

Extra! Extra! Read All About It!

January 28, 2018

Mark 1: 21-28

²¹ They went to Capernaum; and when the sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught. ²² They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. ²³ Just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, ²⁴ 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." ²⁵ But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!" ²⁶ And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him. ²⁷ They were all amazed, and they kept on asking one another, "What is this? A new teaching—with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him." ²⁸ At once his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee.



As we begin today, I invite you to think about the best teacher you ever had. Can you picture them in your mind? Can you see them? Now, think about what it was that made them the best teacher you ever had. What qualities or characteristics made them stand out as the best teacher you ever had?

Now, transition to the opening verses of our scripture for today. Jesus enters the synagogue in Capernaum and begins to teach the people that had gathered. Our passage today tells us that the people, "*were astounded at his teaching, for*

he taught them as one having authority". Jesus' teaching was apparently quite impressive. If you were there that day, perhaps you too would think of Jesus as one of the greatest teachers you ever had. This is a familiar refrain that we find in the gospels. Jesus often astounds those that He is teaching. Whether it is a group of Pharisees or other religious leaders or if it is just a group of people from a town or village or if it is a single person, Jesus often reveals things or teaches in a way that is amazing and powerful. For many who experienced this, it was mysterious how Jesus could know this or that about them or how Jesus could have just the right parable for just this situation or for that one.

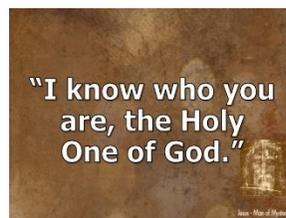
Just two weeks ago we saw how Nathanael was led to follow Jesus because of something Jesus shared about Nathanael as he saw him sitting under the tree. If one were to spend just one hour reading through one of the gospels, one would see just how great of a teacher Jesus was. If you do not know this aspect of Jesus, I encourage you to spend a little time with your Bible this afternoon.



Over the course of the past few weeks we have been looking at Jesus as a man who is sometimes well-known and at other times is more a man of mystery. We began with Jesus' baptism where He was revealed to be God's Son. The second week, we looked at how Jesus invites us to join Him, even though we do not fully understand who and what He is all of the time. Last week we extended that idea as we looked at the first four disciples, who chose to leave all behind to join the mission.

We also saw how we are a part of the same mission to make disciples of all people. Today we rejoin Jesus as a man who is well known but also wants to remain somewhat a mystery. We will look at how, on the one hand, the demon-possessed man declares exactly who Jesus is and then at how Jesus demands that this voice be silent yet turns around to amaze the crowds by sending the demon out of the man. Let us pray.

The “know me fully” Jesus and the “continue to discover more and more of me” Jesus once again emerges today. As Jesus teaches in the synagogue He is revealing more and more of Himself as people get to know Him and His authority more fully. Teaching in such a way in a very public setting will produce notoriety. It simply does. People recognize an authority to Jesus’ teaching that they do not see in the scribes’ teachings. As our passage continues, Jesus was teaching and *“there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit”* who cries out in a loud voice, *“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”*. Not much doubt about who Jesus is, is there?. *“You are, the Holy One of God”*. It is almost the same declaration we hear after Jesus’ baptism when God identified Jesus as His Son. But Jesus tries to quickly shut down such talk this time, telling the demon possessed man, *“Be silent, come out of him”*. Did Jesus drive out the demon to heal the man or to keep the demon from professing who Jesus really was – the Holy One of God?





The healing of the man has the same effect as His teaching does: it amazes the people and their response is to then go and share the news. The people feel an urgency to tell others of this Jesus and consequently *"at once his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee"*. There is no keeping such a good thing a secret. Through His teaching and in the miracle healing the man, Jesus is revealed to be a person of great authority. Yet He also wants to remain a mystery. We recall how He quickly and emphatically told the demon to be quiet. And again, to insure its silence, Jesus immediately drives the demon out of the man.

But this action just points even more to who Jesus is. It is a pattern that will continue. The more that Jesus teaches and performs miracles, the more people are amazed and drawn to Him. Almost every teaching changes someone's life and almost every miracle is followed by people sharing the good news of Jesus with all they meet. It is like the newspaper boys who stood on the corner yelling, "Extra! Extra! Read all about it!", drawing attention to a great story. Yet over and over Jesus still insists on keeping a lid on things, on keeping just who He is a secret. It is almost as if the mystery is part of Jesus' message itself.

Sometimes a bit of mystery is good for us. Sometimes it is what keeps us engaged and draws us back again. It works in the simplest of ways. Headlines on all the tabloids and even in the Winner Advocate draw our attention and call us to read the article to find out more. We love to read novels, to go to movies,

and to watch television shows that are built around a mystery that is revealed as the show or book evolves. In the end we know that the secret will be revealed. This is what I think Jesus was doing – revealing enough of Himself to draw people in yet keeping enough secret to make them want to come back again, to learn more, to go deeper. He too knew that in the end all would be revealed as He glorified God through His resurrection. But in the interim, Jesus wanted to continue to draw more and more people in.

As Jesus ministry continues, He reveals more and more about Himself yet keeps pieces secret or mysterious. In that way there was always an attraction to hear Jesus teach again, to get to know Him better, to understand what Jesus was trying to teach and model. Jesus must have known what He was doing, because these things remain true today. As we continue on our own faith journeys, we sense a need to continue to delve into Jesus' teachings, to gain a greater and greater level of understanding who Jesus was and what He calls us to be, and to invest in our relationship with Him. And as we journey in faith, we too encounter Jesus in ways that are mysterious or at least unexpected. We encounter Jesus in a person we least expected to meet Jesus in. We are led from our sin by a Jesus who loves us beyond our limited comprehension. We experience healing or restoration that can come only from Jesus. In some ways, Jesus will always be a mystery to us. This opens the impossible to us as well. The more we know Jesus, the more we come to realize that Jesus is capable of the impossible. Not only does this draw us to Him, it also brings us hope beyond the realities of life.

For those who were astounded by Jesus' teachings and amazed by His miracles, the unknown was partially what attracted them too. Through His teachings and the miracles, Jesus created space in people for them to wonder what was possible with Jesus. He created and gave permission for people to imagine what it could look like to live their lives differently from the world with all of its laws and rules. Jesus drew people into the possibilities of the amazing plans that God might have for their lives.

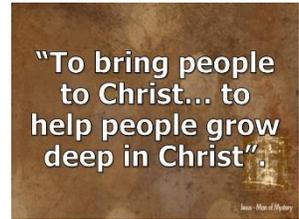
Last week we talked about the urgent mission we have as individuals and as a church. Our urgent mission is *"to bring people to Christ... to help people grow deep in Christ"*. It must be the sole focus that all else is connected to and branches out from. Whatever we do, wherever we reach out, however we are in ministry, it must all be filtered through this mission. In all we do, we must ask ourselves: does this help bring people to Christ or does it help people grow deeper in their relationship with Christ? If it does not, we must ask why we are doing it.



To begin to wrestle with this question, let us consider how we, as individuals and as a church, reveal Jesus to others. Do we do it by buying a bullhorn and standing down by the light, shouting at people, telling them that they are sinners destined to spend eternity in hell? Do we do it by protesting this or that, holding up posters at the event or by sharing posts on social media that condemn the topic or the issue or the person? Certainly, Jesus weeps when Christians act in these



ways. Jesus weeps because these actions do not bring people to Christ. These actions do not help people grow deep in Christ. We must choose words and actions that do accomplish our mission. This is our one mission. It must remain our focus.



So then, how should we bring people to Christ? How should we help people to grow deeper in their relationship with Christ? To begin, we should simply be like Christ. In doing so, love should be primary. Everything Jesus did was based upon loving God above all else and then upon loving the other person more than Himself. This laser focus is reflected in the two greatest commandments: love God and love neighbor.

As I shared last week, at times this is a very difficult path to walk. Yes, like Jesus, we should speak the truth in love. But we should not allow the truth to harm or hurt a lost child of God. Truth may have to wait for that person to mature a bit in their faith, so that the truth leads to growth and not to turning away. And like Jesus, we should meet people where they are at and minister to them in ways that bring God all the honor and glory. We should not 'help' in a way that is, in reality, harmful or hurtful to that person. We should serve those in need by meeting their basic needs, just as Jesus instructed us to, while helping them to gain skills to meet their own needs. When we do meet a need, we should do so only in love. Therefore, we should not place any strings or requirements on someone in need receiving our help or assistance. For example, we should not expect to be paid back or for them to start showing up at church

every Sunday. We should feed the hungry or clothe the naked because that what Jesus did and because it is what He calls us to do. No more, no less. We should love as Jesus loved.

When we love others as Jesus loved the least and the lost, then we begin to help others see how Jesus lives in us and how He has changed us. As Christians, we are called to love and serve those who society ignores or neglects. As Christians, we are called to stand up for those that society takes advantage of or perpetrates injustices against. When we love and serve and stand for the least and the lost, we are different than the world and we are noticed. It makes the least and lost ask 'why' we are loving and serving them or why we are risking for them. It makes those in power ask why we are loving and serving those that those in power normally ignore or dismiss. When we choose to love others as Jesus loved them, we bring all people closer to knowing Christ.

The second way that we can reveal Jesus is by sharing what Jesus has done and is doing in our lives. In today's scripture passage, these are the "miracles", so to speak. In Jesus' time, the miracles allowed people to see that faith could overcome what seemed impossible to them. It was faith that allowed the blind to see and the lame to walk. It was faith that cured the leper and it was faith raised Lazarus from the tomb. It was faith that calmed the sea and it was faith that allowed Peter to walk on the water. Through the miracles, the people of Jesus' day came to see that nothing was impossible with God. When we can

share how Jesus has brought healing or wholeness to our illnesses or brokenness, then others can have hope that Jesus can do the same for them.

In a similar way, you and I can also reveal Jesus to the lost and the broken by sharing how Jesus saved us from our sins and then redeemed us by His blood. Each and every sin that Jesus has defeated in us are sins that people are still wrestling with today. Those trapped in sin need to know how Jesus can set them free from their bondage. They come to see this by hearing how Jesus has set us free. We all have a story to share that helps others imagine how Jesus could set them free as well. This is yet another way that we can help to bring others to Christ. When we create space for people to imagine how Jesus could change their lives, we are opening doors for Jesus to enter in.

Our urgent mission is to make disciples of Jesus Christ. Sometimes we live our faith out by serving others, by meeting needs, by being the hands and feet of Christ in the world. We allow others to Christ in action. At other times, we use our own experiences and stories to share the good news of Jesus Christ. We allow others to hear how Christ can change their lives too. In all cases, we are being Christ to the world, allowing the lost and the least and the broken to see how and why Jesus would change their lives too. May our life and our witness shout "Jesus!" to the world. May our faith be like a headline, out there for all to see, loudly proclaiming, "Extra! Extra! Read all about it!". May our faith bring Jesus to all the world. Amen and amen.



GPS – Grow, Pray, Serve

- 1) What personal encounters with Jesus have led to growth in your faith?
How could these encounters help another to grow in their faith?
- 2) How could our church's mission to bring people to Christ have the central focus in your life? Pray for God to help you focus in on the mission.
- 3) Who are the least or the lost in your life that God might be calling you to love and serve? What would be a 'next step' for you to take?