**Theme Sentence**

The theme I picked up from this passage and focussed on in interpreting the text, I summed up in the sentence “The Word of God came with power.”

**Aim Sentence**

With that in mind, I think aim of the passage is to remind the readers of the power of God’s word, which is the same today as it was then.

**Context and Style of writing**

So, starting with the context and style of writing. The gospel of Mark is one of the synoptic gospels, meaning it is the biographical, history of Jesus ministry while he was one Earth. This means we read everything in it as historical fact - all that we read, happened.

The events that we read in this passage come right at the start of Jesus ministry. If we look at what happens in the 20 verses preceding it in Mark’s gospel, we see that we’re told about the ministry of John the Baptist, leading up to the baptism of Jesus, and then the calling of the first 4 disciples. The passage we’re looking at now is therefore the first example of Jesus’ public ministry in the book of Mark. It’s an example of all that is to follow, setting the tone and the pattern for a lot of Jesus’ teaching, right up to his death and resurrection.

Since Mark is a gospel narrative, we can look at some of the parallel accounts of these events in Luke and Matthew. Luke (4:31-36) records the events in a very similar way – recording the people’s reaction and the casting out of the evil spirit, right at the start of Jesus’ public ministry. Matthew (7:28-29) doesn’t record the casting out of the spirit, but does present the people’s reaction, and includes and example the teaching which provoked such a reaction from them – the sermon on the mount.

**Content of the passage**

So looking at the content of the verses, Mark starts with the location and context of the events: The Sabbath in the synagogue of the town of Capernaum. Jesus teaches, and Mark records the amazement the people expressed at what was taught, and quite specifically the authority he has in comparison to the teachers they are used to.

While the people are still marvelling at Jesus, a man possessed by an evil spirit appears, and Mark records the encounter between the spirit and Jesus. The spirit acknowledges Jesus, calling him the Holy One of God, and it’s afraid of him – asking if Jesus is there to destroy the spirits. Jesus does not answer it, but with a few words silences the spirit and casts it out. The spirit of course can do nothing but obey such a powerful word.

The account doesn’t end there though, because Mark once again records the people’s reaction. And the people don’t just focus on the miraculous exorcism they’ve just seen, but first return to marvelling at Jesus teaching, and then continue from there to talk about the events they’ve just seen. If it were me, then I would surely focus on the events, and immediately forget any teaching, but for the people, and for Mark, the two are one – the power of the preaching is emphasised, increased, by the miracle.

**Explain Theme and Aim of the Passage**

So how does this relate to the power of God’s word?

At the first TEAM training session we looked at the different uses of the phrase “the Word of God” in the Bible. In this passage we have 2 clear examples of the word. First, there is the preached word of God having a big effect on people. Second there is Jesus, the word become flesh, at work and demonstrating power for the first time.

The people acknowledge the power of the preached word of God from the beginning, contrasting what they’ve heard to their teachers of the law. You see, Jesus has no previous reputation to rely on – it’s only after these that news about him spreads in the region. His preaching doesn’t rely on the authority of others, of tradition, even of the law, but instead the people say he speaks with his own authority. This sets the preaching apart from the teachers of the law. The fact that Mark leaves out the sermon brings into focus the reaction of the people - it seems he wants us to notice how it was received, not what it actually was.

And of course the evil spirit acknowledges the power of the word become flesh, Jesus, first in the fact that *it is afraid*, asking Jesus to explain if he’s going to destroy it, and second in the immediate obedience to Jesus’ command to be quiet, and to leave the man. Even evil spirits cannot resist the power of God’s word.

**Main Application for us Today**

And what does this mean for us today? **SPEAK SLOWLY**

Mark clearly records the power God’s word had then, and this is still true today. God’s word is still as active now as it was when Jesus was walked the earth.

The power of Jesus, the word of God, who we see here casting out evil spirits, is now risen in glory – the same yesterday, today, and forever.

The preached word, which had such an effect on the listeners here, still has power today – as we hear it preached each Sunday and through the week.

And today we have God’s written word in the Bible. A powerful word, powerful in the same way the word became flesh has power, and the preached word has power.

God’s word came in power then, and God’s word still has power now!