sent demons packing and freed humans from their influence and power.

Wow. They had never seen the scribes and Pharisees do that.

So the people who were at this service begin to talk like people always do. They are talking among themselves. **"What is this? What new doctrine is this? For with authority He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him."**

These people were actually putting this in the most positive light. They were saying what new fresh doctrine is this? What breath of fresh air is this? What huge improvement on the old stuff they kept hearing from the religious leaders this is.

And what was different about this doctrine, this teaching?

It works! It is powerful. It has authority. When Christ says scat to the demons, they scat.

Wow. A ministry that produces results. Someone who speaks for God in such a way that things happen.

Naturally the next thing to happen is that Jesus is heralded as the next big thing. Even without facebook and the internet, word spreads that Jesus is doing amazing things. Word spread like wildfire. And His fame spread. Now for many ministries that would have been a dream come true. They hit the big time. They are going viral. But to Christ, this was more of a nuisance than an

accomplishment. Pretty soon he will be surrounded by people who want to see the “**Jesus show**” but have no interest in having their hearts and lives changed.

As we think about this text this week, we should focus on **who this Jesus really is** that we say we believe in. And a good question for us is, how does my life reflect the reality of Christ?

When I speak, do I pass what I say through the sieve of God’s truth and God’s Word, so that when I speak for God I speak with authority? I speak what He speaks.

And do I really **expect** Christ’s power to put evil at bay in my life? Do I really **expect** Christ to exert power over those wrong things in me that I have the most trouble with? Do I really expect Christ to be Christ in my life?

One thing is for sure here. When people were around Christ when He was ministering, they could see a very very clear difference to the religion they are used to. Is that what our family, our friends, our church and our world see in us?