



Sermon: [What is This? Who is This?](#) – Todd Goldschmidt

Sunday Service 10:15 am – January 29th, 2012 – At [Living Hope Lutheran Church](#)

Lesson/Sermon Text: Mark 1:21-28 – (NIV 1984)

Jesus Drives Out an Evil Spirit

Mark 1:21-28

They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law. Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an evil 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!”

“Be quiet!” said Jesus sternly. “Come out of him!” The spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek. 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.” News about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee.



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“The *beginning* of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God”—that’s how the evangelist, Mark, opens his account of Jesus’ life and ministry. This phrase is more than simply the opening verse of Mark’s Gospel; it’s more than just a point of departure, the first step on a long journey toward a distinct destination down the road. Think of the phrase as a title that governs the whole of Mark’s account: an unfinished symphony of sights and sounds, signs and sermons, that spring from the Savior’s lips and are done in love for the lost sheep He’d come to seek and to save. Mark’s Gospel seems intentionally left as an open-ended narrative, the conclusion of which remains for another to pen. St. Mark’s “beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God” offers no satisfactory conclusion, no inevitable outcomes and no easy assurances—again, much like a great composer’s unfinished opus.

St. Mark’s ending is surprising and unexpected, leaving its readers hungry for more good news. It concludes on Easter morning, with that group of grieving women who venture out in the pre-dawn mist to the garden where His lifeless body had been hastily entombed just before sundown on the Sabbath. Expecting to find an enormous, immovable stone blocking the tomb’s entrance, they’re startled to discover that someone has already rolled it away. Instead of a closed crypt, they find an open tomb. In place of a corpse, they discover a young man dressed in white—a heavenly angel sent from above—announcing: “Don’t be alarmed. You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him.” The final scene ends with the women retreating in the stunned silence of utter bewilderment.

Perhaps uncomfortable with Mark’s seemingly unfinished account, the well-meaning early Church felt the need to add the biblically-sound elements of Jesus’ post-resurrection appearances, His commissioning of the apostles and His ascension to the right hand of the Father, bringing his gospel in line with the other Synoptic Gospels, Matthew and Luke. But it seems that originally Mark himself was inspired by God’s Spirit to record a narrative about Christ that served as only a “beginning.” The true ending of the Gospel of Jesus Christ continues to unfold in the life of the Church as she proceeds toward the second coming of Christ and His eschatological kingdom.



Now to our text: Mark writes, “[Jesus and His disciples] went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law.” Mark seems to delight in surprises, to revel in the unexpected turn of events that characterize much of Jesus’ ministry. The authoritative nature of Jesus’ preaching astounded His hearers in Capernaum—even more so because it far surpassed the spiritual fare they’d been receiving from the rest of the rabbis they’d been listening to. Their amazement grows when Jesus, with His stern rebuke, “Be quiet!” silences that evil spirit who cries 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!” Jesus then exorcises it with His command: “Come out of him!” We read: “The spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek.” 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.” What an amazing preacher Jesus was! Even demons fled in fear!

Friends, Satan and his minions still scurry away from that One of whom John wrote in his 1st epistle: “The reason the Son of Man appeared was to destroy the devil’s work” (3:8). He’s done that for you and me. When the Holy Spirit took up residence within our sinful souls, He sent the devil packing. No, not completely. He still controls our sinful natures. He still works in cahoots with the wicked world in which we live, too, striving with all his demonic might to lead us down those tempting back-alleys and dead-end streets that take us away from the LORD and His will for our life. If we’re at all honest about it, we have to admit that we’ve fallen into Satan’s traps all too often, wandering far from the paths of righteousness that our Shepherd, Jesus, wants to lead us along; drinking from cesspools of sin instead of the crystal clear mountain-fresh “water of life” that flows from our Savior’s sacraments of Baptism & Holy Communion; mal-nourishing our souls on the poisonous potions that our Enemy, the devil, presents to us under the guise of good rather than sustaining our faith in the green pastures of God’s Word. LORD, have mercy!

And He does! He invites, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest” (Matt. 11:28). John tells us in his 1st epistle: “If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.” On the other hand, if—by the power of God’s Spirit alone—“we confess our sins, [God] is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” (1:8-9). What a promise! So we come, weak, weary and worn-out to the only One who can give us the refreshing rest, the quiet confidence and the blessed assurance that in Him we have forgiveness for our each and every sin and that the burden of guilt has been lifted from us and put on Him. He “bore our sin in his body on the tree,” and there, on the altar of the cross, He offered Himself up as the one-time sacrifice for the sins of the world.



“Jesus of Nazareth” amazed the people of His day with His authoritative teaching and with His astounding power over the “evil spirit” that possessed that poor man in Capernaum’s synagogue. “New stuff”—good stuff—godly stuff! It’s still happens today as the Holy Spirit liberates souls who are in bondage to sin and Satan. And it’s just as astounding if we let it be! Very rarely do we get the privilege today, however, to marvel as the Capernaum-ites did that day in their synagogue when Jesus’ exorcised that demon. We can only imagine that that man—set free from the evil spirit that had tormented him—became a believer in Jesus from that point forward. One of the greatest experiences in my life as a believer happened recently as I witnessed the Holy Spirit work through the Word of God and prayer to transform Amjed—a Pakistani Muslim—into David William, a Christian who had nothing to gain, humanly speaking, and everything to lose, by his spiritual transformation. Yet he told Bill & me Friday, “All this is by the Holy Spirit. Jesus is my Savior. This life is short. Heaven is forever. I will never go back.”

What a marvelous miracle! David called his brothers and cousins back in Pakistan recently to let them know about his new-found faith in Jesus as his Savior. Some reacted with skepticism; others with outright rejection. He said to me, “The rejection was immediate.” One of those brothers informed David’s mother about his new faith in Jesus & that he was no longer Muslim. When David spoke with her by phone she told him, “You are not my son.” Can you imagine hearing those words from your mother? It broke David’s heart to hear them from his mom.

Bill Ruthford and I spoke with David about that this past week, and encouraged him in his new walk of faith as “brothers in Christ.” I gave him his baptismal certificate to remind him of his baptism into Christ on December 10, 2011. On the front was a picture of a cross in the clouds with a dove—the Holy Spirit—superimposed on the cross. This verse was there as well: “for we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body” ^(1 Cor. 12:13). He asked me, “Is this normal to be rejected by one’s family when one becomes a Christian?” To which I replied, “Yes, David. But it’s harder for you. If Bill or I or some other American comes to faith in Jesus, we don’t often experience what you’ve experienced—total rejection from our family. But now you have a new family—the family of believers—and we will always love you and be there for you.”



“News about [Jesus] spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee”—and far beyond! Who will you tell that good news to in the week ahead? What “Amjed” is there in your circle of family, friends and acquaintances that the Holy Spirit is just waiting to transform into another “David William”? They’re out there, friends, those who have been elected from eternity and who are just waiting—whether they know it or not—to repent at the cutting-edge law of God and to rejoice in the gracious good news of His love in Christ by the power of His Spirit! Spread the word: the God-man, Jesus of Nazareth, has come! He’s come, to set us free from our fears, to liberate us from the guilt of our failures, to rescue us from death and ransom us from hell; to forgive us, to restore us to a right relationship with God, to make it possible for us to live forever with Him in the eternal joys of heaven! Come, follow Him—Him who has power even over evil spirits; who has power over everything we face, deal with or get discouraged by! He is El Shaddai—the LORD Almighty! With Him, “all things are possible”—*all things!* Amen!