

Message #5

Mark 1:21-28

We may recall that at this point Jesus has called four fishermen to follow Him and join His elite ministry team. The four were Peter and Andrew and James and John. They had immediately left their fishing business and followed him. **What He told them is that if they would follow Him, He would make them to become “fishers of men.”** So this next episode is part of the process of training them to become fishers of men. In fact, we could say this is their first lesson they need to learn and the lesson is this:

IF YOU ARE TO BECOME A FISHER OF MEN, YOU WILL NEED TO PUBLICLY PREACH AND TEACH; AND WHEN YOU DO, THERE WILL BE DIFFERENT REACTIONS WITH THE PEOPLE TO WHOM YOU ARE PREACHING.

Now Peter was probably the one who actually told Mark this story. Peter was with Jesus when this happened. He witnessed this. He was in the synagogue to actually hear what Jesus was saying and see what actually happened.

Now this is all part of the training process in helping these men become fishers of men. There are six historical facts we want to observe:

HISTORICAL FACT #1 – Jesus and his disciples go into Capernaum. **1:21a**

Now Christ needed a new home base from which He could minister. He had left Nazareth and went to Capernaum (Luke 4:16-31).

Capernaum was a beautiful small town on the upper northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee. It was small but it was busy. It is located about two miles from where the Jordan River flows into the lake. This city would become kind of a home base of His operations in the Galilean region. Mark stresses this point three times (**1:21**; 2:1; 9:33). This would become the headquarters for a while for the public ministry of Jesus Christ.

Capernaum was not some big metropolis that featured the great scholars of the world. This was a humble city comprised of fishermen, craftsmen, merchants, and various agricultural laborers who were just trying to make a living. These were just average families, trying to raise their children as best as they could. Most had no idea who just walked into their town to make this His headquarters.

The lesson the disciples would learn from this is that you need a home base from which you can operate and that home base starts in the city where you live. Simon and Andrew had a house in Capernaum (Mark 1:29), and this is where they lived and this is where Christ would base His ministry. In fact, archeologists have uncovered the place where they believe this house was actually located.

HISTORICAL FACT #2 – Jesus immediately went to the synagogue in Capernaum on the Sabbath Day. **1:21b**

Here is the first mention of the synagogue. This was the central place in the city for Biblical instruction. There was one Temple in Jerusalem, but there were many synagogues in various cities. **These synagogues were known for one thing—teaching the Scriptures.** There was no music, there was no singing, they did pray and then they read the Scriptures and expounded them.

It was a known place for teaching. In fact, Philo, the preacher from Alexandria, Egypt, in the mid-first century said that the synagogue was a “house of instruction.” This really is what the church should be today, but most are far removed from this objective.

Now those who have visited this area say that there is the remains of a synagogue that may very well sit in exactly the place where this happened. The ruins of the synagogue have been uncovered in what is known today as Tell Hum and they seem to suggest that this synagogue was a beautiful, large facility.

Now of course the lesson the disciples are learning is that if you are going to fish for men, you are going to need to go where they publicly gather so you may expound the Scriptures.

HISTORICAL FACT #3 – Jesus went to the synagogue to teach. **1:21c**

Jesus teaches His disciples an important lesson here—the reason we go to these religious services is to preach and teach the Word of God. This is what people need when they go to their religious place of worship; they need to be taught.

The word “teach” is the Greek word from which we get our English word didactic. The word means to give instruction as a teacher. Jesus went to this synagogue for the purpose of giving careful instruction to the people. He did not go to entertain. He did not go to sing. He did not go to start some religious club. He did not go to share. **HE WENT TO THE PLACE OF WORSHIP TO PREACH AND TEACH!**

This clearly shows the importance of teaching God’s Word. This is what the church should be known for—careful preaching and teaching of God’s Word. This was the primary focus of the ministry of Jesus Christ and it should be the primary focus of the ministry of the church.

These disciples are being taught a very important point about fishing for men and that is you must go to the place of worship and carefully preach and teach the Scriptures. This is a key part of the process of fishing for men.

HISTORICAL FACT #4 – Jesus amazed the people in Capernaum with His teaching. **1:22**

Now the verb “amazed” is imperfect tense meaning they were continually amazed by the teaching of Jesus. Every time He taught they were amazed. Now the word “amazed” is one that means they were astonished and shocked by His authoritative teaching (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 141).

These people had never heard anything quite like this. When He spoke there was an intensity and an authority to Him and His teaching. His teaching was impacting and powerful. It was not like the Scribes who were just sharing all kinds of religious stuff. **What we actually have here is God teaching the Word of God.**

The Scribes were religious professionals especially known for their law teachings and their teachings of men’s traditions. Jesus came to town and started teaching the Word of God and it was impacting.

Jesus Christ, who was the Word, was preaching the Word and there was power in it. Based on what Mark said in Mark 1:14, he is carefully preaching and teaching the Gospel of God. He is carefully unraveling the fact that they are sinners and need a Savior and there was tremendous power in His teaching.

That is the way it was when I sat under the teaching ministry of Mr. Miles. There was power there. He was not flamboyant but there was a power behind what he taught. That was the way it was when he sat under the ministry of Lewis Sperry Chafer.

Mr. Miles described Dr. Chafer’s teaching: “When he spoke or taught, there was nothing bombastic or oratorical. However, there was an intensity and conviction and authority that held me spellbound” (John Miles, *The Thrill of the Ministry Lessons of Fifty-five Plus Years*, p. 48).

When you sit under a ministry of God’s Word that is being presented by someone close to God, there is power and authority in it. That is the way it was when Jesus taught in Capernaum.

Now keep in mind that four fishermen, who have just been recently called to be His disciples, are traveling with Him and watching all of this. They are getting a tremendous ministerial lesson—namely, **a true Christ-like ministry that is powerful will be given to carefully teaching God’s Word.**

They are watching him carefully lay open God’s Word. He handled it seriously, systematically, and accurately. His focus is on preaching and teaching and that would need to be their focus if they were to truly reach people.

I do want to point out something here and that is even though the people were amazed, most were not converted. Even though they sensed there was power in the teaching, the vast majority did not believe.

HISTORICAL FACT #5 – Jesus’ teaching affected a demon-possessed man. **1:23-24**

Now while Jesus is teaching and the people are listening and, as one writer said, “thunderstruck by Jesus teaching,” a demon-possessed man cried out.

Now the first thing we want to observe is that a demon-possessed man was at this religious service. As I understand the Greek, the man was in the synagogue listening to this. The problem was this man was demon-possessed. What we conclude from this is that this demon-possessed man was used to going to the synagogue and listening to the Scribes teach their religious topics. The demon-possessed man had no problem listening to the Scribes teach religion or teach about good works or teach about trying to keep the O.T. Law or teach that you must keep men’s traditions. That did not faze him; but when Jesus Christ came to the Synagogue and started to proclaim the true Word of God, it caused the demon to come out of the closet or more accurately cry out through the mouth of the man.

Now the words “unclean spirit” means that this man was possessed by a specific demon that was impure and unclean. The power of Jesus’ teaching is what caused this demon to “cry out.” That verb “cry out” means the man was actually “shouting” (*Ibid.*, p. 31).

True teaching of God’s Word is explosive to the dark works and world of Satan. Preach the truth of the grace of God in a religious world of demonic works and you will see the sparks fly.

Years ago, I was the chaplain of a detention center in Valparaiso, Indiana. I would go to the center once a week and conduct a Bible study with the young people being detained. One time when I arrived I was told there was a major Satanist in the group. That does not bother me, because God is greater than Satan; in fact, His Word says, “Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world.” So I went in to do my study. When I started reading the Word of God, this young man jumped up, ran around behind me and started beating on the bullet proof window and started yelling to the attendants “Get me out of here”; “Get me out of here.” This was one violent reaction to the Word of God. That is what happened here.

Now **verse 24** is most interesting because it shows us the demon world has tremendous knowledge of the Person of Jesus Christ and of the plan of God.

(Realization #1) - This demon knows there is future business Jesus will conduct with Satan and demons. **1:24a**

The opening question of this demon indicates demons know that there is a program between them and God and that program will end in their destruction. This demon knows that the end result of Satan and demons will be the Eternal Lake of Fire. They will be eventually destroyed there.

Apparently the demons know about the first coming of Christ and the second coming of Christ.

They have some perspective of eschatology. They know what will ultimately happen to them, but they also knew the timing wasn't right yet.

(Realization #2) - This demon knew Jesus was a real human who came from Nazareth. **1:24a**

By calling Him "Jesus," this demon knows this is the Divine Savior in human form. This demon possessed this man, but this demon knew that Jesus had been living in Nazareth.

(Realization #3) - The demon knew Jesus was the Holy One of God. **1:24b**

This demon knew that this Jesus of Nazareth was God. This demon knew this was "the Holy One of God." Demons had no problem identifying Christ. They identify Him as the "Son of God" (Mark 3:11) and they identify Him as "the Son of the Most High God" (Mark 5:7). Satan and demons know who Jesus Christ is and they have no problem believing that. The problem is with humans.

HISTORICAL FACT #6 – Jesus commands the demon to be quiet and come out of him.
1:25-26

Jesus Christ has total control over this man and when this demon cried out, Jesus gave the demon two commands; two imperatives:

(Imperative #1) - Be quiet. **1:25a**

The word "be quiet" (*ἥσυχος*) literally means "muzzle your mouth"; silence yourself (*Ibid.*, p. 471). He commands this demon to shut his mouth.

(Imperative #2) - Come out of the man. **1:25b**

There is the preposition "out of" with the prefix of the verb "come out" and another one that sits by itself. The preposition is "ek." **What that means is that this demon was really inside this man and Jesus is ordering him out of the man.**

According to **verse 26**, when Jesus commanded this, the man was thrown into some convulsion and the unclean spirit cried out with a loud voice and came out of him.

The "crying out" was apparently some inarticulate howling of some sorts and not an actual communication of words, which Jesus had just commanded he not do.

Now one commentator made a great observation when he said that this scene gives the worst of us hope. You may be here today with the most hardened heart in the world or you may know someone who has a hard heart. You may know someone who is plunged deep into evil and the person appears to be "impenetrable, irredeemable, impossible."

You may know some person who is sitting in prison because of the gross evil they have done. You may know of some proud religious person who loves himself and his religion but hates the grace of God.

Well know this; **Jesus Christ can set you free from anything. He can set you free from your vile sins and your hard heart.**

Someone told me that one of the major leaders of the church of Satan cried out to Jesus Christ just before he died. If that is true, he cried out to the only Person who could save him. He did it in Capernaum and He can do it now.

Now what would these disciples learn here? Demon-possessed people need Jesus Christ because Jesus Christ can and will set them free from the demonic world.

HISTORICAL FACT #7 – Jesus impacted the people of Capernaum. **1:27-28**

Now let's put this in some perspective. These are common Galilean people, who go to their synagogue for some typical religious service, and in walks Jesus, who starts teaching and then you see some demon cry out and some guy has convulsions because Jesus took care of this problem.

There were three immediate reactions:

Reaction #1 - The people were all amazed. **1:27a**

This is a different Greek word from **verse 22**. This word means they marveled at His teaching and saw it as an absolute wonder (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 203).

Reaction #2 - The people debated His new teaching among themselves. **1:27b**

The adjective “new” means this was brand new teaching. Jesus’ grace teaching about believing in Him for entrance into a relationship with God was brand new to these people. They had never heard anything like this. They were debating this which means they were talking, disputing and examining what He said. This was new authoritative teaching that was so powerful that even the demonic world responded to Him and His commands. This was the talk of the congregation.

Reaction #3 - The people spread the news about Jesus. **1:28**

But do you notice what you don't read? You do not read that they all believed in Him.

So the first lesson these disciples learn about reaching people is that our job is not to entertain or to appease or to try to make people feel real good about them. Our job is to accurately and publicly preach and teach the Word; and when we do that, there will be different reactions to it. People will sense and know there is power in what we are saying. They will talk about it among themselves, but very few will believe.