

Mark 1:21-45

On the Sabbath, when Jesus entered the synagogue what did He do (v. 21). He taught the people. Typically, the synagogue had no pastors/rabbis or set teachers assigned. Customarily the leaders of a local synagogue would invite recognized visiting teachers to speak to the congregation usually on the Scripture reading for that day. Jesus was given the opportunity to speak to the Jewish people on this day. His primary mission on earth was to teach the people because they had such a great need to understand.....Not unlike our world today which likewise has such a great need to understand the truth surrounding the Gospel message.

How did the crowd react to His teaching (v. 22)? They were amazed at his teaching. They had never heard anyone teach quite like this before. The people realized that Jesus was no ordinary teacher.

What was the difference between the teaching of Jesus and that of the scribes/teachers of the law?

The scribes of Jesus' day rarely taught boldly. They would simply quote and then interpret a variety of Rabbis. Jesus taught with boldness. Jesus taught with authority because He really had authority. Jesus proclaimed revelation directly from God rather than interpreting other Rabbi's.

What observations can you make about Jesus' encounter with the demon-possessed man (vv. 23-24)? The man cried out, but it was really the demon speaking through him. The demon recognized Jesus, and it knew about His mission. The demon was afraid of Jesus and clearly recognized Jesus as its Judge.

Jesus did not need a magical formula or incantation to exorcize this demon, as other exorcists of His day did. He simply ordered it to be quiet and to leave the man. Jesus' authority over demons showed that He had power as God's Servant to destroy the devil and his agents.¹

Why did Jesus tell the demon possessed man to be quiet (v. 25)? After all, the demon was just telling the truth about who Jesus was (v. 34 and 3:11; 5:7). Jesus was determined to maintain control of when and how and to whom He revealed His identity. It was a timing issue, based on God the Father's sovereign plan, to reveal to the world just who He was. A timing issue based on a three-year journey to the Cross. If the Jews realized exactly who Jesus was, then the crest of popular support that Jesus had ridden the day before, could threaten to carry Him into a position of political leadership that might have washed out the Cross.² At the same time, the Romans might have concluded that He was mobilizing an insurrection to overthrow the government and could have arrested Him prematurely.³ Jesus didn't want His identity announced prematurely and certainly not by Satan or his agents.

When Jesus did the miracle of driving out the demon, how did the people react (vv. 27-28)? The crowd was amazed. People all over that part of Galilee heard about Jesus. Word about Him spread like wildfire.

Note the two healings of vv. 29-34. How was Jesus regarded by the people at this point? The crowd saw Him as a miracle worker. They were bringing their sick to be healed. There was no curiosity about His Messiahship. They still didn't "get it" which is really not that surprising. For 1500 years they had been expecting a political Messiah; someone who would throw off the Roman oppression and set up His kingdom on earth. Jesus didn't fit their Messianic expectations. They didn't know their Old Testament scriptures (Isaiah 53 e.g.).

Jesus forces healing on no one. He does not seek people out to heal but heals only those who come to him. He initiates a healing only when he takes responsibility for healing on the Sabbath. And Jesus heals freely, with no strings attached. He does not demand that people believe he is the Savior (none do) or even believe in the Jewish God. He does not require a person to be morally good. Jesus does not expect to gain personally from healing, for he never asks anyone he heals to follow him. Usually he orders them, often harshly, to keep quiet or go home. They proclaim or follow on their own, and Jesus does not consider either action a condition for healing.⁴

After preaching and healing in one town, and before heading for another, what did Jesus do (v. 35)? Got up early, got alone with God and prayed. He spent some time in solitude.

He was the Son of God. If anyone didn't need to pray, it was Jesus. Why did He pray? First, Jesus prayed as an example to his followers. He did not do anything independently of the Father. He was totally submissive. He did everything to honor and glorify the Father. Second, when Jesus became man, He took on a human nature in

addition to His divine nature – He was 100% God and 100% man. From His human nature, He needed communion with the Father. He was consciously dependent on His Father for strength and direction for what lay ahead of Him. This passage is in keeping with Mark's emphasis on the true humanity of Jesus.

What is the message or application for us? If the Son of God needs to be alone with the Father, how much more do we? Like Jesus, we need to find a place of solitude. A place to pray....listen....meditate.

What was the attitude of Simon and his companions as they went in search of Jesus (vv. 36-37)? They did not understand that Jesus needed to spend time in prayer. They considered His healing ministry to be the highest priority. Their words implied annoyance as if to say, "There is a great need and opportunity here to heal. Quit wasting your time praying."

What was the emphasis of Jesus' ministry (vv. 38-39)? Preach/teach/proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom of God. And casting out demons. Miracles were a smaller part of His larger mission. He combined preaching and practicing, saying and doing. Miracles served to authenticate His preaching/message.

How would you describe the mental condition of the leper (vv. 40)? He was desperate. The leper had no doubt about Jesus' power. "*If you are willing, you can....*" shows great faith and great awareness on his part. This man experienced a pitiful existence due not only to the physical ravages of the disease but also to ritual uncleanness (Leviticus 13-14) and exclusion from society. Leprosy brought anguish at all levels: physical, mental, social, and religious. It served as an illustration of sin.⁵

How did Jesus respond to the leper and his request (v. 41)? Jesus felt compassion toward the man. He actually touched him which was unheard-of-behavior toward contagious lepers. We are often moved with compassion when we meet sick people, but lepers' appearance was so repulsive that they usually made people feel disgust instead of compassion. Jesus ... touched the untouchable and cured the incurable.⁶

Once Jesus' healing was complete, why did He tell the leper to go show himself to the priests and perform the cleansing ritual (v. 44)? To honor the existing law of God but also to serve as a testimony to the priests that an incurable disease had been cured. Since lepers were never healed, these priests had never conducted this ceremony. They probably had to look it up in Leviticus, the instruction manual for this ceremony, because they didn't know how to do it. When they carried it out for the first time, it would be a strong witness to them that the Messiah was among them....which is exactly what miracles are designed to do.....point to and glorify God.

What were the results of the leper's disobedient response to Jesus' command (v. 45)? His disobedience frustrated Jesus' work rather than advancing it. Jesus needed to minister to people but the leper's action forced Him to now spend more time in uninhabited, solitary places. Jesus could no longer openly enter a town. The leper's disobedience did not thwart God's plan but only created complications. And yet the Galileans still kept seeking Jesus out (v. 45).

J. Vernon McGee quoted a preacher who commented on this leper's response: "The Lord told him not to tell anybody and he told everybody. He tells us to tell everybody and we tell nobody."

We should learn some important spiritual lessons from this chapter. To begin with, if the Son of God came as a servant, then being a servant is the highest of all callings. We are never more like the Lord Jesus than when we are serving others. Finally, if you are going to be a servant, be sure you have compassion; because people will come to you for help and rarely ask if it is convenient!⁷

¹ Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on Mark, 2020 Edition, (published by <http://planobiblechapel.org/soniclight/>), p. 49

² Ibid. p. 55

³ Ibid. p. 49

⁴ Ibid. p. 53

⁵ Grassmick, J. D. (1985). *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament* (p. 111). Wheaton: Victor Books

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on Mark, 2020 Edition, (published by <http://planobiblechapel.org/soniclight/>), p. 58