

St. Mark 1:21-28

Dear Friends in Christ,

Concerning our text from the Gospel of Mark, Biblical scholar F. F. Bruce wrote: "Mark omits much...but it makes a distinctive contribution to the evangelic *history in showing by a few realistic touches...the remarkable personality of Jesus.*" (Quoted by A. T. Robertson, "Word Pictures In The New Testament", Broadman Press, p. 259)

I found the insight interesting but understated. I would say that the personality of Jesus is the personality of God Who allows us to see and hear Him as He wishes to be seen and heard among humans. We're given a powerful look into the Almighty Triune God Who would condescend to our level and reveal . . .

## **THE WORD - FROM THE WORD HIMSELF**

### I. The Final Word.

And they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath he entered the synagogue and was teaching. And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes. (vv. 21,22)

You might ask, "How is it that someone could simply walk into a synagogue and start teaching?" Lutheran commentator Harold Wicke writes, "Since synagogues had no resident ordained ministers, the rulers of the synagogue would invite some rabbi (teacher) or scribe present to teach the lessons. So it happened that Jesus was often invited to address the congregations." (Harold E. Wicke, "The People's Bible. Mark", Northwestern Publishing House, p. 24)

The important part of the opening words of our text is this: "...they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes." They were "astonished." They were stunned with a great wonder and surprise. They had never heard anything like this.

I want to emphasize this with you for a moment. "They had never heard anything like this." It has been stated, "They (the scribes) quoted other rabbis and felt their function to be expounders of the traditions which they had made a millstone around the necks of people." (A. T. Robertson, "Word Pictures In The New Testament", p. 259) And this insight: "They always appealed to the interpretations of past rabbis and were particularly adept at breaking down God's word into any number of legalistic regulations." (Wick, "Mark", p. 25)

Our understanding of this is so important for our walk with the Lord. The people were listening to and filling up on everything but the clear Word of God! They were what most of the church is today: Church people sitting in a theological vacuum. And by "church people: I mean people who only claim a "membership" in the church.

The teachers of the synagogue were teaching "Do this and that, don't do this and that. Pursue rule upon rule, regulation upon regulation that God might love and bless you!" Tell me - help me understand this, if you can - what's the difference between that and the constant present day pouring out of *If You Do This and That, or If You Don't Do This or That, then God Will Heal You, God Will Pay Your Bills, God Will Bless Your Earthly Life with success and happiness* - programs?? What's the difference??

The Person standing in that Synagogue not only speaks with authority - He is The Authority. The Word Himself - God in the flesh - speaking the Word. He need not cite the past rabbis or the theologians of the day.

And here we are - in this present moment - surrounded and being consumed by twisted wisdom and understanding of creation, the value of life, family, what humanity is and how it should proceed. All of it taking us everywhere and, yet, nowhere but into a deep, dark, dead end! I love Psalm 119:105: "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." And with that verse 114: "You are my hiding place and my shield; I hope in your word." That's Who is standing in the synagogue: The Word! The Light! The Lamp! Our Hiding Place and our Shield!

## II. The Satanic Constant.

And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are - the Holy One of God." But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!" And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying out with a loud voice, came out of him. (vv. 23-26)

I call this *The Satanic Constant*. Satan is always there to oppose the Word any way possible. We're all familiar with "The Temptation of Jesus". Listen to the closing words: "And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time." It's the constant. **An opportune time**. This portion of our text begins with "And immediately there was a man...with an unclean spirit." "Immediately." One of those "opportune times". Hell at work in a place of worship in order to oppose the Word!!

You must hear these words of commentator Harold Wicke:

Many theologians deny the possibility of demon-possession then and now...Perhaps the trouble is with us - we fail to recognize them. But we also know that Satan and his evil angels are sufficiently wise to adapt themselves to the times. Today we find their power displayed in the human attempts - usually by highly educated persons - to undermine Scripture and its teachings. False doctrine, cults, pagan religions, science that rejects Scripture - all these are the working of Satan. (Wicke, "Mark", p. 26)

And we, of this moment, cannot afford to ignore these words of Scripture: "The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved." (2 Thess. 2:9-10)

"The activity of Satan" is all around us. It is a constant. But it is the very Word Himself, our Lord Jesus Christ Who will bring this constant to its end!

## III. The Coming Day of No Questions.

And they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, "What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him." And at once his fame spread everywhere throughout all the surrounding region of Galilee. (vv. 27,28)

We're not told what he had specifically taught them, but it wasn't new. They had never really heard it because the Word of God had been set aside by the teachings of sinful men. And, again, it's the same in most of the church today!

Remember this: the leader of the unclean spirits (Satan) already knew his fate from the beginning when God said to him, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and

her offspring; he (the One who was teaching in the Synagogue) will bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.” (Gen. 3:15) Satan and all the demons of hell know their fate. But the insanity of hell itself drives them further into disarray and maniacal activities. But this will end!

The most horrible word that throws every life into shambles was sounded out at the beginning when God said to Adam, “but the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” (Gen. 2:17) Die! Every generation runs itself into a tizzy trying to avoid the reality.

The words of the wise woman to David make void every fantasy that silently proclaims, “Well, I’ve got a lot of life to live so I’ll get serious about the dirt that will cover me later!” These words of the wise woman: “We must all die; we are like water spilled on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again.” (2 Sam. 14:14) It’s always the wages of sin.

The statement from our text about Jesus, “they were all amazed” is amazing only to those who walk away from the One Who says, “whoever believes has everlasting life.” And the question, “What is this?” is the question left only for those running themselves into a tizzy trying to avoid the reality of dying and death. What this is, is *The Way and the Truth and the Life*. This is the One Who stands between God’s righteous anger and us, covers us with His blood, that we would be pronounced “Not guilty!”; that we can hear Him say, “Come, you who are blessed by my Father and inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” (Matt. 25:34)

It is the love of God for us that changes everything: how we see others who are in turmoil with guilt and sorrow, how we serve the Lord, how we use all that God has given us. It’s good that we could be in the synagogue with Him this morning; to hear **The Word - From The Word Himself**.

Amen.

Pastor Bill Abbott

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Mark 1:21-28: **“The Word - *From the Word Himself*”**

- I. The Final Word.
- II. The Satanic Constant.
- III. The Coming Day of No Questions.

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