

Dear Fellow Redeemed,

We read all the accounts in the Gospels already knowing that Jesus is the Son of God. But the people of His day didn't have that knowledge or faith. Jesus wore sandals! In other words, He looked like everyone else. He walked about, ate, slept. It would be hard to believe that He was truly God unless He proved it. So Jesus did just that. Mark records Jesus' beginning His public ministry in Capernaum and how He captivated the attention of the whole city.

We continue Mark 1:21-45. We will read the text and discuss it verse by verse, for there are many applications, but they all revolve around the theme:

Jesus Reveals His Authority as God!

"21 Then they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and taught.

Last week we heard about how Jesus called Peter and Andrew, James and John to follow Him. Now they went into the city of Capernaum and on the Sabbath they went to the Synagogue to worship. Luke says that "was His custom." (Luke 4:16) It's what He did every Sabbath without question.

This is an important point for us to take to heart. Sometimes it seems like we think our worship is optional. How do you decide if you go to church or not? Does it depend on how you feel? Or how much you have to do? Is it a matter of when it's convenient; or if there is not something more important happening? Do we forget that God commands us to worship Him together. It is the 3rd commandment. And that doesn't mean sitting in your living room watching the service online. Our online services are a great blessing for those situations where we are not able to come to worship together; when we are sick or those who are isolated from their church by many miles. It can also give the opportunity to revisit a service to review the message. But the online services are not meant to be a convenient alternative if we didn't get up in time, or we want to get out faster to do something else. God's will for us is to come together to worship. He says, "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching." Hebrews 10:23-25 You see, our worship is not just for our own sakes, we are also here for our brothers and sisters to be an encouragement to them. God wants you to be here to encourage each other, and "so much the more as you see the Day approaching." Thank God that Jesus was faithful in this so that He could forgive us for all our unfaithfulness in our worship. Seeing that ought to make us want to do God's will all the more.

As a traveling Rabbi Jesus was invited to speak to the people. And what a message He gave!

22 And they were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

The people had never heard anyone preach like Jesus before. We might imagine that Jesus was a very captivating speaker, but notice that the people were astonished "at His teaching." They were astonished not only at HOW He taught, but also WHAT He taught.

The scribes always referred to the opinions and interpretations of past rabbis. This one

thinks this and that one says that. Also, their teaching was all about the Law. What you need to do to be a good child of God. How many steps you can legally take on the Sabbath, and the proper way to ceremonially wash. etc. Jesus did not speak about what other teachers thought or said, He preached with the authority of “Thus says the LORD!” This is God’s Word! It is not open to various interpretations. God’s word is truth. When Jesus taught the law, it was not to show how to make yourself holy before God. He used the law to show how unholy they were. Like His sermon on the mount, demonstrating how everyone has fallen short of God’s holiness. Jesus also taught something that the people had seldom if ever heard before, that God loves and forgives. That is what all the sacrifices were about. God provided a blood sacrifice that would take away sin. That is what was so astonishing.

That kind of Law and Gospel preaching has great power to move hearts and change lives. It is that law and gospel preaching that instills faith and love in the hearts of those who hear. It was that kind of teaching that moved those disciples to leave their jobs and their livelihood to follow Jesus and become His Apostles, willing to suffer great persecution and even death for His sake. It was this kind of teaching that moved a sinful woman to find Jesus and kneel at His feet, washing them with her tears and drying His feet with her hair and then anointing them with expensive perfumed oil.

However, notice they said He taught them AS one having authority. He sounded like He had authority. It is possible for people to teach as though they have authority. Many false teachers teach with great conviction in their voice. They sound like they know what they are talking about. Even outright liars can speak authoritatively. Jesus went on to prove that He had the authority of God. We read verses 23-28

23 Now there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, 24 saying, “Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!” 25 But Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be quiet, and come out of him!” 26 And when the unclean spirit had convulsed him and cried out with a loud voice, he came out of him. 27 Then they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, “What is this? What new doctrine is this? For with authority He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him.” 28 And immediately His fame spread throughout all the region around Galilee.

Can you imagine this? Picture yourself coming to church and we have a guest speaker, and all of a sudden somebody gets up and shouts, “Leave us alone! What have we to do with You? Did You come to destroy us?” That would be pretty shocking, wouldn’t it? If that happened to me I while I was preaching I would be so flustered I wouldn’t know what to do or say, but Jesus didn’t miss a beat. He simply said, “Be quiet, and come out of him!” Immediately the evil spirit had to obey, he came out with a shriek. Jesus proved that He has the authority of God. He has power over all, even the devils must obey Him.

The people got the message. They were all amazed and said, “What is this? What new doctrine is this? For with authority He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him.” Jesus did not just speak like He had authority. He truly does have all authority in heaven and on earth.

Thankfully we don’t normally have that type of interruptions in church, but Satan is still trying to undermine Jesus’ word and message today. He does that on a daily basis at work and in school and on TV. The world bombards us with messages essentially trying to convince us that Jesus has come to destroy us. Jesus, or those who have the audacity to speak Jesus’ word, are responsible for all the hate and evil in the world because they speak against

people being themselves and living their own life. He is trying to take away our rights and freedoms.

Sadly, Satan has planted his messengers in the churches of our day. They have joined the world in getting rid of the true Jesus and His message and replacing Him with a false Jesus who condones and supports and encourages every evil lifestyle that God condemns. They boldly proclaim the lies of Satan that the world really is billions of years old. With that they do away with the significance of Jesus' death for our salvation. These are Satan's messengers in the churches.

However, we find great comfort and peace knowing that Jesus has authority over the devils and all their messengers. His word is still the ultimate authority. Those who listen have the truth and the power of God to salvation. May we all be eager to come and hear His Word! Not just because God commands it but because He has the words of eternal life. The devils are powerless to harm us when we remain in Christ and submit to the authority of His Word. We continue reading verses 29-34.

29 Now as soon as they had come out of the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. 30 But Simon's wife's mother lay sick with a fever, and they told Him about her at once. 31 So He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and immediately the fever left her. And she served them.

32 At evening, when the sun had set, they brought to Him all who were sick and those who were demon-possessed. 33 And the whole city was gathered together at the door. 34 Then He healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and He did not allow the demons to speak, because they knew Him."

When the people saw that Jesus had authority over the demons, they came to Him with all their troubles. After the worship service the Sabbath laws did not allow the people to mill about the town. They went home and rested the rest of the day. Jesus went to Peter and Andrew's home. Right away they told Him about Peter's Mother-in-law's illness and He healed her. The Sabbath ended at sunset, and as soon as it did the whole town brought all their sick and demon possessed people to see if Jesus could heal them. Jesus showed that He truly had the authority of God. No matter what kind of disease they had, Jesus healed them and He cast out demons, no doubt going late into the night.

We should find great comfort in this. Jesus truly cares about us and whatever is ailing us. He invites us to come to Him also. Just as He healed people with "various diseases," so He helps us in various ways. Sometimes He heals completely. I have witnessed His miraculous healing on a few occasions where the doctors said there was nothing more they could do, and we prayed and God granted a remarkable, almost instant healing. At other times, like with Paul's thorn in the flesh, God gives the strength to continue. I am utterly amazed at what God has done for Pastor Hein. He has a very serious, aggressive form of cancer that is usually fatal and it was already in a very advanced stage when it was discovered. God has not only kept him alive but has given him enough strength to continue his work in the ministry through all the treatments. What a powerful testimony his life and faith has been for all who know him.

Jesus does have the power and authority of God, and He does care about you, so call upon Him. Go to Him with all your troubles and needs. He will help. But remember Jesus has so much more to give than just healing your diseases and helping you with the little trials of life. That's why, when He was receiving all this fame and attention, He turned away from it as we see in the next verses of our text.

35 Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed. 36 And Simon and those who were with Him searched for Him. 37 When they found Him, they said to Him, "Everyone is looking for You." 38 But He said to them, "Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth." 39 And He was preaching in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and casting out demons.

Healing your diseases helps make you more comfortable but it is very short lived. We will no doubt get sick again and in a few short years we will die. Jesus wants to give you so much more than that. He wants to save you from death itself and give you eternal life. That's not something where Jesus can just work miracle and we are saved. Jesus came to work out our salvation by living a perfect life and dying in our place, but the only way anyone can receive that forgiveness and salvation is by hearing and believing the Gospel of what Jesus has done for us. That's why Jesus came to preach, not just to heal. That makes the last verses of this chapter so wonderful and yet rather sad. Verses 40-45

"Now a leper came to Him, imploring Him, kneeling down to Him and saying to Him, "If You are willing, You can make me clean." Then Jesus, moved with compassion, stretched out His hand and touched him, and said to him, "I am willing; be cleansed." As soon as He had spoken, immediately the leprosy left him, and he was cleansed. And He strictly warned him and sent him away at once, and said to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone; but go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing those things which Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.' However, he went out and began to proclaim it freely, and to spread the matter, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter the city, but was outside in deserted places; and they came to Him from every direction."

Isn't that wonderful? After just saying He came to preach, when a leper came to Him, Jesus was moved with compassion. He couldn't turn the man away without healing him. But He commanded the man not to tell anyone. Jesus did not want to just become a healer. But the man couldn't help it, he was so overjoyed he had to tell everyone. As a result Jesus couldn't go anywhere without mobs of people wanting to be healed or see another miracle. Sadly many of those people never did come to faith in Jesus for their salvation. They only saw Him as a great miracle worker and not as their Saviour.

Let's never forget that. Call upon Jesus to heal your illnesses and take care of your problems. But more importantly turn to Him in His word to grow in your faith. Call upon Him for your spiritual needs above all—for forgiveness of our sins, to overcome our doubts, to inspire us and cure our laxity and apathy, look to Him for Salvation. That is what Jesus wants to give you most of all. He may not always heal every ailment of body, but He will cure what ails the soul. Call upon Him and Rejoice!

Amen.