

#1815  
Cf. #410

Mark 1:21-28<sup>1</sup>  
Jesus teaches with authority,  
drives out demons,  
and the people are amazed.  
4<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Epiphany  
Supplementary Lectionary  
Series "B," Gospels

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Elected men: \$L  
Elders

<sup>21</sup> They went to Capernaum, and immediately the Sabbath came, and Jesus went into the Synagogue and began to teach. <sup>22</sup> The people were amazed at his Teaching, because he taught them as One who had authority, not as the Teachers of the Law (Scribes). <sup>23</sup> Just then a man in their Synagogue who was possessed by an evil spirit cried out, <sup>24</sup> "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!"

<sup>25</sup> "Be quiet!" said Jesus sternly. "Come out of him!" <sup>26</sup> The evil spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek.

<sup>27</sup> The people were all so astonished 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." <sup>28</sup> News about Jesus spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee.

JESUS AMAZES AND ASTONISHES THE PEOPLE  
I. WITH HIS TEACHING  
II. WITH HIS MIRACLES

In the Name of Jesus, who teaches us through his Holy Scriptures, Dear Fellow-Redeemed,

Last week from this same Gospel of Mark (1:14-20), we were introduced to the beginning of Jesus' Galilean ministry. Galilee was a region or district north of Judea and north of Samaria. Capernaum was located on the northeastern corner of the Sea of Galilee and served as a cross-roads for points north, south, east and west. Jesus made Capernaum his headquarters for his Galilean ministry. Jesus also moved his mother, stepbrothers and stepsisters to the town of Capernaum (cf. John 2:12).

Last week we heard how Jesus called four fishermen – Andrew and Simon Peter, James and John – to be his disciples. Jesus said he would make them "fishers of men" (1:17b). This call to follow Jesus probably took place on a Friday, for today's text tells us that "immediately on the Sabbath, they went into the Synagogue" – the Sabbath beginning at sundown on Friday and continuing till sundown on Saturday.

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<sup>1</sup> *The New International Version*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House) 1984. All Scripture references are taken from this translation unless noted otherwise.

It was the custom of the time that if any Jewish visitor had a message to convey to the people, he was asked to do so. Indeed, Jesus did have a Message. Thus, we are told that Jesus “began to teach” (1:21c). The Teaching of Jesus, the Message of Jesus, was so different and astounding that the people were amazed and astonished (1:22,27). The people were amazed and astonished at Jesus’ Message, which they considered “new” (1:27b), and also by the authoritative way in which Jesus proclaimed his Message (1:22b,27c). In addition, the people were amazed and astonished by the fact that Jesus performed a miracle – a miracle which also demonstrated his authority, and which verified that his Teaching was valid and true. So we see that ... JESUS AMAZES AND ASTONISHES THE PEOPLE ... I. WITH HIS TEACHING; and, II. WITH HIS MIRACLES.

## JESUS AMAZES AND ASTONISHES THE PEOPLE I. WITH HIS TEACHING

Jesus’ teaching was different. Mark tells us “The people were amazed at his Teaching, because he taught them as One who had authority, not as the Teachers of the Law (the Scribes)” (1:22). The Teachers of the Law would drone on and on and on. Moreover, the Teachers of the Law were thoroughly Jewish; they wanted a Messiah who would turn the Jewish state into a world power. How similar that is today with some, who, for false religious reasons, support the State of Israel. The Teachers of the Law also added to God’s Word.

The Teachers of the Law came up with 613 rules and regulations added to the Law of Moses (but cf. Deuteronomy 4:2). We see the same thing today among some false churches who boast: “We don’t drink or smoke or chew, and we don’t go with the girls (or the guys) that do!” The Teachers of the Law were strict about keeping their rules and regulations, and they showed no mercy or compassion toward those who broke them. They went contrary to God’s Word which stated through the Prophet Hosea “I desire mercy, not sacrifice” (Hosea 6:6; cf. Matthew 19:13; 12:7). Obviously, then, the Teachers of the Law were not going to get along with Jesus; and, Jesus was not going to get along with them but condemn them. This amazed and astonished the people (1:22,27). Jesus also taught differently from the Teachers of the Law.

Jesus taught with authority (1:22,27). The Teachers of the Law brought their own interpretations to the Scriptures and their own additions to the Scriptures. Jesus did not do that. Jesus’ Teaching was absolutely true; for it was the Word of God.

As was noted in last week’s sermon (1:14-20), Jesus’ teaching was summarized in his own words, “The time has come .... The Kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the Good News (the Gospel)” (1:15). Thus, Jesus proclaimed properly the teaching of the Law which works repentance.

The teaching of the Law works repentance. The teaching of the Law aimed at exposing sin and the terrible and eternal consequences of the suffering and torment that sin deserved.

The teaching of the Law proclaimed “There is no one who does good.... All have turned aside, they have together become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one” (cf. Psalm 14:1-3; 53:1-3; Ecclesiastes 7:20). The Law also proclaimed terrible and eternal judgment. The LORD said through the Prophet Isaiah, “I will punish the world for its evil, the wicked for their sins. I will put an end to the arrogance of the haughty and will humble the pride of the ruthless” (Isaiah 13:11). But, Jesus also taught the Gospel.

Jesus proclaimed the Gospel – the Good News of the forgiveness of sins that he would earn for all people by his cross and suffering. On the cross, Jesus was going to receive from God the full punishment for the sins of the world (cf. Psalm 22; Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34; Isaiah 53:5&6; John 19:30). Thus, Jesus also had full authority not only to proclaim the Gospel of the forgiveness of sins but to actually give that forgiveness (cf. 2:5b). In addition, the authority with which Jesus taught the Scriptures makes sense, for Jesus was the author of the Scriptures, for Jesus is One with the Holy Spirit and the Father.

And so, the people were amazed and astonished. They labeled Jesus’ teaching authoritative and new (1:22,27). Yet Jesus’ teaching was not really new. God the LORD had said that he desired to be merciful (supra, Hosea 6:6; cf. Matthew 19:13; 12:7). In Jesus was fulfilled that about which King David wrote in Psalm 103:

<sup>2</sup> ***Praise the LORD, O my soul ...***  
<sup>3</sup> ***who forgives all your sins***  
***and heals all your diseases,***  
<sup>4</sup> ***who redeems your life from the pit***  
***and crowns you with love and compassion***  
(Psalm 103:2a,3&4)

And,

<sup>8</sup> ***The LORD is compassionate and gracious,***  
***slow to anger, abounding in love.***  
<sup>9</sup> ***[The LORD] will not always accuse,***  
***nor will he harbor his anger forever;***  
<sup>10</sup> ***he does not treat us as our sins deserve***  
***or repay us according to our iniquities.***  
<sup>11</sup> ***For as high as the heavens are above the earth,***  
***so great is his love for those who fear him;***  
<sup>12</sup> ***as far as the east is from the west,***  
***so far has he removed our transgressions from us.***  
<sup>13</sup> ***As a father has compassion on his children,***  
***so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him***  
(Psalm 103:9-13).

The Old Testament Scriptures proclaimed the mercy and compassion of the LORD (cf. Exodus 34:6&7a). The Old Testament Scriptures proclaimed that the LORD forgave sins. Jesus earned that forgiveness. Jesus proclaimed that forgiveness. Jesus gave that forgiveness. The people were amazed and astonished at Jesus’ authority and teaching.

## APPROPRIATION

The message of Jesus, both Law and Gospel, has come and is now being proclaimed to you too. The Law is proclaimed to you.

The Law says to you and to me through the Apostle Paul,

**<sup>9</sup> Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders <sup>10</sup> nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the Kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:9&10).**

The Law proclaims to you and to me,

**<sup>19</sup> The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; <sup>20</sup> idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions <sup>21</sup> and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the Kingdom of God (Galatians 5:19-21).**

The Law says to you and me,

**<sup>3</sup> But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. <sup>4</sup> Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. <sup>5</sup> For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a man is an idolater—has any inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ and of God. <sup>6</sup> Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient (Ephesians 5:3-6).**

And note the punishment which is spoken of in these verses: “God’s wrath [is coming] on those who are disobedient”; and the wicked have no place in “the Kingdom of God.” This is the Law you have heard and that condemns you. But you have also heard the Gospel – the Good News – of the forgiveness of sins in Jesus.

The Gospel or Good News of Jesus directs our attention to his cross and resurrection. St. Paul proclaims, “[Jesus] was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification” (Romans 4:25). Jesus was put to death on the tree of the cross. Through his suffering and death, the entire world has been forgiven, for Jesus “is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:2). Jesus’ resurrection from the dead proves that we have been justified – declared not guilty by God for Jesus’ sake. It is through this Teaching that you have been brought to faith in Jesus your Savior.

It is the Gospel in Word and Sacraments through which alone the Holy Spirit brings you to faith and keeps you in faith. Through that faith, you can confess with mouth and heart, “Jesus is my LORD and Savior” (cf. Romans 10:9-13); for, “no one can say, ‘Jesus is LORD,’ except by the Holy Spirit” (1 Corinthians 12:3b). In that faith in Jesus, you have forgiveness of sins, eternal life and salvation.

For you and for the world, Jesus earns and gives the forgiveness of sins. Our text testifies to Jesus’ authority to do this.

## JESUS AMAZES AND ASTONISHES THE PEOPLE II. WITH HIS MIRACLES

Mark records:

**<sup>23</sup> Just then a man in their Synagogue who was possessed by an evil spirit cried out, <sup>24</sup> “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!” (1:23&24).**

It was not the man himself who recognized Jesus but the evil spirits within him. One of the characteristics of demon possession in the New Testament was the fact that these evil spirits knew something that the man whom they possessed could not and did not know. So this evil spirit refers to Jesus as being from Nazareth and that he is “the Holy One of God.” Jesus was indeed the Holy One of God, the Messiah, the Christ, the One promised in the Old Testament. But Jesus would not permit these evil spirits to reveal who he was. That revelation, testimony and confession, was reserved for the angels in heaven and for those brought to faith in Jesus through the Gospel.

The evil spirits who possessed this man “cried out, ‘What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us?’” (1:24a&b). Had Jesus shown up at this particular time to send these evil spirits to their utter destruction in hell forever? Jesus would not permit these evil spirits to speak about him or abide any longer in this man.

Jesus says,

**<sup>25</sup> “Be quiet!” said Jesus sternly. “Come out of him!” <sup>26</sup> The evil spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek (1:25&26).**

In a last bitter attempt to cause the man harm, suffering and pain, the evil spirit comes out of him with a shriek and shakes the man violently. All the people react with amazement and astonishment.

Listen again to the reaction of the crowd, “The people were all so astonished 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!’” (1:27). What was the purpose of this miracle for these people? What was the purpose of all Jesus’ miracles? Jesus’ miracles did not stand

alone. Jesus' miracles verified that his Teaching was true and valid. And, the greatest miracle for his believers would be Jesus' resurrection from the dead.

#### APPROPRIATION

One of the questions that is sometimes asked today, is whether or not there is demon possession as there was during the time of Jesus' earthly public ministry. Certainly, there is the devil; and, certainly there are demons. Is there demon possession? Some would say, "yes"; some would say, "no." Some would say that they can even detect demons today. The truth or falseness of this we leave to the judgment and knowledge of God. But it is true that all of us were at one time demon-possessed and under the influence of the devil and his demons.

By nature, all of us are demon-possessed and under the influence of the devil and his demons. King David expresses this truth in Psalm 51:5, "Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me." All of us have to confess that "every inclination of the thoughts of [our] heart(s) [is] only evil all the time" – "evil from childhood" (Genesis 6:5b & 8:21b). All of us have to confess that we are by nature sinful and unclean. Since we are by nature sinful and unclean, then God is not our master; rather, the devil and his demons are our master. This by nature demon possession was hinted at in some of the old formulas for Holy Baptism.

The sponsors or parents of the baby being baptized were asked to speak on behalf of the child, "Do you renounce the devil and all his wicked works and all his wicked ways?"<sup>2</sup> The sponsors or parents would answer for the child, "I do." It was an exorcism. It was also a tacit acknowledgement that the child by nature was under the influence of the devil and his demons. Such an exorcism has happened for you and me too through the work of the Holy Spirit in the Means of Grace, the Gospel in Word and Sacraments (Holy Baptism and Holy Communion).

Jesus was performing an exorcism in our text. Only God and his Word has authority over the devil and demons. It is through the Gospel of Jesus that, not devils and demons dwell in you, but that the Holy Spirit dwells in you. St. Paul writes to the Romans,

**<sup>9</sup> You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. <sup>10</sup> But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. <sup>11</sup> And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you (Romans 8:9-11).**

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<sup>2</sup> *The Pastor's Companion – Authorized by the Synods Constituting the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America* (St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, n.d.), p. 6.

If a person is “controlled ... by the sinful nature,” then that person has as his or her master, the devil and his demons. But, St. Paul goes on to say,

***<sup>15</sup> For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.” <sup>16</sup> The [Holy] Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. <sup>17</sup> Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory (Romans 8:15-17).***

Now this is what you have through the work of the Holy Spirit in the Gospel.

Through the Gospel, the Holy Spirit not only dwells in you but also moves and motivates you to behave in God-pleasing ways – to avoid sin and shame and to bring forth the fruits of faith in good works – pleasing to God for Jesus’ sake. The miracle of faith has been worked in you through the Gospel.

## CONCLUSION

It is by God’s grace that we too are amazed and astonished in Christ Jesus. Jesus’ teaching rightly exposes our sins and speaks of the punishment we deserve because of our sins. Jesus’ teaching also points us to Jesus’ cross, on which he took away the sins of the world and our sins too. Be amazed and astonished that Jesus, through the Gospel, has worked in you the miracle of faith. Be amazed and astonished in your LORD Jesus Christ. Amen.