

October 4, 2009/Mark 1:21-45 (ESV¹)

the official lesson this morning begins at verse 32 ... as context for the official lesson, let's begin 21 ... we were here just over a year ago, but this is what the lesson planners have given us ...

Mar 1:21 And they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath he entered the synagogue and was teaching.

the local synagogue was a center of Biblical teaching, prayer, public reading of the Scriptures, and Jewish social life ... obviously, it was not the temple, there was only one of those and that in Jerusalem ... but every town with at least 10 married Jewish men had its synagogue ... these had no paid staff, no official minister ... the layman who was ruler of the synagogue every Sabbath arranged for a qualified person to expound the scriptures, and Jesus was apparently invited to fill this role ... the standard teaching of the synagogue was filled with references to what important rabbis had said in interpreting the scriptures ... but Jesus taught otherwise ...

Mar 1:22 And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes.

the word rendered "astonished" by the ESV is literally "struck out of themselves" ... the people are dumbfounded ... their scribes taught constantly referencing what others had said ... He taught with personal authority on the matters on which He spoke ... that this is no ordinary Jewish rabbi is evident already in His manner of instruction and the intrinsic truth of what He said ...

Mar 1:23 And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit. And he cried out,

Mar 1:24 "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."

how it is that this fellow in this condition is in the synagogue is not addressed ... but the evil spirit in him interrupts Jesus ... notice that what the demon says is absolutely true, but it is not meant for good ... it is meant to create a stir, draw attention away from what Jesus is teaching, maybe even to try and gain some power over Jesus ... Ryle, commenting on this passage, points out the complete insufficiency of simply knowing what is true without real obedience ... the demon says "I know who you are" and he does ... but that counts for nothing ... knowing the facts of the Christian faith without obedience to it is, if anything, worse than not knowing ...

Mar 1:25 But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!"

this is a very sharp rebuke ... the "be quiet" is "be muzzled" ... it's nearly as forceful (presumably without the rudeness) of our "shut up" ... Jesus had no use for advertising provided by the forces of evil ... this is not a confession of saving faith or humble surrender, and Jesus silences the demon and casts it out ... the manner with which this is done is remarkable ... there were popular exorcists of

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the time ... but they relied upon elaborate incantations and rituals and assorted mumbo-jumbo and weren't all that successful ... Jesus simply says "come out of him" and

Mar 1:26 And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying out with a loud voice, came out of him.

Jesus didn't go looking for this opportunity to display His authority, rather He responded with compassion to a man in need, when that person's situation became evident ... and the reaction of the people is genuinely human ... they're impressed with His teaching (mostly its manner rather than content) BUT most of all, it's the power they find most appealing ...

Mar 1:27 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."

Jesus is there declaring the advent of the Kingdom of God, and the crowds are fixed on the demonstration of power ... and (figuratively speaking) they run to tell their friends and neighbors ...

Mar 1:28 And at once his fame spread everywhere throughout all the surrounding region of Galilee.

Mar 1:29 And immediately he left the synagogue and entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John.

Mar 1:30 Now Simon's mother-in-law lay ill with a fever, and immediately they told him about her.

Ryle: "We live in a world of sin and sorrow. The days of darkness in people's lives are many. It needs no prophet's eye to see that we will all shed many a tear, and feel many a heart-wrench before we die. Let us be armed with a recipe against despair, before our troubles come. Let us know what to do when sickness, bereavement, cross, loss or disappointment breaks in upon us like an armed man. Let us do what they did in Simon's house in Capernaum. Let us at once 'tell Jesus.'"

Mar 1:31 And he came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

this fever is an illness that laid people low, a "burning fever" ... Barclay says that the Jews of the day had a 3-day ritual they used to try and deal with it based on **Exodus 3:2-5** and a supposedly magic incantation ... but Jesus cut through all that, and in compassion and power cured her immediately ... the detail of taking her by the hand is one of those vivid items that points to the closeness of Mark to an eyewitness to all of this, Peter himself ...

when healed, Peter's mother-in-law didn't take vacation and bask in the glow of it all ... instead she set about to serve Him ...

Mar 1:32 That evening at sundown they brought to him all who were sick or oppressed by demons.

after sunset ... when the Sabbath was over and it was within the law to do work and carry a burden, people brought their infirm and tormented loved ones to Christ ... the tense indicates that there was a continual and steady stream of people at the door ...

Mar 1:33 And the whole city was gathered together at the door.

Mar 1:34 And he healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons. And he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

Jesus has compassion on us ... we are frail and infirm, and we understand from passages like this that when we come to Him in need He doesn't turn us away ... again, Jesus silences the evil spirits ... He doesn't need or want their testimony, and if we'd think it through, it should be obvious that any speaking they would do could only be counter to the purposes of God ... the tense again indicates that it was Jesus' consistent practice to silence them ...

Jesus has spent the better part of a day now caring for a steady stream of human need ... when things finally calm down, perhaps after a bit of sleep, He's up and talking with His Father ...

Mar 1:35 And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed.

our meager prayer lives look especially strange next to that of the Son of God ... if it was a priority for the 2nd person of the trinity to pray, where does that leave you and me? ... the disciples don't have a clue ...

Mar 1:36 And Simon and those who were with him searched for him,

Mar 1:37 and they found him and said to him, "Everyone is looking for you."

this "went to look for" is literally "hunted down" ... look Jesus, you've got a great opportunity that you are squandering out here ... your miracles have drawn a crowd ... we've got momentum, let's get back into town and cash in on it! ...

Mar 1:38 And he said to them, "Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out."

Mar 1:39 And he went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons.

this is a significant statement ... Jesus came to declare the way to the Father, and to die to provide it ... He wasn't here primarily to heal or take care of our immediate needs and wants ... He wasn't going to hang around Capernaum and let the crowd define His mission ... He wasn't going to allow them to turn Him into the temporal deliverer that they were longing for ... the Gospel is fundamentally eternal, not temporal, and the eyes of the people were on the temporal ... Jesus does respond in compassion to our temporal concerns, but fundamentally He's at work in us for eternity ...

Mar 1:40 And a leper came to him, imploring him, and kneeling said to him, "If you will, you can make me clean."

leprosy in this context may have included not only what we call leprosy, but a variety of other skin diseases as well ... lepers were not only sick people, they were cut off from family and friends ... they had to go around calling out "unclean" so that people knew to stay clear of them ... obviously, to touch a leper made one ceremonially unclean ... but that didn't stop Jesus ...

Mar 1:41 Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand and touched him and said to him, "I will; be clean."

apparently some of the best and oldest NT manuscripts read "being angered" instead of "moved with pity" ... angered at what evil and the evil one have done to people created in the image of God ... recognizing the image of God in humans being defaced is a thing that ought to produce righteous anger ... the evil one hates humans as image-bearers of God and works to mar that image ... Jesus was again willing to respond to this man's plea ...

Mar 1:42 And immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean.

this is no slight of hand or psychological trick here ... this fellow was big time sick and with a touch and a word, the Son of God healed Him ... immediately he was cured ...

Mar 1:43 And Jesus sternly charged him and sent him away at once,

"sent him away" apparently contains an element of indignation or anger ... why? ... perhaps directed at the work of the devil ... perhaps because Jesus knew that the man was going to ignore what He (Jesus) was about to tell Him ... Jesus' compassion here didn't produce an obedient servant ...

Mar 1:44 and said to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, for a proof to them."

Jesus tells the fellow to follow the proscribed health and ceremonial laws of the day, to stay within the existing system ... Jesus said many times that He didn't come to negate the OT law, but rather to fulfill it ... He asked the man to be quiet because He knew that to do otherwise was going to reduce His hearers' interest in what He had to say (what was, in fact, the most important thing) ... heal me now, I'll still die in the end ... give me the Gospel and when I do die, all will be well ...

Mar 1:45 But he went out and began to talk freely about it, and to spread the news, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter a town, but was out in desolate places, and people were coming to him from every quarter.

we, I think, often read these verses and unthinkingly figure that really Jesus didn't care, and it's no big deal that the fellow disobeyed ... but that just shows our fallen hearts ... this guy willfully disobeyed, and who knows how many people were prevented from hearing Jesus preach in their synagogues because of it??? ... this is serious business ...