

JESUS' TEACHING AND HEALING

Mark 1:21-39

Key Verse: 1:27

The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, "What is this? A new teaching--and with authority! He even gives orders to evil spirits and they obey him."

Last week, we learned that Jesus' first message was, "The time has come. The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!" During his life on earth, Jesus planted the hope of the kingdom of God in the hearts of many despairing people. Today's passage teaches us about the two major things that Jesus did for his ministry. First, he taught the word of God. Second, he healed the sick. Let's think about why Jesus started his ministry by teaching the word of God.

First, Jesus' word has authority (21-22). After his baptism by John and the inauguration ceremony by God the Father and the Holy Spirit (1:9-11), Jesus returned from the region of the Jordan River to Capernaum. There he started his messianic ministry. What did Jesus do at the beginning of his messianic work? Verse 21b says, "... *Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach.*" Jesus began his messianic work by teaching the word of God in the synagogue. While the temple in Jerusalem was for sacrificial rituals, synagogues were primarily for teaching God's word. Usually around ten families were sufficient to maintain a synagogue in any Jewish community. Throughout history, many powerful countries tried but failed to destroy the people of Israel, because of this community system. Not all synagogues had professional clergy. Many rabbis had their own job to support themselves. So Jesus, as a layman, could teach the word of God in the synagogue.

At that time, there were many pressing issues for the people of Israel. Their country was occupied by the oppressive regime of the Roman Empire. So Jesus could have started another resistance group against the evil empire. Their king and queen were corrupt and immoral. Jesus could have organized a political rally against them. The people were suffering from severe economic hardships. So he could have helped them by opening a soup kitchen. But the first thing Jesus did was to teach the word of God. He taught the word of God as of first importance. Jesus planted the absolute truth of God in the hearts of people. He firmly believed that the truth of God would set people free from the power of sin and death. This way, he planted a living hope of the kingdom of God in the hearts of the despairing people.

How did they respond 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). Some asked each other, "What is this? A new teaching--and with authority!" (27) In the past, they used to hear the homilies preached by the teachers of the law who had doctoral degrees in the law. They prepared their speeches with meticulous care. But the people were not impressed by the teaching of the detailed rules and regulations extracted from the Torah, with a long list of "do's and don'ts." But Jesus was different. His word had

power and authority. His word touched and moved their hearts. When Jesus said, “The time has come. The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news,” a ray of hope sparked into their darkened hearts. When Jesus said to them, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (Jn 14:6), their hearts were warmed with a new hope in God. Jesus taught them the word of God with a broken shepherd heart. Jesus’ teachings were full of hope and the love of God. His word convicted their hearts about their sins, and at the same time, his word gave them hope in a hopeless situation.

It is important for us to remember that Jesus began his messianic work by teaching the word of God. He had faith in the word of God. When we don’t have faith in the word of God, Bible study may seem the most impractical way of helping people who are in need. We might ask ourselves, “Wouldn’t it be better to help students with more practical matters? What can our 1:1 Bible study sessions accomplish? Wouldn’t it be better to organize an anti-abortion movement, or to distribute fliers on the virtue of abstinence?” But Jesus had faith that the word of God has transforming power in it. Hebrews 4:12 says: “For the word of God is living and active ... it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.” Whoever hears the word of God and believes in Jesus can have eternal life (Jn 5:24). The word of God is able to make man wise for salvation (2Ti 3:15). We must also have faith that our seemingly insignificant Bible study sessions can be an opportunity for young people to come to know God and have eternal life. We must have faith that the word of God can transform a sinner into a man or woman of God and a disciple of Jesus.

Second, Jesus’ word has power to heal (23-25). There was a man in the synagogue who was possessed by an evil spirit. He also heard Jesus’ teaching of the word of God. The evil spirit, the agent of Satan, was not afraid of the teachers of the law. But when Jesus spoke the word of God, the evil spirit was scared to death and began to cry out. Look at verse 24. *As soon as he heard Jesus’ teaching, he 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!”* The devil was deeply disturbed by Jesus’ teaching.

What did Jesus do? Did he hope that the man would just disappear quietly? No, Jesus accepted the challenge of the evil spirit. Jesus did not merely argue with the evil spirit. He rebuked him, saying, “Be quiet! Come out him.” Then, the evil spirit shook the man violently and came out of him. The evil spirit was so evil that he did evil things even as he came out of the man.

Notice that the evil spirit knew who Jesus was. He said, “I know who you are—the Holy One of God.” People who ignore God also tend to ignore the existence of the evil spirit. But the evil spirit is real. And he is smarter than people. He knows all about God. The problem is that he does not want anything to do with Jesus of Nazareth. In fact, his goal is to sever our relationship with Jesus. So he prowls around looking for prey—a person who might be willing to give him room to occupy (1Pe 5:8). In Mark’s gospel, those who are possessed by evil spirits are shown to suffer severe relationship problems. One young man was possessed by a legion of evil spirits. He could not stand the people around him. So he left his home and school and went to live in the cemetery. Night and day among

the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones. Only Jesus could set him free.

Evil spirits are also called unclean spirits. Unclean spirits corrupt young souls to live immoral lives. Mary Magdalene was once a woman possessed by unclean spirits, until Jesus set her free. Even today unclean spirits corrupt young people and lead them to engage in dirty and unclean acts without any sense of shame. The work of evil spirits and unclean spirits is quite visible in our society. Evil spirits lock up people in loneliness and torment them. For example, if you listen carefully to the lyrics of some young people sing, you can almost hear their screams.

People without God cannot but suffer from evil spirits and unclean spirits. But praise God for sending his Son Jesus Christ to free us from these evil and unclean spirits. Jesus can help all these young people who are screaming in their hearts for help. We may not know how exactly evil spirits operate. But one thing we must know: Jesus is able to set us free from evil spirits. Jesus can restore those who were broken. Jesus can restore damaged souls and heal those who are corrupt in body and spirit. How? Jesus baptizes us with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit enables sinners to pursue God's good works. Deep down in their hearts, people desire to do good and pursue what is right. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God's holiness. The Holy Spirit purifies sinners from all filthiness and ugliness. The Holy Spirit enables us to confess our sins. God is faithful and just and forgives us our sins and purifies us from all unrighteousness. All we have to do is come to Jesus and confess our sins and believe in him (1Jn 1:9).

Look at verse 27. The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, "Wow! What is this? A new teaching—and with authority! He even gives orders to evil spirits and they obey him." Then they spread this news to all their neighbors. Unlike the religious leaders, the ordinary people were open-minded. They were genuinely amazed at Jesus' ministry. They viewed the work of Jesus without prejudice. Jesus' teaching was new and fresh. Above all, they saw God's authority in Jesus' teaching. Then they spread this news. Through them many more people heard that the word of Jesus has power to heal the sick and to drive out evil spirits.

Third, Jesus heals many (29-34). Look at verse 29. *"As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew."* Jesus' disciples must have been hungry by now. So they went to Simon Peter's house expecting delicious lunch prepared by his mother-in-law, who might have frequently cooked for them. But this time she was in bed with a fever. Perhaps she was sick in her heart because Peter did not care for his wife as much as he used to, spending all the time with Jesus instead. Perhaps she had hoped that Peter would become the president of the Galilean Fishermen Association. Anyway, there was no hope for them to eat lunch there.

What did Jesus do for her? Jesus went to her, took her hand and helped her up. When the loving hand of the Messiah touched this sickly woman, the power of God overflowed in her life. Then the fever immediately left her and she began to wait on them. Out of great joy, she waited on Jesus and all the disciples. She prepared her specialty—crab

cake with baked potato. The disciples had a great feast. After this incident, Peter's mother-in-law and his wife probably began to support the ministry of Jesus wholeheartedly.

As soon as the sun had set, the Sabbath was over. Jesus had worked hard all day long for the needy. It was time for Jesus to get some rest. But the whole town gathered at the door of the house where Jesus was staying. They came with various diseases, and many were possessed by demons. They were moaning and groaning with their sicknesses. Though they were a crowd of people, Jesus welcomed them one by one, as a father welcomes his children. He did not say to them, "My office hour is over. Call my secretary to set up an appointment." Instead, Jesus cared for them one by one until all of them were taken care of. Jesus is the true shepherd of all mankind. Jesus came to this world to heal the sick and the wounded. Jesus came to this world to heal sin-sick souls.

Fourth, Jesus prays early in the morning (35-39). 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."* During the previous day, Jesus was very busy. He was exhausted. His day had begun with teaching people in the synagogue. He visited and healed Simon's mother-in-law. In the evening he healed a crowd of sick people. He spent all day long for the crowd of people. He also spent time with his disciples. Jesus had no personal time for himself. But he made time for his personal prayer. He got up early in the morning and went to a solitary place to pray to God. He listened to God and renewed his mission in God. The situation was overwhelming. There were so many people to take care of. Every single person needed his personal attention. What could he do? Through prayer, Jesus found a direction in God for his ministry. Prayer was a time of spiritual renewal for him. It was a time of love confession and communion with God. Prayer was the power source of his ministry. Jesus had a regular time of prayer. The Bible does not say what Jesus really prayed for. But Jesus' answer to Simon Peter suggests about his prayer topics.

Look at verses 36-37. *Simon and his companions went to look for him, and when they found him, they exclaimed: "Everyone is looking for you!"* Peter was probably still sleeping when he heard the crowd of people looking for Jesus for healing. He was excited that Jesus' popularity was soaring after his healing of many sick people. So he went to Jesus to report to him, expecting that Jesus would say, "That's very good. Let's expand our operation, and I appoint you as the president of Capernaum Community Hospital." But what was Jesus' reply? Look at verse 38. *"Let us go somewhere else--to the nearby villages--so I can preach there also. That is why I have come."* Jesus knew Simon's feelings. But Jesus told him why he came to this world. It was to preach the word, not to be a famous doctor. Through his personal prayer, Jesus found a clear direction in his ministry. Peter, on the other hand, did not pray and he had no idea about what God wanted him to do.

A similar thing happened just before Jesus' crucifixion. On the night of Jesus' arrest, he struggled in the Garden of Gethsemane in his prayer to obey the will of God. He fell to the ground and prayed, "Abba, Father. Everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will" (Mk 14:36). After the prayer struggle, Jesus was ready. When the Jewish police came to arrest him, he said, "I am the one you

want.” On the other hand, Peter slept while Jesus prayed. So he had no idea about what to do. He drew his sword and cut off the ear of the high priest’s servant.

We learn that through our personal prayer, we can have a clear direction and purpose in life. May God help us to come to him in our prayer every morning! May God help us to listen to him and plead with him! May God help us to have a clear direction and purpose in our life through our Bible study and prayer!

In conclusion, Jesus began his messianic ministry by teaching the word of God and healing the sick. Let’s pray that God may give us faith to believe that the word of God has the power to heal the sick and give eternal life to those who come to him.