

## **PP Summer in Galilee**

### **Part 4-Mark 1:21-28 Jesus, the God of Authority**

6/15-16/2019

This summer, we are looking at the events of Jesus in northern Israel, the Galilee region  
In our passage today, the baptism and the temptations of Christ are in the rear view mirror, and in fact, months have passed

John the Baptist has been arrested by Herod, things are heating up in Judea, and Jesus moved back north into Galilee

If you've ever thought of Galilee as a back-water area then you don't yet know the area

It was a center of social, political, commercial life, standing at the crossroads of trade routes

The languages of Greek, Hebrew and Aramaic would be heard in the markets

Syrians, Jews, Romans and Parthian peoples mixed freely

The area was alive, dangerous, trendy, and the perfect place for the explosive ministry of Jesus

He made His way toward Capernaum, where He called out to Peter, his brother Andrew, John and his brother James to follow Him (**Luke 5:10**)

The four were involved in a fishing partnership and it is possible they all lived in Capernaum

***"they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue"*** 1:21

Capernaum at that time was the largest of the 16 fishing ports on the freshwater lake called the Sea of Galilee, and it was a prosperous center of commerce

I mentioned last week that if it was Sabbath Day for Jesus, it was church Day, and back then, the synagogue was in many ways, like a church service is today

If a town had 10 men, Jewish Law commanded them to have a synagogue, a meeting place

It was a place for them to gather for 'church'; a school for the education of their children; and serving like a modern courthouse, a place for legal cases to be tried

Their services had three elements to it: prayer, the reading of God's Word and its exposition

The synagogue was more influential on the Jewish heart and mind than even the Temple

Jesus was fast building a following, and after the event we are about to look at, ***'His fame spread everywhere throughout all the surrounding region of Galilee.'*** 1:28

He entered the synagogue, and was invited to teach and while we aren't given what He taught, we are told the effect of His teaching: ***'they were astonished at His teaching.'*** (1:22)

**PP** ***'astonished'*** comes from a Greek word that means to *strike with panic or shock*

It struck them like a blow, the word we are familiar with was it left them *thunderstruck*, the phrase we could use it that it *blew their minds*

We might think it's because He taught them what they had never seen in the Hebrew scriptures before

We tend to like a preacher when we can say, *'I never saw that in that passage before'*

I'm sure that the teaching of Jesus was filled with fresh understanding and insight

But Mark says what left them thunderstruck was not what He taught, but how He taught

Mark tells us why: ***"He taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes."*** 1:22

The effect of His teaching on those synagogue worshipers had to do with His ***'authority'***

The body of teaching and interpretation of scripture a rabbi had was called his ***'yoke'***

The rabbi would speak to groups of people and invite them to take their ***'yoke'***, their

interpretation of the Scriptures and submit to it as his disciples, or learners

**PP** ***"Come to Me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 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. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light."*** Matthew 11:28-30

When a rabbi gained a massive influence, he was believed to have *s'mikhah*, a word for authority, and with that came the credibility to make interpretations of the Torah Teaching ***'as one who had authority'*** indicates they could sense that he had *s'mikkah*, authority But how was this ***'not as the scribes?'***

Most of the people in Jesus' day were illiterate and had no personal copy of the scriptures So the position of a teacher and preacher was extremely important and influential and the ones to perform this privileged duty were the scribes

Most of the scribes belonged to the group called the Pharisees and the revered among them were given the title ***'rabbi'***, which means *'honored one'*

**PP** Rabbis had 3 main duties: they studied the Law of God, writing up rules and regulations to keep it called the Oral Law; they taught that Oral Law to the people; and they gave judgment in legal cases similar to a lawyer

And they had a particular style of teaching...they nearly always quoted from someone else

**PP** In the words of one ancient rabbi, *"I have never in my life said a thing which I did not hear from my teachers."* Phillip Ryken, Luke

But Jesus didn't borrow from the authority of others, His authority was in Himself

He would reference what the scribes would teach, but then He would say, ***'But I say to you'***

He would often emphasize His teaching with ***'Truly, truly'*** the Greek word ***'Amen'***, and when He did, He was attesting that the truthfulness of what He was about to say was bound up in His own self, His own authority, not because some rabbi said it was true

No one else taught like that and it was astounding to hear, leaving the people thunderstruck

Yet there was one there in that synagogue not feeling amazement, but terror: ***"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.'"*** 1:23-24

Did you catch the plural pronoun that the unclean spirit used...twice...***'us'***?

Jesus speaks immediately to the unclean spirit, and the unclean spirit itself said, ***"I know who you are"***

It appears there is one unclean spirit in this man, speaking on behalf of others of them

They knew who Jesus was, as word of their master's defeat in the wilderness had reached them

There are few occurrences of unclean spirits in the Old Testament, or in later church history

But it was like kicking an ant hill when Jesus publicly began to preach the good news

The Jewish people believed demons hovered over thrones and cradles

Demon possession was a terrible form of suffering

One effort to exorcise them was to put a foul smelling root up the person's nose, thinking that the demon would be driven out

Another was boring a hole in the skull of the possessed, thinking it allowed the demon to escape

The extracted disk of bone would then be worn around the neck as an amulet to ward off evil

Rarely, the person survived, evidence by finding bored skulls with bone growth around the hole

So powerfully had this unclean spirit taken over this man, that the Greek literally says the man was *'in an unclean spirit'*, the two were fused together

It was when Jesus began to preach that this demon-possessed man cried out

The power of the Word of God shattered the deception and flooded the synagogue with light, the unclean spirit hiding in that man could not help but blow his cover

***"But Jesus rebuked him, saying, 'Be silent, and come out of him!'"*** (25)

**PP** ***'silent'*** is a word used elsewhere for a muzzled ox

***“And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying out with a loud voice, came out of him.”***

There was no battle, no contest of wills, the demon had no choice but to obey  
In rage, it screamed, and shook the man, and left while the people ***‘were all amazed’*** (27)

Just moments before the people were ***‘astonished’***, blown away, now they were ‘amazed’

**PP** They were ***‘all amazed’***, a word that means they were *shocked* at the display of His authority  
There is no mention of being shocked that there was a demon-possessed man in their midst  
Their shock was directed at Jesus, and they turned to one another asking *Who is this guy?*

*\*There are some lessons in this for us, if we have ears to hear:*

**PP First, the power of our greatest enemy has been broken by Jesus**

Flip forward to **Mark 3:23**, where some scribes were accusing Jesus of being possessed by a  
Philistine deity called Beelzebub, which was a figure of speech for Satan

He answered them, ***“How can Satan cast out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but is coming to an end. But no one can enter a strong man’s house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. Then indeed he may plunder his house.”*** Mark 3:23-27

Jesus had bound the devil, the strong man, and He was plundering and taking his goods, those he  
had bound and chained...and this synagogue worshiper was one of them

Christian, **PP** ***“He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.”*** 1 John 4:4

The spiritual forces against us have been bound by Christ, which gives us great confidence that  
they can do nothing against us that God does not allow, as we walk with Him

**PP Second, curiosity in Jesus is not the same as believing faith**

Did you notice the response of that congregation after this demon was expelled?

***“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.”*** 1:27

The demon shrieks in terror, and the congregants sign up at the Capernaum *Meetup* to discuss it  
This incredibly inadequate response ought to pull us all up short

When you read the scriptures and see the power and authority of Jesus, are you left in awe?

*But, you say, it’s difficult to get excited just reading about it, after all I wasn’t there*

I would say to you that this is the living Word of God, written by God, imbued with His power to  
open your eyes, to excite your heart toward exaltation and amazement and worship

You go to the zoo, and you leave amazed at the beauty of the animals

You go to the Amazon jungle, sleep in a tent, hear the animals moving around at night, snorting  
and fighting, and you feel the excitement and terror of being in the wild

The zoo is fun, interesting, informative and safe, but the jungle is visceral, untamed, terrifying

Do you see Jesus as interesting, or as the incarnate Son of God, worthy of your worship?

God isn’t pleased when a glimpse of His Son moves us to discussion and debate rather than  
worship and obedience

**PP Third, there seems to have been no concern for the one just delivered**

No one is talking about him, rejoicing for him, coming around him  
 Jesus never wants our love and worship of Him to cause us to overlook the life of a sufferer  
 A man is set free from a life-ravaging demon and no one there is talking to him, or about him  
 How prone we are to discuss/debate theology and lose track of what matters...real people  
 How wonderful it would have been to see people gathered around this man, helping him to get  
 his life started

Do you enjoy hearing and seeing God heal and deliver suffering people more than reading  
 articles on issues and movements?

What is more exciting for you: loving others, or reading books?

Christian, do you see those struggling all around you in the midst of a worship service at church?

Are you making an investment in relationships with those who attend your church, or do you  
 rush out after the Amen, with a see you next week, same time, same place?

**PP Finally, *Jesus plants seeds of faith today that will sprout tomorrow***

In Mark 5, there was a synagogue ruler by the name of Jairus who would desperately come  
 to Jesus because his little daughter was dying

Many experts believe that this same grieving father was the ruler of the synagogue at  
 Capernaum, who had invited Jesus to speak, and witnessed His power and authority

If that is true, then the seeds of faith were planted in this day with the demon-possessed man, and  
 sprouted to life in a crisis later

Friends, plant the seeds, and water them with patience, for Jesus is our sovereign farmer, He  
 knows how to author and grow those seeds into a harvest of faith

It calls for patience, and trust for those who you love but do not yet believe in Jesus for salvation

Have you seen the authority of Jesus in this passage?

Is there anything in your life that's overwhelmed you, held you in its power, too big for you?

Do you believe in the sovereign, satan-binding, plundering power of the Holy One of God?

Are you more interested in the Person of Jesus than discussion about Jesus?

Have your eyes of mercy been drawn to the suffering all around you, directing your hands and  
 feet toward them?

Perhaps there are some course corrections you need to make even today!

Amen?

Pray