

AMAZED AT JESUS
Mark 1:21-34

If you're just joining us this morning, we have recently started making our way through the action-packed Gospel of Mark. Today we will be in Mark 1:21-34 and in this text, we are going to walk through one Sabbath day with Jesus. The Sabbath was basically the day they went to church and worshipped God and rested. But what you're going to see from Mark is that it was a very busy day for Jesus. He was always teaching and healing and freeing people from darkness. And the reason Mark writes about it is to show us the Servant-heart that Christ had.

“They went into Capernaum; and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and began to teach. They were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. Just then there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, saying, “What business do we have with each other, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are – the Holy One of God! And Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be quiet, and come out of him!” Throwing him into convulsions, the unclean spirit cried out with a loud voice and came out of him. They were all amazed, so that they debated among themselves, saying, “What is this?” A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him.” Immediately the news about Him spread everywhere into all the surrounding district of Galilee. And immediately after they came out of the synagogue, they came into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. Now Simon’s mother-in-law was lying sick with a fever; and immediately they spoke to Jesus about her. And He came to her and raised her up, taking her by the hand, and the fever left her, and she waited on them. When evening came, after the sun had set, they began bringing to Him all who were ill and those who were demon-possessed. And the whole city had gathered at the door. And He healed many who were ill with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and He was not permitting the demons to speak because they knew who He was.”ⁱ

When you read this, you quickly begin to understand why in the world Jesus became so busy and it’s because people were drawn to Him. His preaching and teaching was like no one else’s. He was casting out demons with a word by His own Name and healing people of all their diseases. And it’s in Galilee where Jesus really began to press hard into ministry and specifically in Capernaum.

I. THE HEADQUARTERS OF JESUS’ GALILEAN MINISTRY: CAPERNAUM. (V.21)

After calling some of His disciples to follow Him, it says **they** went into **Capernaum**. Verse 29 tells us this is where **Peter and Andrew** lived. Mark 2:1 even describes Capernaum as Jesus’ home – it says, “When He had come back to Capernaum several days afterward, it was heard that He was at home.” So He stayed here often enough for it to be considered a home-base. And I always like to show you places on maps because it demonstrates the reliability of the Bible – these are real places, real events with real people. Capernaum is up there in the territory of Galilee on the north west shore of the Sea of Galilee, also known as the Sea of Tiberius to the apostle John (Tiberius is one of the towns on the western shore). Capernaum means “town of Nahum” (possibly named after the prophet Nahum) and it was a sizeable town, large enough to be called a city anyway (1:33; Mt. 9:1). It was a place of commerce and located on a crossroads of trading routes. And Jesus did a lot of ministry here both in word and in deed as we see from our text today. Isaiah prophesied about the region that Capernaum was in, saying that those who live in the land of darkness would see a Great Light and Jesus was that light (Is. 9:2; Mt. 4:16). Jesus was the fulfillment of that prophecy.

The interesting thing about Capernaum, as well as some nearby towns called Chorazin and Bethsaida, is that judgment was later pronounced against them. Matthew 11:23 tells us that the joy we see over Christ in Mark 1 was short-lived. He pronounced woe against them. “Woe to you Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had occurred in Tyre in Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. Nevertheless I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. And you Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven will you? You will descend to Hades; for if the miracles had occurred in Sodom which occurred in you, it would have remained to this day. Nevertheless I say to you that it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for you.” Why a greater judgment? Because they had more exposure to Light and to truth, but did not respond to it well because it didn’t always tell them what they wanted. Initially, it seems, that these folks were really amazed at Jesus. They were thankful for His blessings but they never really became thankful for Him. They wanted Jesus as long as He would make their life easier but when challenged to trust Him as their Savior and follow Him, they walked away.

Their response to Jesus reminds me of the Parable of the Sower from Matt. 13. Jesus compared peoples’ response to the Word of God with sowing of seeds. There was **seed sown beside the road that was eaten by birds** and that resembled people who hear the Word but don’t understand it. The birds, Jesus said was the evil one, who snatches away anything that was heard, maybe by teaching the Word falsely (v. 19). And we certainly know that demons were certainly active in Capernaum in the synagogue. The **seed sown on the rocky places** where there is not much soil; he is the man who hears the Word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no firm root in him, but is only temporary because when affliction or persecution arises because of the Word, he falls away (v. 20-21). **The seed sown among the thorns** is the man who hears the word as well, but the worries of the world and deceitfulness of wealth choke it out and it becomes unfruitful. This described Capernaum well. They received Jesus at first with great joy, but apparently for the many, it didn’t last, like a seed on rocky soil or caught up in thorns. They wanted the kingdom blessings He had to offer but didn’t really want Him or the moral nature of the Kingdom. In fact, it was in this same area of Galilee that Jesus miraculously fed thousands and He said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled.” This is something we have to be careful of – wanting the things Jesus has to offer more than just wanting Him.

With the next point we being to study the uniqueness of this Servant. This Servant is not like any other servant. He is a Servant with authority – an Authoritative Servant. And we see that first in His authoritative teaching.

II. **JESUS’S AUTHORITATIVE TEACHING (VV. 21-22)**

Mark mentions His teaching but more so the response to it rather than content of it. Not a lot is said about the content and that again, is something typical of Mark – Mark’s style. This book is not highlighting what Jesus did and not just what He said. But it says He began to teach in the **synagogue** there in Capernaum. Some of you may be wondering what a synagogue is in the first place. And the synagogue is a lot like a local church today because it was a place where Scripture was read and studied, where they prayed together and sang together – but it was also more than that for the Jewish people. It was also a place of civil action – a courthouse if you will – where legal contracts and cases and consultation were made.ⁱⁱ And it looks like wherever there were at least 10 Jewish men they could establish a synagogue and the men would lead it under the supervision of a board, with one main synagogue ruler. And if a recognized rabbi or priest or scribe would come

through, they might ask them to teach, and it was also the place where the local up and comers would get their feet wet preaching and teaching and leading. This explains why Paul or Jesus had so much freedom to preach in the synagogues and why they would let Paul would enter synagogues.

But Jesus' teaching, you'll notice, was "not like that of the scribes" it says. **And scribes** are those who were considered the expert teachers of the Law, maybe more precisely considered the lawyers or jurists of the Law. Remember, they lived under a theocracy so these religious men would also serve as judges. They may have served on the Sanhedrin and acted as judges when called upon. Their chief duty was the **administration of the justice and teaching of the Law**. But Jesus was different from these men in a couple of ways.

A. Jesus taught from His own authority. (source)

Whereas the scribes got their authority from those whom they trained under and from those who went before them. To add authority to their teaching, they were forever quoting some other teachers or rabbis that went before them. Jesus, however, would say, "You have heard that it was said,... but I say to You..." He spoke from His own Name. He had prophetic power. There was no guessing for Him. No comparing between one rabbi and the next – He just preached with His own authority, saying, "Thus says the Lord."

B. Jesus preached the truth of God's Word. (content)

These scribes were known for preaching and teaching not from the written Word of God but from unwritten laws, oral traditions that had been passed down through memory. They saw it as their job to pass this oral tradition down and they did this by repetitious lectures and exhortations. Actually, to them, the "**repeating**" was the same as "**teaching**."ⁱⁱⁱ This oral teaching was later written down and is what is called the **Mishnah**, which when compiled with another work of Jewish rabbi oral teaching from Babylon, called the **Gemara**, became the **Talmud**. The Talmud, in my mind, is a lot like today's catechisms. Some of you may have been catechized as children. Well, the thing about catechisms is that they can have some good stuff in them, some definitely biblical doctrines, but they can also be full of heretical things, anti-biblical things that go beyond what is written in God's Word. **Jesus** wasn't teaching oral traditions and extra-biblical rules and regulations of men like they were. I mean they had people so weighed down with religious commands that went beyond Scripture that one would wonder if it was considered working just to breath on the Sabbath. When Jesus preached, He preached like a prophet and appealed to no one and nothing but the written Word of God.

And the text says they were **amazed** at His teaching. The word there is that greatly astounded; they marveled at it; they were blown away by it. The word for amazed means "to drive out of one's senses by a state of shock."^{iv} – they were **mind-blown**. I actually almost named Jaycee's middle name after this word for amazed that is used in v. 27 (*thauma*) because I wanted her to be amazed at everything God created for her and provides for her. We chose the name Selah instead, which means pause, because Selah is prettier than Thaum, but we should all have moments where we pause and take in God's Word or we take in God's Creation and stand amazed! As we pause to study the things Jesus said and did this morning, we ourselves should be amazed with Jesus!

Amazing people is something Jesus has specialized in, even since He was a young boy. Luke says (2:47) that when Mary and Joseph accidentally left Him in Jerusalem for three days, when they found Him where? In the Temple sitting in the midst of all the teachers and all the teachers in the Temple "were amazed at His understanding and His answers." They were astonished. And 2,020

years later, His teaching is still astonishing to the multitudes. There has never been and will never be a teacher greater than Jesus. I kid you not, I had a friend post on Facebook last night about how blown-away it is to listen to Ravi Zacharias. And Ravi is an incredibly gifted man, who also might not be with us much longer because of cancer, but there is no one like Jesus. No one will. His teachings today in the Bible still surpass anyone who has ever lived before Him or after Him. There is nothing like them.

To the men and women in our text, Jesus was simply amazing. But they didn't really understand who He was yet. But who did? The demons. And knowing who Jesus was, they had a much different response. One of trembling and fear.

III. JESUS'S AUTHORITY OVER UNCLEAN SPIRITS (VV. 23-28)

There are only two types of angels: holy angels who serve God and fallen angels who have rebelled, that we also call demons. When Satan fell, he led astray many other angels with him. They are his henchmen, his servants (2 Cor. 11:15) who, having rejected God's purpose for their lives and rebelling against anything good, they are called **unclean**. They are not pure but are corrupt. And many of these fallen demons are still very active in this world, and especially in the arena of religion where they deceive people as angels of light, even pretending to be "servants of righteousness," as the apostle Paul put it in 2 Corinthians 11.

And this explains how or why a demon would be attending a religious service in a synagogue and probably went there on a regular basis. They thrive in works-based teaching. That's what they do for a living! They steal, kill and destroy people through the lies of false religion. When the Bible says salvation is by grace, false teachers who may be satanically inspired, lead people to think it is by merit. When the Bible says salvation is by faith, they say it is by works. When the Bible says look to Christ alone, they say to look to yourself or to look to someone other than Christ. And so it's no wonder why this demon who would normally feel right at home in a religious service all the sudden can't stand it and has to make a scene. He could not stand the truth! Normally, they like to hide, especially in materialistic cultures like ours, but the truth Jesus is preaching draws this demon out.

Notice that Jesus often made them shout and cry out. In Mark 3:11, Mark says, "Whenever the unclean spirits saw Him, they would fall down before Him and **shout**, "You are the Son of God." In chapter 5, when a number of demons called Legion in a man, sees Jesus, the demon, through the man runs up to Jesus, bows down before Him, and shouts with a **loud voice**, "What business do we have with each other, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore You by God, do not torment me!" So the people are amazed, not knowing who Jesus is – but in contrast – the demons know exactly who He is and are terrified! They know He is God and that by His power and authority they will be destined to eternal wrath. They know where His authority comes from – and its Himself. Notice that the demon in Mark 1 speaks on behalf of the rest of them using "us": "What business do **we** have with each other, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy **us**?" Now, either there was more than one demon in that man or in that room, but either way, I think we can conclude that the demon is speaking collectively on all the fallen angels' behalf. Collectively, they fell together. Collectively, they work together to deceive people. And collectively, they will be judged together for eternity in the Lake of Fire that was prepared for them. Satan will not be a ruler in hell – he will be the most judged in hell and receive the greatest punishment – worse than Capernaum and Chorazin and Bethsaida.

One of the weird things about demons is that demons can possess people. They are a spirit being who can live inside of a material, unsaved being. Being an unbeliever is a scary thing because you are helpless against the enemy and you can be used to do Satan's will. You can be internally possessed by a demon to the point where it is the demon who operates your body. **Believers however, we are comforted to know, cannot be possessed by demons because we have who living in us? the Holy Spirit!** 1 John 4:3 says, "You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because **greater is He who is in you than he who is living in the world.**"

Jesus taught this principle using the analogy of strong man we will get to in Mark 3 – but He said if you are going to plunder a strong man's house, someone stronger than him must first bind him. And this is what Jesus did. Through His casting out of demons, He demonstrated His power over Satan's kingdom, the strong man, by binding him. Jesus is the stronger than Satan. And since we have Christ's Spirit living in us, we don't have to worry. Greater is He who is in us than he who is living in the world. It is important for us to make this distinction:

A. Believers can be oppressed by demons but not possessed.

Believers can be oppressed in the sense that we can experience some of Satan's wrath on this earth (he will try and persecute us), we can be oppressed by their false teaching, they may tempt us to sin, and we can even experience some hindrance or harassment by them. Even Paul said he was hindered in his travels once by Satan (1 Thess. 2:18). This doesn't mean we need to go to some extreme of saying that everything that is bad that happens to us is Satan's fault. We can't cast all blame on Satan. Sometimes the fault is our own and our own sinful flesh (James 1:14), something that will be proven during the Millennial Kingdom when Satan is locked up.

In some Christian circles there is a fascination or emphasis on things healing and exorcism. But we would do well to remember that Jesus does these things to authenticate His message and His identity. These signs were not for entertainment and not to impress, but to authenticate.

B. Exorcisms and healings authenticated Jesus' message and identity.

C. We should be more concerned about sharing a clear gospel message than the demon problem.

Why do I say that? Because if you teach the right message and someone believes, He'll take care of the demon problem in someone's life or notice, that the right message, like Jesus was preaching, brought the problem out and to the surface. Truth makes them uncomfortable. Jesus taught in Luke 11 that someone can have a demon cast out of them and they can sort of clean up their own lives and become religious, but if they don't hear the right message and are saved, and so receive the Holy Spirit, they're worse off than they were at first and they'll be an even better vessel of Satan. He said a demon can leave and someone can reform their life but if they aren't saved, that demon will return to find that "house" swept and put in order, and it will take along with it seven other spirits more evil than itself and they go in and live there and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first.

It's also worth noting that **Jesus did not accept the testimony of demons.** Did you notice that? Even if it was something true a demon said about Him – He rebuked them and commanded them to be quiet and come out of people. The apostle Paul did the same thing with a girl in Acts 16:16-18. He didn't need her testimony. When Jesus healed someone, He often told them not to tell anyone about it because He wanted to promote the message and not just the miracles.

The last mark of His authority is seen in His authority over disease.

IV. **JESUS'S AUTHORITY OVER DISEASE (VV. 29-34)**

What a point to be made during the current situation, huh? Regardless of the origin of this virus, we need to know God is sovereign and nothing takes place without Him knowing it or allowing it. A lot of our vexation (worry/fear/frustration) can be put to rest just by acknowledging that right there. God has authority over disease and there's more than one example of that in Scripture.

His authority over disease is demonstrated in our passage at the house of Simon Peter and Andrew, where they go for lunch after the church service. Some of you are probably thinking about that already! I know after I get done preaching, I'm ready to eat myself! But Jesus and the disciples don't find a meal when they return home because **Peter's mother-in-law** is there sick, lying in bed with a fever instead. Which, by the way, tells us what? Peter was married! I grew up being taught that Peter was the first pope and wasn't married or his wife died before he became an apostle but even in 1 Corinthians 9:5, Paul even said that Peter took his wife along in his missionary travels. He said, "Do we not have a right to take along a believing wife, even as the rest of the apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas?" This verse says that at least most of the apostles were married; Jesus, who had half-brothers and sisters according to Mark 6:3 (meaning Mary and Joseph had kids after Jesus), like James – they had wives; and so did specifically Cephas – also known as Simon Peter. Wives can be a huge blessing to us men in ministry. Make no mistake that anyone who forbids marriage and enforces celibacy does so through the deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, Paul said in 1 Timothy 4:1-3). Singleness is a gift Paul said, but so is being married. He who finds a wife finds a good thing (Prov. 18:22)! It wasn't good for Adam to be alone.

Anyway, back to Mark, as soon as they get to Peter and Andrew's house, Jesus heals Peter's mother-in-law of her illness. Luke's account says she was burning with a fever. And when you have a fever, about the only thing you want to do is lay on the couch and sleep it off. Even after it's gone, your energy levels take time to build up again. But it's apparent that she is **completely and immediately healed** right then and there from her sickness by the way she gets up and begins to serve everyone – it actually says she **waits** on them like a servant. Actually, the word there could be translated that **she ministered to them** (from where we get the word deacon). And it's right there that we find a great principle from Peter's mother-in-law:

❖ Spiritually, we are healed and set free to serve Jesus, like Jesus.

By His wounds we are healed of our sin problem and instead of living in the empty and unsatisfying prison of self-servanthood, we are freed to look beyond ourselves and to serve God by serving others, where we find much greater fulfillment. Peter's mother-in-law makes for a great, unplanned Mother's Day sermon. Even if she didn't have much to prepare or much time to prepare it, we know her meal was a great meal because it was served with love and gratefulness! Proverbs 15:17 says, "Better a small serving of vegetables with love than a fattened ox [a steak] with hatred."

Their time at the house was later interrupted as soon as three stars were in the sky because sundown meant the Sabbath was over, which meant they could carry burdens again and some burdens were literally people they were carrying to Jesus. Some ill, some handicapped, some demon possessed. Mark says, "the whole city had gathered at the door" to be healed and set free by Jesus. It's a beautiful picture of how compassionate Jesus was and how willing He was to be inconvenienced as a servant of others. That was one of the sayings we used to have at Bible school: **servants must be willing to be inconvenienced.**

In conclusion, I think we have to ask ourselves the question though. **Which of the three responses are we from the text?**

1. Some, the people, were temporarily amazed.

They followed Jesus just because of what He had to offer them. They liked Him because He made their life easier. But when He began to challenge them to really believe and follow, many didn't stick around long. It was like they went to church, heard Him preach and teach and were fascinated by it, thinking that was interesting – but that was all the further it went. Like the Hebrews 6:4-8 warning, they tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, but they never bore the fruit of it. Like the seeds scattered by the road and on rocky soil and among the thorns.

2. Some, the demons, trembled at the thought of being judged by Jesus but it didn't change them one bit.

They shudder at the thought of a coming judgment but they don't have a personal relationship with Jesus and they will never yield their lives to Him. Many people today say they fear judgment but they never act like judgment is coming by getting to know Jesus and growing in Him, putting aside deeds of darkness and putting on righteousness.

3. Lastly, there were those who like Peter's mother-in-law were set free by Jesus and began to serve Him.

They are like the seed I haven't mentioned yet. It is sown in good soil, Mt. 13:23 says. It hears the word and understands it and bears fruit, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. In the language of Hebrews 6 it is the ground that drinks the rain which often falls on it and brings forth vegetation useful to those for whose sake it is also tilled and receives a blessing from God. This is who we want to be. We don't want to be temporarily amazed at Jesus but constantly amazed with Jesus and bearing fruit as we apply His Word to our lives by His power at work in us.

That is something that starts first and foremost by simply trusting Jesus Christ as your Savior who died for you on the cross. God so loved the world that He gave His Son so that whoever believes in Him will have everlasting life. And by the miraculous power and supernatural authority He displayed, you can know He is who He says He is. You can trust Him to save you from darkness and from sin.

ⁱ New American Standard Bible.

ⁱⁱ Chuck Swindoll, *Swindoll's Living Insights: New Testament Commentary, Vol. 2, Mark* (Carol Stream, IL:Tyndale House Publishers, 2016), 39.

ⁱⁱⁱ *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1988), 1142.

^{iv} Swindoll, 39.