

**Fourth Sunday after Epiphany – February 1, 2015**  
**Good Shepherd Ev. Lutheran Church**

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**Mark 1:21-28 (NIV)**

**They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach.** 22) The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law. 23) Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an impure spirit cried out, 24) "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!" 25) "Be quiet!" said Jesus sternly. "Come out of him!" 26) The impure spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek. **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 impure spirits and they obey him."** 28) News about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee.

Dear disciples of the Lord:

Today we have the privilege of focusing our attention on a lesson from one of the Gospels that reminds us of the fact that Jesus often participated in the worship services in his local congregation or synagogue. It is our privilege to enjoy the blessings of the Lord Jesus' presence whenever we gather together in his name. So once again today

**Theme: Let's Go to Church With Jesus**

- 1. To Enjoy Security in our Savior's Power**
- 2. To Receive Strength from His Word**

One of the trademarks of Jesus' ministry was that he healed those who were under the power of the devil (Acts 10:38) Our text reports the first instance of demon possession in the Gospel of Mark.

**Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an impure spirit cried out, 24) "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 words of our text suggest that it was really the evil spirit who spoke to Jesus. There may also have been other ways in which this spirit controlled and affected this man. In other parts of Scripture, we learn that at times those who were possessed by demons had physical ailments. Luke tells about a crippled woman who could not stand up straight. (Luke 13:11) He also tells us of a child who had uncontrollable convulsions. A demon possessed man had super human strength. A girl who was possessed by demons had super natural powers such as fortune telling. However, one thing that all the demons seemed to have in common was that they knew who Jesus was and why he had come into this world. They knew that Jesus was the seed of the woman who had come to crush the devil's head in fulfillment of the promise God made to Adam and Eve back in the Garden of Eden.

As God's enemy and our enemy, Satan prowls about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. He is the one responsible for plunging the world into the darkness of sin and evil. He is the one who seeks to separate creation from the creator. He is the one who caused death to be a part of our existence in this world.

Still today, Satan and his allies are hard at work. We find his power displayed in human attempts (often by highly educated persons) to discredit Scripture and its teachings. False doctrine abounds today. False religions flourish – including satanic cults. Science questions and challenges Scripture with no real proof

against it. There are bombings and terrorist acts done in the name of religion. We could go on and on citing examples of Satan's presence in our world today.

How can we be safe from him? Where do we find security against his temptations and his evil attempts to separate us from the love of God? Our security is not in our abilities, our knowledge our strength. It is in our Savior's power. As disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, we find our security in the one who gave ***orders to impure spirits and they obeyed him!***

The spirit who had possessed the man had 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 man could not have known this by himself. It was the devil speaking through him. Even though these words are the truth – Jesus is not willing to allow Satan to speak them for those who would have heard this man would have not believed him since they knew he was possessed by Satan, the father of lies. So Jesus sternly says: "Be quiet!" And the devil is silenced! Then he commands. Come out of him. What happened? **26) The impure spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek.** He was no longer able to undermine Jesus' work.

The Scriptures report numerous other accounts of Jesus' dealings with the devil. Each time the result was the same – Jesus demonstrated his power over the devil. Satan's final desperate attack would be directed at Jesus on the cross. There Satan's power in connection with sin and death would be put to an end. Jesus would meet death and defeat it. It is for that reason that we can **resist the devil and he will flee from us.** (James 4:7 NIV)

Peter warns us that the devil is still shrieking – still desperately trying to deceive us. But he also assures us of our security. **Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. 8) Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. 9) Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings. 10) And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.** (1 Peter 5:7-10 NIV)

Security in our Savior's power is one of the blessings of discipleship. He is the one who assures us of protection from harm, deliverance from evil and the security of eternal life in the glories of heaven.

Strength from his word is another blessing of discipleship. Jesus used the power of his word – the Holy Scriptures to resist the devil's temptations in the wilderness. That word also provides us with the strength to resist the devil. The strength and power of the word of Christ is evident in our text. **When the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. 22) The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law.**

It was common for Jesus to attend the services at the synagogue. This was his normal custom. Surely, Jesus' regular attendance at worship services reminds us of the importance of attending worship services where we can be strengthened by the word of Christ. Mark doesn't record Jesus' actual message for us yet we are told that it amazed the people because it was new and different from the message the usual teachers of the Law proclaimed.

The regular teachers based their messages on the interpretations of men. They pointed the people to their actions and burdened the people with all kinds of legalistic actions. Often they quoted so-called religious experts as their authorities. They emphasized the teachings and traditions of men and the opinions of men. That made it difficult for anyone to come away feeling confident about what they had learned since there were

so many opinions. Sadly, those teachers were so busy talking about the Scriptures that they forgot to teach what the Scriptures said. Jesus proclaimed a different message. He proclaimed the good news of forgiveness. He spoke as true God and he revealed the love of God to the people.

Unfortunately, we often take the Scriptures for granted, too. It's easy for us to neglect them. We might be far likely to spend time browsing the internet each day so we can keep up to date on world events and our favorite activities than we would be to pick up our Bibles or even read an on-line devotion. We might come up with all kinds of excuses but finally there really is no excuse for indifference to the word. The Bible is the authoritative powerful word of God that gives us strength.

This word strengthens our faith in Jesus as our Savior as it shows us how he defeated the devil and won salvation for us. Paul describes the Gospel as the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes.

The Word of God is the sword of the Spirit that we can use in our battle with Satan.

The Psalm for today described the Word as a living stream – which nourishes and strengthens the Christian to live in keeping with God's will and assures us the blessings of God. God's Word gives us strength and comfort in times of difficulty and trouble and doubt by showing us that God is faithful to all of his promises. It reminds us of his love. It urges us not to lean on our own understanding but on the wisdom of God to help us understand and determine what is good and right.

When the people heard what Jesus taught and saw how even the demons had to obey his word – they were amazed. They saw and heard the love of God in action. News about him spread quickly.

As disciples of Christ, we have some wonderful opportunities to be strengthened by the word of God in our worship services, our Bible study classes, our at home Bible reading times. That Word will give us the strength and the ability to resist the devil's temptations, to cope with the hassles of life, to conquer our fears of death, to have confidence that nothing can separate us from the love of God. That word offers the assurance of an open heaven and motivates us to spread the message of Jesus' far and wide.

Isn't it refreshing, dear disciples of the Lord to see and hear the power of God's word? Isn't it a comfort to be reminded of the grace of God which has called you to follow Christ? Isn't a joy to know that your place in the Lord's family and in heaven has been secured for you by God himself? Those are the blessings of going to church with Jesus.

That's certainly a different message than you might hear proclaimed by many religious teachers who make it sound as if you have to do something to become and remain a disciple of Christ. As we have seen again this week it is by the grace of God that we become disciples and by the grace of God that we remain disciples. What a blessing it is to enjoy security in our Savior's power and Strength from his word as we live a life of total commitment and glorious service to our Lord. Amen.