

Introduction

1. The Most Powerful Word
 - a. What is the most powerful word/message that you have ever received in person?
You're the winner! It's a boy/girl! You got the job!
 - b. What is the most powerful action that someone has done for you?
Brought help that you desperately needed; Been with you in a crisis; Saved your life.
2. Can you imagine hearing Jesus teach and seeing Jesus heal someone in person?
 - a. The people in the synagogue at Capernaum did, and they were blown away.
 - b. Jesus revealed that he was the incarnate word of God by the authoritative words of his teaching and the awesome words of healing.

3. Read Mk 1:21-28.**A. A Powerful Word of Teaching (21-22)**

1. Jesus went into the fishing village of Capernaum (lit. "village of Nahum" or "village of comfort").
 - a. Capernaum was on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee near where Jesus encountered and called Peter, Andrew, James, and John to "Come, follow me" in last week's lesson (cf., Mk.1:17).
 - b. The four new disciples escorted Jesus into their hometown and into their homes.
 - c. Mk 1:29 specifies that Jesus went to the home of Simon Peter and Andrew.
 - d. If you visit the ruins of Capernaum today, you can see the remains of what archaeologists believe to be the home of Peter. A Catholic chapel with a glass floor is built over top of the ruins of his home.
 - e. Capernaum and the homes of his disciples became a base of operations for Jesus during his ministry in Galilee.
2. Sometime later, maybe a day or more, "the Sabbath came" (Gk., *kai euthus tois sabbasin eiselthon*)
 - a. The action continues to unfold dynamically (Gk., *euthus*) as Mark tells the story.
 - b. "Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach." (21)
 - c. Mark does not give much information concerning the details of Jesus' teaching.
 - 1) Remember the summary of Jesus' message given by Mark—"The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!" (Mk 1:15)
 - 2) Mark focused attention on Jesus and the power of his authoritative word than on the specific words of his teaching.
3. The Jewish Synagogue
 - a. Warren Wiersbe writes, "The Jewish synagogues developed during the nation's exile when the people were in Babylon after the temple had been destroyed. Wherever there were ten Jewish men above the age of twelve, a synagogue could be organized. The synagogue was not a place of sacrifice—that was done at the temple—but of reading the Scriptures, praying, and worshipping God. The services were led not by priests, but by laymen, and the ministry was supervised by a board of elders that was presided over by a 'ruler' (Mark 5:22). It was customary to ask visiting rabbis to read the Scriptures and teach, which explains why Jesus had such freedom to minister in the synagogues. The apostle Paul also took advantage of this privilege (Acts 13:14-16; 14:1; 17:1-4)" (Warren Wiersbe, *Be Diligent*, 23).
 - b. There is a synagogue in the ruins of Capernaum that dates from the second century AD. It was not the one in which Jesus taught, but it may be built on its foundations.
4. Jesus' word of teaching was unique (22).
 - a. Jesus taught (Gk., verb *didaskon* "teach" and related noun *didaskalos* "disciple; learner").
 - b. Teaching was something that Jesus did throughout Mark's gospel (cf., Mk 1:21,22; 2:13; 4:1-2; 6:2,6,34; 8:31; 9:31; 10:1; 11:17; 12:14,35; 14:49).
 - b. He taught with "authority" (Gk., *exousian*) that came not from the traditions of the scribes but directly from God, his Father (cf., Mk 1:11).
 - d. William L. Lane summarizes, "Jesus' word, presented with a sovereign authority which permitted neither debate nor theoretical reflection, confronted the congregation with the absolute claim of God upon their whole person. Jesus' teaching recalled the categorical demand of the prophets rather than scribal tradition" (William L. Lane, *The Gospel of Mark* in New International Commentary on the New Testament, 72).

B. A Powerful Word of Healing (23-28)

1. “Just then” (Gk., *kai euthus*) – Again Mark points to the dramatic movement in response to Jesus’ powerful word of teaching.
2. A man in the synagogue who was possessed by an “unclean; impure (Gk., *akatharto*) spirit cried out” (23).
 - a. What is an “unclean” or “imprue” spirit? – Daniel Akin responds, “The more usual term for ‘unclean spirit’ is ‘demon’ (used 63 times in the New Testament). Who or what is a demon? They could be (1) the spirits of a pre-Adamic evil race, (2) the spirits of evil men, (3) the product of angels cohabitating with women Genesis 6:1-4, or (4) fallen angels. This fourth option is the most likely. Mark calls them ‘unclean spirits’ 11 times and ‘demons’ 13 times” (Daniel L. Akin, *Christ-centered Exegesis Exalting Jesus in Mark*, 26).
 - b. The Apostle John speaks about the fall of Satan and his angels in an ancient war in heaven. “Then war broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him (Rev 12:7-9).
 - c. In my opinion demons are fallen angels who follow Satan and do his work of evil in the world.
 - d. We also should note that some modern commentators have drawn a parallel between demon possession and what we know today as mental illness. However, the presence of Jesus, as the representative of God’s drawing-near kingdom, precipitated a crisis in the realm of spiritual evil. The demon in the man reacted to this spiritual attack.
 - e. One wonders how long this man in the synagogue had attended services without revealing that he had a demon. He was not known as a demoniac prior to this event. The presence of Jesus was such a threat that the demon could not keep silent.
 - f. Akin adds, “Demons can oppress but not possess believers. . . . If this demon made his way into the first-century synagogue, we should not assume that our own churches are beyond their reach” (Akin, 27).
3. What unfolds in Mark’s account is a typical exorcism story.
 - Jesus encounters a demon (23);
 - the demon makes a defense (24);
 - the demon is exorcised (25-26);
 - the effect on the observers is recorded (27-28)
4. Jesus Encounters a Demon (23-24)
 - a. Was there more than one demon possessing this man?
 - b. The demon asks, “What do you want with us” (24, **emphasis mine**)
 - c. Wiersbe writes, “The demon’s use of plural pronouns shows how closely he was identified with the man through whom he was speaking” (Wiersbe, 24).
 - d. Akin surmises, “‘Us’ may refer to multiple demons in the man or to the demonic realm as a whole” (Akin, 27).
 - e. The plural may stem from the demon’s close identification with this man but more likely points to Jesus’ attack on the whole realm of spiritual evil as the one bringing God’s kingdom to earth.
5. The Demon Makes a Defense (24)
 - a. The unclean spirit is afraid—“What do you want with us . . .? Have you come to destroy us?” (24ab)
 - 1) The demon knew it was under attack.
 - 2) Truly the kingdom of God was drawing near in the person of Jesus, God’s son (cf., Mk 1:15).
 - b. The unclean spirits knew who Jesus was (24c):
 - 1) He was “Jesus of Nazareth” – his human identity
 - 2) He was “Holy One of God” – his divine identity
 - c. An important contrast exists between the identification of Jesus made by demons and those made by human beings whom he healed. Lane writes, There is “. . . a striking difference between the form of address employed by the demoniacs and the titles used by ordinary sick individuals. The latter group appeal to Jesus as ‘Lord’ (Ch. 7:8), ‘Teacher’ (Ch. 9:17), ‘Son of David’ (Ch. 10:47-48) or ‘Master’ (Ch. 10:51). The demoniacs, however, address Jesus as ‘the Holy One of God’ (Ch. 1:24), ‘the Son of God’ (Ch. 3:11) or ‘the Son of the Most High God’ (Ch. 5:7), formulations which identify Jesus

as the divine Son of God. The contrast in address is an important characteristic distinguishing ordinary sickness from demonic possession, and reflects the superior knowledge of the demons. The recognition-formula is not a confession, but a defensive attempt to gain control of Jesus in accordance with the common concept of that day, that the use of the precise name of an individual or spirit would secure mastery over him” (Lane, 74).

d. While the demons knew Jesus was the son of God, they did not receive him with repentance and faith.

1) As the Apostle James writes, “You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder” (Jm 1:29).

2) The demon shuddered in the presence of the son of God; attempted to resist his presence; but ultimately had to respond to Jesus’ powerful word.

6. The Demon is Exorcised (25-26)

a. Exorcisms in the ancient world were complicated matters. The exorcists “. . . identified themselves by name or by relationship to some deity or power, who pronounced some spell or performed some magical action, Jesus uttered only a few direct words, through which his absolute authority over the demonic power that had held the man captive was demonstrated. . . . There had been no technique, no spells or incantations, no symbolic act. There had been only the word.” (Lane, 75-6).

b. The powerful word of Jesus was enough. (26)

1) Mark gives the specific, powerful words that Jesus spoke: “Be quiet” (Gk., *phimotheti* - “be muzzled; silenced”) . . . Come out of him! (Gk., *ekselthe eks autou*) (25).

2) Jesus put a gag order on the demon. There would be no debate or bargaining. The demon was done. It came out with one last violent convulsion and a shriek.

3) This is the same powerful word that Jesus spoke to still the storm. “Be still!” (Mk 4:39)

4) Jesus’ word is powerful and authoritative in both the spiritual and physical realms.

c. Jesus’ order for the demon to “Be quiet” was more than an end to any debate about the demon’s submission to him. It was also an order not to repeat the confession of Jesus as “Holy One of God.”

1) The Messianic Secret refers to Jesus’ on-going command for silence about his true identity.

2) Jesus commanded silence about his identity not only of demons but also of those whom he healed. It is a theme running through Mark’s gospel (cf. Mk. 1:26, 44; 3:12; 5:43; 7:36-7; 8:26, 30; 9:9).

3) Jesus was not ready for his Messiahship to be fully revealed.

a) He did not want the Jews to follow him only because of his miracles. His goal was that they would follow him in repentance and by placing personal faith in him, the good news.

b) He did not want the Romans to arrest him as an insurrectionist until the time was right (cf., Mk 15:1-15). This charge of insurrection would be the one that led to his crucifixion.

c) Jesus had much to teach and many miracles to perform before his sacrifice for our sins.

4) James A. Brooks writes, “Jesus likely did not want to be known primarily as a wonder-worker or at all as a political or military deliverer because such a reputation would compromise his main mission of redemption (cf. 10:45) (James A. Brooks *Mark* in *New American Commentary*, 51).

7. The Effect on the Observers is Recorded (27-28)

a. The people had already heard Jesus’ authoritative teaching.

b. Now, they saw his authoritative action over an unclean spirit, a demon.

c. Overall they were “amazed” (Gk., *ethambethesan* – “left speechless; dumbfounded; a little bit afraid”) by both the spoken words and the active words of Jesus (27).

d. Jesus’ reputation was growing. The word was out and spread “quickly (Gk., *euthus*) over the whole region of Galilee” (28).

8. Will you receive the powerful Word of Jesus in your life today?

a. The authoritative teaching of Jesus is available to you in the written word of God, the Bible, if only you will read and hear them. If only you will allow their power to resonate in you and amaze you.

b. The authoritative action of Jesus is at work for good in your life through the presence of the Living Word, the Spirit of the Resurrected Christ, dwelling in you by faith.

c. Receive the Word of Christ by faith each day as you speak and act with His power at work in your life as you live to His glory.

d. Be amazed at the authority and power of the Word at work in you today.

e. Can you imagine hearing Jesus teach and seeing Jesus heal someone in person? The people in the synagogue at Capernaum did, and they were blown away. Let Jesus blow you away today!