

Jesus Drives Out an Evil Spirit, Heals Many, Prays Alone and Heals a Man with Leprosy

Introduction

- Last week started to get to grips with Mark's gospel
 - and incidentally, Housegroups resume this week and will be looking at Mark's gospel
 - repentance, discipleship, mission
 - all centred round Jesus - his call, him we follow, him we share
- So who is this Jesus...? Tell me more!!

Exposition

(21) They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach.

- Sabbath - Jesus at worship; in Father's presence.
 - this connects directly with v.35, where Jesus spent time alone in the Father's presence
 - his whole ministry was rooted in relationship with God!
 - he loved his Father, he delighted to spend time (with others and alone) with God
- No matter how many times we have heard that, we need to hear it again!!

(22) The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law.

- Authority - of the first hand encounter, not second hand.
 - an authority on something - someone who really knows their stuff;
 - from God, not from man;
 - where does our authority come from, in life, in the church?

(23, 24) 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!",

- When the Spirit is at work, opposition arises.
 - has been my experience over the years
 - we shouldn't be surprised;
 - but it should drive us to our knees!
- Why did evil spirit oppose in this way?
 - anything to disrupt or divert God's work.
 - Jesus was allowing people to make up their own minds; evil spirit forced the issue, not allowing people the space to respond to Jesus as he really was, and not as their preconceptions ordained.
- And so its not a surprise when spiritual opposition can come from within:
 - within the synagogue, within the church;
 - something good - identification of Jesus as Holy One of God - used for evil!
- Discernment called for!

(25) "Be quiet!" said Jesus sternly. "Come out of him!"

- Authority not just of superior knowledge, but authority of command.
 - core Christian confession is: "Jesus is Lord!"

(26) The evil spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek.

- evil spirit had to obey;
- but sometimes cleansing, dealing with sin can be painful; that's why we avoid engaging in process of "mortification of the flesh"; often have to give up things that are precious.
- But the result is healing, restoration, new life:
 - compare with the miracle of freedom from an addiction;
 - Christian detox centres have best success rates!

- *Story: after church, do you believe water into wine story? "I'm only a beginner, and I don't know about water into wine, but I do know about beer into groceries and betting slips into shoes for the kids."*

(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 evil spirits and they obey him."

- Amazement - but distinguish that from trust.
 - warning here that we don't just spectate, but trust and obey Jesus ourselves.

(28) News about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee.

- Can't help but talk about Jesus if he is making a difference in our lives.
 - cf couple who are growing in their faith, find that it just comes up - they know their neighbours well enough to be asking what they do on a Sunday morning...

(29, 30) As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew. Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told Jesus about her.

- Natural to tell Jesus about people in trouble:
 - instinctive for those who have actually come to Christ;
 - but worth focusing too - prayer meeting, personal prayer times.

(31) So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them.

- Jesus always answers our cries to him - whether with a "no" or a "yes", or a "later"
 - he always responds.
 - notice: her response to healing is to *serve*;
 - humble, heartfelt, grateful, self-giving.

(32) That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed.

- Natural reaction to the days events.

(33, 34) The whole town gathered at the door, and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was.

- People are drawn - by Jesus, by healing, by power, by curiosity, nosiness!
- Notice: Jesus heals many, not all; he casts out many demons, not all.
 - was it weakness on Jesus part? Surely not!
 - was it some lack of faith on part of some? Perhaps
 - most likely it simply matches the fact that *God's ways are not our ways*. Today we pray for healing - often not as much as we should - but not all are healed. Some are.
- Is God's power too small to heal today? Surely not! (*Derek; Motherwell*)
- Is every failure down to lack of faith? Faith size of mustard seed can move mountains; sometimes those who would confess to little faith at the time are healed - doesn't seem to correlate.
- *Paul: (2 Cor 12:9) But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.*
- Always God knows best - in a big picture we can't even begin to comprehend:
 - and that "best" may not be best in the categories we can come up with this side of eternity; but he will carry us through.

(35) Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.

- Time alone as well as time with others marked Jesus relationship with God
 - does it ours?
 - Quiet Times, personal bible study & prayer, reflection on the day (ahead or past)
 - *quiet, time, & effort!!*

(36, 37) Simon and his companions went to look for him, and when they found him, they exclaimed: "Everyone is looking for you!"

- Even the brief public flurry has created a set of expectations of who Jesus is and what he will do...

(38) Jesus replied, "Let us go somewhere else - to the nearby villages - so I can preach there also. That is why I have come."

- A set of expectations that Jesus is not prepared to be swallowed up by:
 - because they need to get to know who he really is, not who they think he is!

(39) So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.

- Summary verse, capturing essence of what we've worked through so far
- The chapter finishes with another little incident that reveals again some more of who Jesus is:
 - Mark's gospel is the story of God's breaking-in to earthly reality, the story of the demonstration of God's love expressed through Jesus
 - and this little incident, in some ways so typical of Jesus at work during his ministry, helps us see why he came, what he did, what intention underlay his whole life.

(40) A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, "If you are willing, you can make me clean."

- Jesus had healed others - why question of willingness?
 - leprosy - skin disease, slow, wasting, infectious, scary!
 - outcasts from society, and also outcasts from community of faith (ceremonially unclean, couldn't come to worship in Temple...)
- No one, least of all an upright teacher, rabbi would want to take himself out of contact with God by touching, having anything to do with such a person...

(41) Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!"

- But something had drawn that leper to Jesus nonetheless:
 - and Jesus response confirmed that he'd come to the right place!
 - for Jesus not only felt compassion, he demonstrated it - he touched the leper (making himself unclean!)
 - *what did it feel like for the leper to be touched for first time in years?*
- Jesus has that same compassion, love for all those who are hurting today:
 - maybe we don't feel very valuable; low self-esteem? Maybe we feel dirty, our failures dragging us down - whether of performance, or of character...
 - he loves us!! He loves you!! He came to make you clean, to reach out to you and touch you!

(42) Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cured.

- No doubt over Jesus ability!
- That same truth applies equally to our need for cleansing:
 - immediately we trust in Jesus, our old life is gone and a new one begins.
 - there is no doubt, or question mark hanging over us; we are clean, we are healed, we are newly created!
 - commentary: "whenever the compassionate Christ and the yearning sinner meet, there then comes instantaneous and complete healing."

(43) Jesus sent him away at once with a strong warning: (44) "See that you don't tell this to anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them."

- Another strange, strong warning!
 - (remember told demons to shut up?)
- Here it would seem Jesus' intention is to head-off anyone who would seek to follow him for their own selfish gain, without a changed heart:

- Jesus heals bodies... I want a healed body... I'll follow Jesus!
- Jesus saw that **unwise testimony of physical healing** would draw people to him from wrong motives;
- one of the paradoxes of Jesus ministry - same Jesus who had compassion on crowd when they were hungry tells many of the same people off for following him in the hope of getting more free bread!
- Jesus came to **proclaim the kingdom**, to inaugurate that new kingdom:
 - part of that involved demonstrating God's love for the **whole person**, body as well as mind and spirit;
 - but **healing alone wouldn't cut it - only his own death and resurrection, and disciples who understood and would pass on that message would;**
 - and so his teaching ministry, his time with the disciples, as well the healings had to be **part of the mix**: unbalanced, his work would fail.
 - healings alone won't save our souls!

(45) Instead he went out and began to talk freely, spreading the news. As a result, Jesus could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside in lonely places. Yet the people still came to him from everywhere.

- Surely telling of what Jesus has done is good?
- But man's actions limited Jesus on-going ministry, and possibly also drew attention to himself.
 - careful that we don't go beyond what our Lord has said!
 - the clear message is that disobedience, even with good intentions, can hamper God's work - Jesus no longer able to exercise his ministry in the way he'd planned.
 - careful of similar dangers in our Christian walk or witness: eg not telling someone of the gospel (**disobedience**) in case we upset them (**good intentions**)!

Conclusion

- A number of facets of Jesus characters and ministry emerge:

Relationship with God

- Jesus walked in close fellowship with his Father
- and invites us to share that intimacy, through knowing him

Healing with Compassion

- Jesus heals the whole person - body, mind, spirit
- people come to Jesus in need, and he responds
- not merely out of duty, but out of a deeply loving compassion

Authority

- Jesus has authority:
 - recognised in his teaching
 - acknowledged by the enemy
- Confirmed by the healings
 - do we bow the knee, or do we spectate?
 - do we invite others to bow the knee, or do we try and make things easy in the wrong way?

Passing on

- Jesus came to love us, to heal us in the most profound ways.
 - and he left us with the task of telling others about him, passing on that love;
 - to live as he lived, in other words!

Mismatch of Expectations

- Jesus didn't always do or say what was expected of him
- he could upset the apple-cart!
- and he is just as disruptive today, inviting us to change how we live!

- Lets allow our encounter with Jesus to draw us to follow him ever closer!