



Mark 1:21-28 *And they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath [Jesus] entered the synagogue and was teaching. ²² And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes. ²³ And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, ²⁴ "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." ²⁵ But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!" ²⁶ And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying out with a loud voice, came out of him. ²⁷ 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." ²⁸ And at once his fame spread everywhere throughout all the surrounding region of Galilee.*

It's been said that "A mediocre teacher tells. A good teacher explains. A superior teacher demonstrates. But a great teacher inspires." If you think back on all the teachers who instructed you during your school days, I would guess that there are probably one or two who stick out as truly inspirational—someone who, in the way they instructed and encouraged you, had a truly transformative effect on your life. Maybe it was a teacher that believed in you when others had given up, maybe it was one who put in the extra hours to make sure that you understood the material, maybe it was a coach who motivated you to give it your all every time you played. These types of teachers stand out in our minds as simply different from the many other teachers through the years.

In God's Word for this morning, we meet another such teacher. It doesn't take long for His students to realize that Jesus of Nazareth was much different than the rabbis and scribes they were used to hearing. He spoke with authority. He spoke with strength. He spoke as the Son of God. And as He spoke His Word and demonstrated His power, His students' lives were inspired and forever transformed—just as our lives have been forever transformed by this same Word. We'll keep that idea in mind as we consider the theme:

Jesus is Not Your Average Teacher

- 1) His students receive strength from His Word.
- 2) His students receive security in His power.

With only sixteen chapters, the Book of Mark is the shortest of the four gospels. Despite this, it could be argued that Mark is also the most action-packed gospel. Mark employs the word "**immediately**" forty-one times in his sixteen chapters, while the same word appears only ten times in the rest of the New Testament. Reading in Mark feels like reading a superhero comic book, we're jumping from one place to the next, things are always happening "**immediately**." That's how our text for today begins also: "**And they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath he entered the synagogue and was teaching.**"

The *they* that Mark refers to is Jesus and his brand-new disciples. Only the day before, Peter and Andrew, James and John—we read the account last week—they had been fulltime fishermen on the Sea of Galilee, when Jesus said, "**Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.**" (Mark 1:17) And follow Him, they did. They might have had a few ideas about what this experience would be like, but little did they know that the next day, Jesus would make it clear to them that He simply was **not your average teacher**.

Now when it comes to teaching methods, there are tons of different ways to teach. There's the classic lecture method that I'm sure we've all experienced at some point and likely didn't think too highly of. There's the discussion method, the problem-solving method, the inductive method, the blended learning method—I'm sure we could go on and on. Although Jesus was a highly effective teacher, He didn't need to employ anything like this; I think if we had to give a name to Jesus' method of teaching, we might call it the authoritative method.

When Jesus taught His first lesson that Sabbath in the Capernaum synagogue, we're told that His students, ***"Were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes."*** This isn't meant to be a dig at the scribes. The scribes were essentially the Jewish equivalent of modern-day pastors and teachers. The job of the scribe was simple—teach people about what God's Word said. So, they would employ phrases like, *Thus says the Lord..., It is written..., God's Word for our consideration today...*, basically it would sound similar to the way I speak during a church service.

But **Jesus was not your average teacher**. He not only shared God's Word, His Word is God's Word and it gives strength to His students. Jesus didn't have to say, *"Thus says the Lord,"* but could say instead *"Thus I say.... So far My Holy Word..."* It's easy then to see why His students would be astonished. Near the end of our text they exclaim, ***"What is this? A new teaching with authority!"***

So Jesus shows real authority in His Word, but He doesn't just speak to "show who's in charge," no, **His students receive His strength from His Word**. Sometimes I daydream about being one of Jesus' disciples. How amazing it must have been to hear Him preach and teach in person—to sit and listen to Him explain Old Testament prophecies and make prophecies of His own about His crucifixion and resurrection and even the end of the world. How little doubt I would have in my heart about anything if I could have sat there and heard Jesus' words with my own ears! Maybe you've felt the same. Except, we do hear Jesus' very words every time we open the Bible, and in it is power just the same.

Some of you may remember the 1960 Presidential Election, of course I wasn't alive yet. But as the world still transitioned to TV, the Debates that year were broadcast on the Radio and, for the first time ever, on Television. And the story goes that most people who listened on the radio thought that Nixon won the debate, while those who watched on TV thought that Kennedy won the debate.

It's pretty clear that for ordinary people, the mode of communication changes the impact of the words being spoken. We saw that in 1960. We're seeing that today as teachers around the world struggle to teach students on the other side of a computer monitor. But the mode of communication doesn't change anything at all for Jesus. His power wasn't in the way He spoke, or His facial expressions, or hand gestures—but in His Word itself.

The same God who simply spoke, ***"Let there be light,"*** (Genesis 1:3) and then there was light, has now used that same powerful Word on us. The Apostle Paul writes about what that Word does for us, when He says, ***"So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ."*** (Romans 10:17) If you ever find yourself desiring a stronger faith, or if you're ever looking for strength to endure all the challenges and trials of this sinful life—look no further! Hear the Words of Christ—because that's where faith comes from! That's how faith grows and matures! Through the living and abiding Word of God.

Somewhat frequently, people will come to me with some problem and ask me what book of the Bible they should be reading, and I'm always happy to give recommendations. But the real answer is the

Bible—read the Bible! For it is the power of God. You can look to the Apostle Paul’s confession of faith for proof. He was one who worked at a pace which would prove exhausting for most anyone else. He showed unequalled bravery in the face of many situations. He was optimistic even when shackled and locked in prison. How could he go on? He tells us, ***“I can do everything through Him who gives me strength.”*** (Philippians 4:13)

The Word of God has a cumulative affect on our lives. Don’t use it as a self-help book only in times of trouble but instead use it daily as your lifeline into the very strength of God. For that’s what our teacher brings. After all, ***Jesus is not your average teacher.*** His students receive strength from His Word. And His students receive security in His power.

Now, for a teacher to effectively teach a subject, they have to know it thoroughly. They have to know what it’s about, what it means, what the consequences are. They have to know the upsides and the downsides, they have to know what questions people might bring, what challenges they might be confronted with, and they have to have answers while responding quickly on their feet. That certainly could all be said about Jesus, who was challenged and knew exactly how to respond.

Mark says, ***“And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit.”*** There’s that word, ***“Immediately”*** again. ***“Immediately”***, Jesus goes into the temple, ***“Immediately”*** an unclean spirit is there. Mark’s picturing these two like trains hurtling toward each other, or like foes on the battlefield rushing into the fray. Jesus again is here confronted by the powers of hell, just like He was in the wilderness for 40 days being tempted by the devil, only this time it’s in front of everybody. His authority is challenged, but Jesus shows himself to be the one in complete control.

The demon possessed man in our text cries 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.”*** That was true, wasn’t it? Psalm 16 says, ***“You will not allow your holy one to see corruption.”*** (10) That’s speaking about Jesus, calling Him the holy one of God. In John 6, Peter confesses, ***“We have believed, and have come to know, that you are the holy one of God.”*** (69) So, this demon makes a true confession about who Jesus is and what he has come to do—the holy one whom God has sent to save us. And we have to ask, “Why?” Why would a demon, one of the devil’s fallen angels admit that? It’s not the last time either—throughout the Gospels we see this several times: demons trying to confess openly that Jesus is God. Then, each time, Jesus tells them to be quiet. And again, we ask, “Why?” If it’s true, why tell them to keep silent?

In that situation I suppose, you and I might say, “Well he’s not wrong, Jesus really is the holy one of God, why does it matter who says it as long as the people are hearing the truth?” But see, you and I are easily duped by the devil’s schemes and lies, while Jesus is not. The devil is perfectly happy to say things that are true, even to allow Christ crucified to be proclaimed, as long as he can use it and twist it to lead people away from Christ. He can do that, and he does do that. Just think: If all the unclean spirits are going around telling everybody, “Jesus is the Christ, Jesus is the Messiah, Jesus is the Holy one of God”—what are people going to think? They’re going to wonder, “Why are the demons going around saying this? Can He really be the Messiah if the demons are advertising it? He must be in league with them!” And that’s exactly what happens! Later on, in Mark 3, the scribes say, ***“He is possessed by Beelzebul. . . by the prince of demons he casts out the demons.”*** (22)

The devil is crafty, happy to let his false teachers speak some truth in order to lull us to sleep so that we may be led astray by the lies. He did it then, he’s still using the same strategy today in many

pulpits across our country. He's crafty, he mixes truth with a lie, he pretends to confess Christ, and as Paul warns, ***"Satan [even] disguises himself as an angel of light."*** (2 Corinthians 11:14) We are no match for Satan's guile, but Jesus is! Even as this unclean spirit comes charging into the fray confessing who Jesus was, Jesus shows He is the one with authority and tells him to shut his mouth. As we read, ***"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."***

The devil knew that the Son of God came to earth to destroy him. He knew that this was Jesus' first day in His new classroom. He thought that he could ruin it by sending this distraction, this misdirection. But this encounter between Jesus and the spiritual forces of evil ended in the same way as all the rest would—with Satan defeated. What happened when Jesus was tempted by Satan in the wilderness for forty days? Satan was defeated by Jesus' power! What happened when Jesus encountered the demon named *Legion* in the Gadarenes? Satan was defeated by Jesus' power! Every single time that Jesus came across a demon-possessed individual, what happened? At every single turn, Satan was defeated by Jesus' power.

What security we find in the power of Jesus! That old, evil foe, as fearsome as he is for us, whenever he came toe-to-toe with Jesus, he always lost, especially when it mattered the most. At the cross, of course, Satan took his final run at God's Son. Perhaps he thought that the torment and agony of the world's sin would be too much for our Savior to bear. Perhaps he thought that Jesus' bloody back, the thorny crown, the nail-pierced hands and feet would at last make Jesus throw in the towel. But He would not. Instead, He gave up His life, pouring out his blood so that we could find our safety in His wounds. There we find security in the promise that all of our sins have been forgiven.

The devil will try with all his might to cast doubt on this. He will take opportunities to tell us half-truths, making things appear to be Christian when they really are not. He will do everything in his power to lead us away from our God and into the depths of hell. That's a fearsome thought, but we have the best form of security available. We can rejoice with the Psalmist, ***"The LORD is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices; my flesh also dwells secure."*** (Psalm 16:8-9)

Jesus told the devil to be quiet so that He Himself could tell us who He was and what He came to do. And this is what Jesus says about Himself, ***"The Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives...to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."*** (Isaiah 61:1-2) Jesus tells us today that His mission on earth was all about us, sinners for whom He was willing die. In His Word, He assures us that though we live in bondage to sin, He has freed us from our sin's guilt. Jesus tells us that our ***"sins, which are many, are forgiven."*** (Luke 7:47) What a relief to know we are safe and secure in our Savior's grace.

Now because of Hollywood and other glamorizations, people tend to think that demons are scary. But do you know what scares demons? Do you know what haunts their nightmares and gives them the chills? The Holy One of Israel, your Teacher and Savior, Jesus Christ. When He speaks, He speaks with authority, giving His students strength to follow, obey, and praise Him. He's given us His Word that we don't need to be afraid of the evil forces of this world. They've been defeated and His students are secure in His power.

For Jesus is not your average your teacher, but He is YOUR teacher. And by God's grace through faith, you're HIS student. Both now and forever. Amen.