**JESUS DRIVES OUT AN IMPURE SPIRIT**

***Mark 1:21-39***

***“‘Be quiet!’ said Jesus sternly. ‘Come out of him!’” (v. 25)***

Last week we learned how Jesus began to proclaim the good news of God. *“The time has come…The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!”*(Mk 1:15). Today’s passage tells us about our Lord’s early Galilean ministry. It is characterized by his teaching the words of God, driving out demons and healing the sick. Through Jesus’ ministry, the author Mark shows us how the kingdom of God becomes so real to people in Jesus. Jesus wants his disciples to learn from his example and participate in the mission. May God bless us to learn how we can carry out his mission powerfully and victoriously!

1. **Jesus teaches the word of God (vs. 21-22)**

Look at verse 21. ***“They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach.”*** Here, “they” refers to Jesus and the first four disciples – Simon and his brother Andrew, and James and his brother John. Jesus moved with them to Capernaum, the city located on the northwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee. It was a commercial hub and traffic center in the region. Jesus made it his home and the headquarters of his Galilean ministry (Mt 4:13). On the Sabbath, Jesus attended the synagogue worship service. It was a custom of a synagogue worship service to invite a preacher to read a Scripture and give a sermon. Jesus used this opportunity to teach people. What was the people’s response to his teaching? ***“The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law (22).”*** Jesus’ sermon was different from those of the teachers of the law. Jesus did not use scholarly terms as the teachers of the law did. He taught through simple stories, parables and illustrations. But his teaching penetrated people’s hearts and refreshed their souls. They began to feel God’s presence and love and taste inexpressible joy and freedom. Their eyes began to shine and many of them unconsciously uttered, “Amen!” Jesus used the Old Testament as his text as the contemporary Rabbis did. But why did his teaching have authority which the religious leaders did not have?

First, Jesus spoke the truth of God. God’s words are truth, and they are holy. Jesus deeply revealed the truth in God’s word. How could he do it? John 1:1-3 teaches that Jesus is the eternal Word through whom all things were created. Revelation 19:13 says, *“He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God."* Jesus himself is the very word of God. He himself is the Author of the Bible and all Scriptures testify about him (Jn 5:39). Suppose you wrote a biography about your life. Who could explain the meaning with more authority than you yourself? Likewise, Jesus perfectly understood the Scriptures. His words exactly represent God’s wisdom, thought, will, and truth in the word of God. Therefore, Jesus says, *“I am the way and the truth and the life” (Jn 14:6).* Jesus is the truth. The truth is illuminating. Jesus’ word illumines our souls, leads us into the wonderful light of God. All darkness is dispelled in our hearts, and we can see God’s glory, love and hope in his words. Whoever accepts Jesus’ words is free from all bondage of Satan’s falsehood (Jn 8:31, 32).

Second, Jesus absolutely lived by God’s words. God created the heavens and the earth by his almighty words. God sustains the universe by his words. Jesus believed that God’s word is absolute standard for every man to keep. Jesus believed that the word of God never changes (Mt 24:35), and it has absolute power to give people life and grow them to be God’s holy children. So he taught the word of God and he himself fully obeyed God’s words and lived by them. It is not easy for us to exactly live what we know, say and teach. But Jesus lived by what he believed and taught. Hebrews 5:8-9 say, *“Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him.”* The Bible shows us how Jesus earnestly prayed and struggled to obey the Father. Jesus’ authority came from his absolute faith and obedience to the word of God.

We must remember that the word of God was the main spiritual resource Jesus used to accomplish his Messianic mission on earth. Jesus taught the word of God from the first day to the last of his public life. Jesus taught the word of God even when most people did not accept it. Jesus taught his disciples the word of God when they did not understand it. But the word of God planted in people grew in their hearts and bore fruit in their lives. So the kingdom of God spread to the whole world through them. Jesus says in John 6:63, *“The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you – they are full of the Spirit and life.”* We must believe that the word of God is God-breathed and alive and active. The word of God is imperishable and stands forever. God’s word gives new birth to people and brings the kingdom of God (1 Pe 1:23-25). So the kingdom of God grows and spreads as the word of God grows in people’s hearts and spreads around the world (Acts 19:20). As we understand that the word of God is the main resource to spread the kingdom of God, we need to deeply study, meditate on and absolutely live by the word of God. Along with one’s deep understanding of the word of God, his personal faith and obedience to God’s word grant him authority and power as he teaches and preaches the Scriptures. God can use anyone equipped with the word of God for his gospel work regardless of his or her human condition. May God bless each of us to be a powerful instrument of kingdom work, fully equipped with God’s words!

1. **Jesus drives out evil spirits (vs. 23-28)**

While all the people were attentively listening to the word of God, something happened in the synagogue that disrupted Jesus’ teaching. Look at verses 23, 24. ***“Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an impure spirit cried out, ‘What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are – the Holy One of God!”*** What’s wrong with this man? Mark tells us that the man was possessed by an impure spirit. He was ruled by a demon in almost every area of his life.

Today’s psychiatrists describe many cases of “possession” in quite different terms, but their dilemma is that they cannot deny the influence of demonic power in people’s behavior. Demons exist. If we carefully read the Bible, we can find demons here and there. The Bible tells us that demons are fallen angels; their head is Satan or the devil – a fallen archangel (Rev 16:13-14). They are many, for Revelations 12:3 indicates that one third of the angels fell. They oppose and try to destroy every work of God. They cause people to turn away from God and keep them in bondage to sins. Eventually they try to destroy and kill people. Their strong weapons are lies and deceptions. By using any possible means like fear, doubt, guilt, or pride, they try to hinder each believer’s witness and usefulness for God.

Demons differ in power and character as people differ (Mt 12:45). Demons work individually, but many cases collectively. The man in today’s passage was possessed by one demon. In Luke 8:2, we read that Mary Magdalene was cured from seven demons. We don’t know how the seven demons were identified. They may be named the spirit of lust, hatred, depression, lies, envy, disobedience, and murder. We can guess that each demon had invaded Mary and degraded her with its own specialty.

In verse 23, a demon is called an impure spirit. This tells us about the basic character of demons. They are evil and unclean in direct contrast to God’s holiness. So demons love to dwell in unclean environments and impure minds of men. Therefore those who are exposed to drugs, alcohol, wild music, pornography, or occult practices such as Ouija boards or seances and those who persist in habitual sins attract demons. When man is under the influence of evil spirits, he is very unhappy, for he suffers from the oppression of the spirits. It is the opposite concept of having the kingdom of God.

Notice that the man possessed by a demon came to synagogue worship. The man wanted to be free from the impure spirit, so he was seeking help. He listened to the word of God. Then the evil spirit in him began to feel very annoyed. As Jesus teaching continued, it could not bear any longer. Demons try to hide themselves, and they are happy when people don’t know their existence and work. Demons are not detected in hospital labs or mental clinics. Demons are detected only by the word of God. So it cried out, ***“What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are – the Holy One of God!”*** Of course, the demon cried through the voice of the man. Here we learn that demons know Jesus and fear him. Why? Because Jesus came to destroy them. They knew that Jesus would throw them into the eternal fire (Rev 20:10).

What did Jesus do? Read verse 25. ***“‘Be quiet!’ said Jesus sternly. ‘Come out of him!’”*** Jesus commanded and the demon had to obey Jesus. It shook the man as a washing machine does with clothes in it, and the demon came out of him with a shriek. It seemed certain that the man would have died or been permanently impaired. Luke, the medical doctor, informs us that the man was not injured, pointing to our Lord’s power to protect (Lk 4:35). The man rose with tears of joy and gratitude streaming from his eyes. He was restored, and people realized that he was a handsome man. Jesus had compassion on the man who had been oppressed by the demon and gave him a new life. The kingdom of God came into his life. The people were all so amazed at Jesus’ new teaching and authority. News about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee (27-28).

Not knowing about the reality of demonic power, people suffer from evil spirits’ attacks. Even many believers face such attacks. It is believed that demons cannot enter into a believer’s spirit, but they can work in a believer’s heart, emotions, will, and body. Education or medicine cannot heal men who are under the power of evil spirits. Jesus’ casting out evil spirits shows us that only he can free us from the power of the devil. His ministry was a spiritual battle against the devil and his evil forces (Eph 6:12). So is our spiritual life. It is good for us to remember what the evil spirits like most and what they dislike most. Dr. Charles Kraft explains in his book entitled, “Defeating Dark Angels”: If garbage is cleansed, rats in cities cannot survive. To solve a rat problem, rather than dealing with the rats, we must clean out the garbage first. Likewise, demons seek emotional and spiritual garbage. We must clean out the garbage that Satan likes. The garbage can be obscene material, alcohol, drugs, and even some pictures with cruel scenes and snakes and wild beasts. In our daily repentance before God, we can clean such garbage. We also need to clean some emotional garbage like guilt, grudges, anger, hatred, low self-esteem, envy, worry and wounds. We can clean away the garbage by bringing it all to Jesus and laying it down before him daily. Also as we have been forgiven, we must forgive others.

What the demons dislike and fear the most are the Name of Jesus Christ, his blood shed on the cross, and Jesus’ resurrection. Demons are not afraid of the authority of medical doctors, psychiatrists, or even the president of the United States. Demons are only afraid of Jesus’ name. Jesus already gave all his disciples the authority to drive out evil spirits in his name (Mk 16:17). In the name of Jesus Christ, we can confront, rebuke, and drive out demons. Demons also fear the blood of Jesus’ Christ because through his death on the Cross Jesus broke the power of sin. They also dislike the resurrection of Jesus because Jesus broke the power of death in his resurrection. Whenever evil spirits attack, we must remember Jesus’ blood and insist on its saving and purifying power that washes away any sins. We cannot free those who are under the power of the evil spirits by our own power. But when we teach the word of God; plant faith in the name of Jesus, his blood and his resurrection; and pray for them in the name of Jesus Christ, we can see the Spirit of Jesus set them free. May God strengthen us to fight the spiritual battle and spread his kingdom!

1. **Jesus heals many (vs. 29-39)**

After the synagogue worship, the only place for Jesus and his disciples to have a decent lunch was probably Simon’s home. So Jesus went to the home of Simon and Andrew. But Simon’s mother-in-law was suffering from a serious fever at home. She must have been a widow. In ancient times, widows had no means to support themselves. So she lived with her daughter and son-in-law. How did Jesus help her? Look at verse 31. ***“So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them.”*** Jesus showed his love and compassion for her by taking her hand and helped her up. She got up at once and began to wait on Jesus and his disciples. She was not only healed but also fully strengthened to serve the table. Jesus showed his complete control over disease. We can also see the joy and gratitude in Simon’s mother-in-law after experiencing the divine love and power Jesus had for her. The kingdom of God came into her heart.

***That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed (32).*** The phrase “after sunset” means that the Sabbath was over. It was time for Jesus to call it a day and rest after his hard work of ministry. As soon as the Sabbath was over, however, people brought all kinds of sick and demon-possessed people to Jesus. Suddenly Simon’s house turned into a huge field hospital crowded with many urgent patients. Jesus did not leave these pathetic people. Jesus cared for them and healed them one by one.

Mark especially emphasized that Jesus healed many who had various diseases and drove out many demons. All people are different, and their sicknesses are different. Their problems are different. However, Jesus personally cared for the sick one by one as a father takes care of his sick child. Jesus cared for them until their sicknesses were completely healed. Demon-possessed people were out of control of their families and society, but Jesus took care of them until they were freed from all demons and became holy children of God. The good news is this: Human life is subject to illness and demonic power, but Jesus came to heal and restore. Jesus said in John 10:10, *“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”* The kingdom of God comes to anyone who comes to Jesus and receives his love and healing. At the same time, Jesus wants us to participate in his healing work over many sick people physically, mentally or spiritually. We can pray for them in the name of Jesus and bring them to Jesus with his compassion and heart.

Look at verse 35. ***“Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.”*** Here early in the morning refers to around 4 am. Our Lord went out to a solitary place at the time, where he met God personally in prayer. For Jesus, this quiet time was a time to confirm his love relationship with the Father, to listen to him and submit himself to the Father’s will. This time was the source of strength and power for his daily life and ministry. Jesus teaches us that his spiritual authority comes from his spiritual relationship with the Father. We should also go out to our solitary places to meet God daily. To serve God’s kingdom, the most powerful weapon is to have a deep personal relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ. Dr. Kraft says that one’s spiritual authority is proportional to his or her spiritual relationship with Jesus.

But Jesus’ prayer was interrupted by his disciples. They exclaimed, ***“Everyone is looking for you!”*** The disciples were excited by Jesus’ popularity, but they did not understand the importance of his fellowship with God in Jesus’ life.

What did Jesus say? Look at verses 38-39. ***“Jesus replied, ‘Let us go somewhere else – to the nearby villages – so I can preach there also. That is why I have come.’ So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.”*** Jesus did not seek or work for popularity. His first priority was to proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the numerous people. He wants to invite many souls to his kingdom and give them freedom and eternal life.

Jesus wants his disciples to do same works with his compassion and love. He wants us to preach the gospel as our first priority. He wants us to teach the word of God, drive out demons and heal the sick with his authority and in his name. May God bless us to continue to taste and spread the kingdom of God in fellowship with Jesus and by participating in his ministry! May God strengthen us to carry out this mission through our deep personal relationship with him!