

Message #5

“Understanding Authority”

Mark 1:21-39

Introduction

When Christian Herter was governor of Massachusetts, he was running hard for a second term in office. One day, after a busy morning chasing votes (and no lunch) he arrived at a church barbecue. It was late afternoon and Herter was famished.

As Herter moved down the serving line, he held out his plate to the woman serving chicken. She put a piece on his plate and turned to the next person in line.

“Excuse me,” Governor Herter said, “do you mind if I have another piece of chicken?”

“Sorry,” the woman told him. “I’m supposed to give one piece of chicken to each person.”

“But I’m starved,” the governor said.

“Sorry,” the woman said again. “Only one to a customer.”

Governor Herter was a modest and unassuming man, but he decided that this time he would throw a little weight around.

“Do you know who I am?” he said. “I am the governor of this state.”

“Do you know who I am?” the woman said. “I’m the lady in charge of the chicken. Move along, mister.”

That governor tried using his authority for gain but did not properly understand the authority the lady serving the chicken had either. We are looking at Mark 1 and will be paying close attention to the authority of Jesus Christ. We have seen already in our study John the Baptist prepare the way for Jesus, we have Jesus the baptism of Jesus, with the Spirit descending and a voice from Heaven saying, This is my son whom I love. We have seen Jesus battle Satan and win. Last week we looked at the calling of the first disciples and Jesus' first miracle in the gospel of Mark.

Let's read our text Mark 1:21-39

And they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath he entered the synagogue and was teaching. And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes. And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are— the Holy One of God." But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!" And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying out with a loud voice, came out of him. And they were all amazed, so that they questioned

among themselves, saying, "What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him." And at once his fame spread everywhere throughout all the surrounding region of Galilee. And immediately he left the synagogue and entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. Now Simon's mother-in-law lay ill with a fever, and immediately they told him about her. And he came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

That evening at sundown they brought to him all who were sick or oppressed by demons. And the whole city was gathered together at the door. And he healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons. And he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him. And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed. And Simon and those who were with him searched for him, and they found him and said to him, "Everyone is looking for you." And he said to them, "Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out." And he went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons.

I want us to look at first is to understand this truth about Jesus:

Jesus Has Authority Over The Spiritual World

During the earthly ministry of Jesus he had something he loved to do on the Sabbath, Jesus loved to preach and he loved to heal people. A lot of the preaching in a Synagogue and a lot of the healings of Jesus take place on the Sabbath.

We need to realize that Jesus was one who taught with authority. Most preachers and teachers of Jesus' day when they got up to preach would quote a lot list of authorities both on tradition interpretations and biblical interpretations. In fact the lists would often be longer than the message at times. The teachers did this so that it would give credit to their teaching. Jesus had a different method. He simply said, "But I say". Jesus often started his messages, You have heard it said...but I say to you! This made the hearers go ecstatic. They loved this way of preaching and respected Jesus a lot for it. Jesus understood the people do not need a professional stamp of approval in order to know truth is truth.

We are going to be talking a bit about demons. Mark 1 is the first encounter recorded in Scripture of Jesus' first confrontation with a demon. This Roman/Jewish world at the time had plenty of superstitions about demons. If you were to walk into a Jewish synagogue to read you would find two types of resources discussing Demons. The writings describing how demons were the disembodied spirits of evil people and how to perform an exorcism by magical incantations. Our modern bookstores have not changed

that much. Over-hyped Jewish superstitions do not mean that demons do not exist. The truth is Jesus does not mess around when face to face with His first demon. Jesus does not deal with superstitions but with realities. Jesus knew that demons were real. He does not deal with them as a simple superstition or as a psychosis meaning its only in your head. He ordered his disciples to cast them in scripture. He often thanks God when they are cast out. He also scolds his disciples when they could not cast them out.

The truth is demons were real then and they are today. Often we may not witness the manifestations of demons in one culture as others but it does not mean they do not exist. Satan is smart. A good carpenter knows exactly which tool to use in a given situation. Some do choose to ignore the reality of demonic activity while others are in err by overemphasizing it. Let me share with you a few truth about demons both then and today.

1. Satan is not all knowing and all powerful.
2. Scripture does not teach that demons specialize in certain areas over others such as cancer, anger, etc. There is no indication in scripture that a certain affliction is used by a certain demon and needs to be identified before it is cast out.
3. Also the idea that you must obtain the demon's name to cast out the demon is purely Greek and Jewish magic practices and not scripture.
4. We are involved in spiritual warfare but the battle is not dualistic. Meaning the battle of light over darkness is equivalent. The Holy Spirit is infinitely more powerful than any created evil spirits will ever be. There is no contest.

5. There is no reference in Scripture that in order for good angels to win it is dependent upon the prayers of the saints. We do not empower angels over demons with our prayers.

6. Lastly, demons are not illnesses. The Gospels teach that sickness and disease are different and separate from demons. Sickness is a natural part of the fallen world and demons are a natural result of the 'heavenly fall'.

After Jesus is done teaching the demon shouts, What do you want with us? It then asks, Have you come to destroy us. Talk about being found guilty. They give up without even a fight. They are like a spoiled kid after they have done something 'very obviously wrong' and all they can do is go ahead and ask for punishment. They know they are guilty. Jesus overpowers them to such a great degree they surrender. **The truth is as followers of Jesus Christ we also are filled with the Spirit of Christ that we have nothing to fear from demons.**

Notice what the demon says, "I know who you are— the Holy One of God." James 2:19 is right that even the demons believe and shudder. Jesus commands the demon to be silent. The reason is simple, the time for Jesus to be revealed has not yet fully come. It will be Jesus who reveals it at the right time. Nobody forces Jesus to lay down His life, Jesus knows exactly when it is all to happen and unfold. Also Jesus knows having demons praise you is bad PR. He orders them to be literally be muzzled.

This demon comes out of his host. Jesus commands it and the demon comes out. This was no magical incantation or religious formula. Jesus simply with the command of His word, the demon comes out. Mark shares this testimony with us not so we better understand demonology but the authority of Jesus. Jesus has authority over the Spiritual world, this includes demons.

The next truth we need to look at is this truth about Jesus:

Jesus Has Authority Over the Physical World

As Jesus moves from the synagogue and goes to the house of Simon Peter and Andrew. At the home Peter's mother-in-law is very sick. In fact she has a fever. In the ancient times there were two types of fevers. A small fever and what was known as 'the great fever'. This included malaria and other life-threatening diseases. Peter's mother-in-law has been seriously ill for awhile now. Jesus simply walks over to her, grabs her by the hand, lifts her up and instantly the fever leaves her. This lady was sick. Sickness is a natural part of our fallen world. Jesus has authority both rebuke demons and diseases. Jesus has come to destroy the works of the devil. This new kingdom that is coming that Jesus is preaching marks a brand new beginning of the end of Satan's dominion through demons as well as the curse of Eden through diseases and death.

This lady is 100% healed. When Jesus heals it is a complete healing. Later that day on the Sabbath as the sun begins to set on that Saturday evening, the people in the town of Capernaum bring to Jesus all of the sick people in that town. Jesus lays hands on and

heals each one of them. He healed diseases as well as cast out more demons. They kept shouting that Jesus was the Son of God but just like before Jesus orders them quiet. Sometimes we hear in Scripture where Jesus only heals one person in the midst of many who are sick but not here. Not early in His ministry in a town of Capernaum near his hometown. This moment on this Sabbath, the whole town brings to Jesus all of their sick and demon possessed and He heals and touches every single one of them. For myself this is one of the most compassionate and powerful moments for me in scripture. Jesus had been teaching most of the day. Now as the sun goes down and it is now lawful in their mind to work and travel to see Jesus they all come and visit him. There is not one that he does not minister to. This night in Capernaum, every one is healed, everyone is smiling, and tears of joy and laughter fill the streets. It's just a beautiful scene.

Before we move forward I want to share something. This scene is recorded both in Luke and also in Matthew. As Matthew shares this testimony he cites an Old Testament passage from Isaiah 53 verse 4. Isaiah 53 is one of the most powerful prophecies of the coming Messiah in scripture. This is what Isaiah 53:4-5 says specifically:

Surely he took up our infirmities
and carried our sorrows,
yet we considered him stricken by God,
smitten by him, and afflicted.

But he was pierced for our transgressions,
he was crushed for our iniquities;

the punishment that brought us peace was upon him,
and by his wounds we are healed.

We all, like sheep, have gone astray,
each of us has turned to his own way;
and the LORD has laid on him
the iniquity of us all.

Some make the argument and often I think it is simply just a matter of the wrong words used to describe the reality. Some believe that we have the promise of healing because of Jesus Christ and His work on the cross. They focus on the phrase in verse 5 'by his wounds we are healed'. I confess the Hebrew word used for healed there never refers to physical healing. But I have to reconsider though what the verse above it means in verse 4. Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows. It is by no accident that Matthew cites that exact verse to describe what is going on here this night that everyone in Capernaum is healed and restored.

I don't like the word 'rights' especially when talking about God. That I have certain rights in Jesus Christ. Do I have the right to be healed? I would answer a big fat No. Do I have the promise of being healed? Again, a big fat No. But...do I have the hope of healing in Jesus Christ. Absolutely.

I believe when it comes to healing and other supernatural events three things are involved: a person's faith, authority, and God's Will. God's Will trumps them all but

all three are involved. And this night in Capernaum it was truly a glorious evening.

Jesus came to heal us both spiritually but also physically. The description of Jesus in Isaiah 53 is just as much true today as it was back then. That being the case, Jesus is still healing today. Jesus is still the Great Physician.

The final truth I want to share as we consider that Jesus has authority over the Spiritual Word and the Physical World we now must understand that

Jesus' Authority Comes From God

For Jesus, prayer was more important than sleep. Jesus understood where the source of His authority came from. This biblical truth is consistent and simple, please hear this: No praying, No authority. It is that simple. Jesus knew this. Jesus operates only on His Father's agenda and nothing else. The authority that Jesus has over the Spiritual World and Physical World is a direct result of who He is but make no mistake that prayer is part of that equation as well. Understand that Jesus would not be who He was without prayer. Jesus is fully God but also fully Human. Without the prayer life that Jesus shared with the Father, God could not of said this is my son with whom I am well pleased. Jesus would of fell during the temptation in the wilderness. Those hundreds healed the night before would never have happened without the prayer life of Jesus Christ. The gospel writer Mark is testing us right here. He slips this verse in quickly to see if we are paying attention. What is the next section of scripture about, preaching and healing! There is a connection here and we better not miss it. The disciples did not miss

it. They pulled Jesus aside and asked, Lord teach us to pray. They understood that the authority that Jesus carried flowed from His prayer life. **Once again, No prayer life, no authority; it's that simple.**

This principle applies for you and I as well. Do you want God to trust you with more? Being a good steward starts with your prayer time. Do you want God to entrust you with gospel to seek and save the lost? Get on your knees and begin praying to God? The kingdom of God is built on everything being upside down. You want to be first in the kingdom be last. You want more of God, give God more of you. You want Spiritual Authority...you do not ear it you are given it in prayer. You miss that and you miss almost everything. Will we be able to do the things Jesus did? Wrong question to ask. Will we ever have the authority that Christ had? Of course not! Jesus is the head of His Church. But Christ will entrust us to do great things in His Kingdom to bring glory to God but only when we remain daily in Him. No prayer, no authority. You cannot shortcut spiritual truths.

Conclusion

Two battleships assigned to the training squadron had been at sea on maneuvers in heavy weather for several days. I was serving on the lead battleship and was on watch on the bridge as night fell. The visibility was poor with patchy fog, so the captain remained on the bridge keeping an eye on all activities.

Shortly after dark, the lookout on the wing reported, “Light, bearing on the starboard bow.”

“Is it steady or moving astern?” the captain called out.

The lookout replied, “Steady, Captain,” which meant we were on a dangerous collision course with that ship.

The captain then called to the signalman, “Signal that ship: ‘We are on a collision course, advise you change course twenty degrees.’”

Back came the signal, “Advisable for you to change course twenty degrees.”

The captain said, “Send: ‘I’m a captain, change course twenty degrees.’”

“I’m a seaman second-class,” came the reply. “You had better change course twenty degrees.”

By that time the captain was furious. He spat out, “Send: ‘I’m a battleship. Change course twenty degrees.’”

Back came the flashing light, “I’m a lighthouse.”

We changed course.

Right now, as we continue to look at the light of life, Jesus Christ, as we look as teaches and preaches, as he cast out demons, as he heals....as He is calling out to you to repent and believe....will you change course?

Who has believed our message

and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

He grew up before him like a tender shoot,
and like a root out of dry ground.

He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him,
nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.

He was despised and rejected by men,
a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering.

Like one from whom men hide their faces
he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

Surely he took up our infirmities
and carried our sorrows,
yet we considered him stricken by God,
smitten by him, and afflicted.

But he was pierced for our transgressions,
he was crushed for our iniquities;

the punishment that brought us peace was upon him,
and by his wounds we are healed.

We all, like sheep, have gone astray,
each of us has turned to his own way;
and the LORD has laid on him
the iniquity of us all.

He was oppressed and afflicted,
yet he did not open his mouth;
he was led like a lamb to the slaughter,
and as a sheep before her shearers is silent,
so he did not open his mouth.

Before we go any further in our study of Mark it is time for you to change course. Jesus has been preaching throughout Mark 1 repent and believe the good news. The bad news is that we all like sheep have gone astray, each of us turned to his own way, we are guilty of breaking God's Law. We are capable of nothing righteous and good. The one who came to destroy the works of the devil will one day destroy the workers of the devil.

Today is the day to repent and make Jesus Lord and Savior right now.