

“Who Is This Man?”

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Preached By: The Youth

Text: Mark 1:21-28 (The Voice)

God’s Word: Psalm 111 (NLT)

Mark 1:21-

*Narrator:*²¹ They came at last to the village of Capernaum on the Sea of Galilee; and on the Sabbath Day, Jesus went straight into a synagogue, sat down, and began to teach. ²² The people looked at each other, amazed, because this strange teacher acted as One authorized by God, and what He taught affected them in ways their own scribes’ teachings could not. ²³ Just then a man in the gathering who was overcome by an unclean spirit shouted.

*Unclean Spirit:*²⁴ What are You doing here, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I can see who You are! You’re the Holy One of God.

*Jesus (rebuking him):*²⁵ Be quiet, and come out of him now!

²⁶ The man’s body began to shake and shudder; and then, howling, the spirit flew out of the man. ²⁷ The people couldn’t stop talking about what they had seen.

People: Who is this Jesus? This is a new teaching—and it has such authority! Even the unclean spirits obey His commands!

*Narrator:*²⁸ It wasn’t long before news of Jesus spread over the countryside of Galilee.

Set the Stage & Bible Story

A few years ago there was a pretty bad disaster out at sea. A tourist boat, loaded with cars and partiers, had not shut its doors properly; water began pouring in; the boat started to sink, and panic set in!!! People were screaming as the happy and relaxed atmosphere of the ship turned, in minutes, into something worse than a horror movie!!!

All at once one man—who was not a member of the ship’s crew—took charge.

In a clear voice he gave orders, telling people what to do. Relief started to mix with panic as people began to realize that someone, at least, was in charge...and people started to get to the lifeboats they would have otherwise missed in the dark and the chaos.

The man himself made his way down to the people trapped in the boat’s hold. There he formed a human bridge: holding on with one hand to a ladder and with the other to part of the ship that was nearly submerged, he was able to make sure people were able to cross to safety.

When the nightmare was over, the man himself had drown. He had literally given his life using the authority he had assumed—the authority by which many had been saved.

Now, take that picture to a different sea coast. In the little town of Capernaum there was a synagogue. And here comes a Man, not one of the usual teachers, who starts, on His own authority, to tell people what God's will is, how the Kingdom is coming.

Unlike the Temple in Jerusalem where people worshiped and made sacrifices, the synagogue was mainly for teaching. It was a place for prayer and instruction. And Jesus' teaching was electric and new.

The usual teachers, the priests, the scribes and the Pharisees didn't teach like Jesus. They always said, "as Moses said," or "as Rabbi so-and-so said." On the other hand, Jesus spoke with compelling authority which was all His Own! And then Jesus moves from authoritative teaching to authoritative action!!!

As Jesus was teaching and the people stood amazed...we are told in verses 23 and 24 that *"Suddenly, there in the synagogue, a person with an evil spirit screamed, 'What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are. You are the holy one from God.'"* This poor man had somehow been invaded by a force from outside him over which he had no control.

Connect with the Story

How many of us can relate? None of us have any guarantees. Any of us could be assaulted by a myriad of life's external dangers—whether it be a car accident, an illness, the death of a loved one, the loss of a job. How frightening life must be to a person who is dealing with such things, and concludes that he or she must try and navigate through life's perils without any resources, guidance, love, or help from God. How easy and natural it must be to lose hope!!!

In 2010 a disturbing report hit the news about a little boy in Chicago who was shot and permanently disabled in a drive-by shooting. That fact alone is awful enough, but the reporter went on to say that everyone in the neighborhood knew who the shooter was, but no one came forward to identify him. The boy's mother even acknowledged that she drove by the shooter's house every day on the way to work.

An educator from Chicago who was interviewed by the reporter said, "That's what happens when people lose hope. You don't think things will get better, so you just give up."

We know nothing about the man with "an evil spirit." We don't know his background; we don't know how long he had been suffering. What we do know is that Jesus commands the demon to leave the man. And as it came out of him the man convulsed, and the onlookers stood in amazement! We never hear anything more about that man. And because of this, we can surmise that this story is more about Jesus' authority over unclean spirits than it is about this specific person.

The demons don't even appear to be too concerned about anything other than Jesus, once Jesus appears on the scene. *"What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are. You are the holy one from God."*

This gives us some mighty important and life-saving insight into how we are to deal with the unclean spirits and difficulties in our lives. As we acknowledge, recognize and live with the horrible perils of life, our ultimate focus is to be on Jesus!!! For Jesus alone is the only one who can overcome any and all difficulties!!!

We need to shift the focus of our attention from our problems too our Messiah!!! There is no other way!!! Jesus is the One Who has the authority to free us and to bring us into a relationship with God!!!

The Word for us today

To persons whose lives are like a horror movie, cluttered by tragedy and every day cares—Jesus proclaims that we are all fashioned in God's image; we are all the jewel of God's creation!!!

To those struggling with the trials of life, Jesus proclaims that God's love is the anchor that can allow us to stand against the dangers that come at us both from within and without!!!

Jesus provides a relationship with God that pushes back our darkness—that pushes back our secret fears—and that frees us to walk boldly, knowing that every single day of our life is more than worth the effort, in spite of its dangers!!!

And that is Good News!!! That is really, really Good News!!! Because of Jesus we can trust that God's love for us is so great that life's demons and dangers never have the last word!!!

Medical researchers at Johns Hopkins University have now identified a medical condition called stress cardio-myo-pathy. This new research shows that tragic or shocking life events—including the loss of a loved one, a car accident, armed robbery, a fierce argument—can cause a sudden surge in adrenaline that weakens heart muscles. According to the lead author of the study, "It looks like a heart attack...but when you go to the lab, the arteries have no blockages." The patients had very few or none of the typical risk factors for heart disease. It was their emotional pain which stunned their hearts, caused the chest pain, the fluid in the lungs, the shortness of breath and as much danger as an ordinary heart attack!!!

Again, we cannot get through this life unless our ultimate focus is on Jesus!!! And it is only through a relationship with Christ that we can shift our focus from our problems to our Savior!!!

Do we feel that we can trust God that much? Are we willing to focus on Christ rather than on our problems? Do we want to live—really, really live? Or are we more comfortable cowering in a corner, allowing the invading outside forces to control us and destroy us?

What does Jesus want?

I can tell you what Jesus wants from us. Jesus wants a relationship with Him that is based on trust. Jesus wants us to be free from the bondage and slavery to the things which seek to undo us! Jesus wants our lives to be productive and useful.

Jesus wants us to stop focusing so much on self, and focus on God and God's love...and then on our neighbors as well!!!

To put it simply, Jesus wants us to "let go and let God." Jesus has come to this earth, in the form of a human being...Jesus has joined in a struggle against the forces of evil and destruction. And for those whose lives have become a total nightmare, Jesus has come to be the human bridge across which people can climb to safety. And in the process, Jesus Himself paid with His own life the price for this saving authority!

The demons had their final shriek at Jesus as He hung on the Cross, challenging and mocking for the last time the validity of His authority. On the Cross Jesus completed the healing work which He started in Mark Chapter 1, in that synagogue, in a little town called Capernaum.

And through faith in Christ...and only through faith in Christ...are we provided with the Holy Spirit who gives us power to overcome the unclean spirits which seek to haunt and destroy us.

There's a story about a conversation between an African convert to Christianity and a missionary visiting his village. One day as the two men were walking through the jungles outside the village, the man from Africa was reflecting on the radical change in his life since he had learned to trust in Jesus.

"These jungles," he said, "are very dark. Most of my life I have walked through them in fear of the demons I was taught lived here. I no longer walk in fear on these paths. There may be demons or there may not be demons, but I am Christ's and that is enough!" We all need to have that kind of trust!!!

Because the reality is that we all have our own jungles in life to walk through, whether they are covered with vines or paved with concrete. And there may or may not be demons on those paths. But we are Christ's, and that is enough!

To believe this is the key to salvation—the key to Christianity in a world that, despite its panic and despair, has already been claimed by the loving authority of God in Christ Jesus!!!

Do you believe this?

Amen.