

MARK 1:21-2 THE LORD IS TWICE AMAZING

Then they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and taught. And they were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

Now there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, saying, "Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!"

But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be quiet, and come out of him!" And when the unclean spirit had convulsed him and cried out with a loud voice, he came out of him.

Then they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, "What is this? What new doctrine is this? For with authority He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him" And immediately His fame spread throughout all the region around Galilee.

"It was the most amazing thing I have ever seen!"—have you ever said that? or heard it? Maybe there was an eagle swooping down out of the sky and snatching a fish as it jumped. Maybe it was your dog getting rolled under a car, then running to you, with no visible harm. The people in today's text were amazed in regard to Jesus, for two different reasons.

Mark's account of the life of Jesus tells nothing about Jesus' birth or youth. Mark goes directly to Jesus at age 30 being baptized by John the Baptist, then in the wilderness for 40 days tempted by Satan, then calling His first disciples at the Sea of Galilee to be "fishers of men." In verse 20, Jesus is already into His ministry; that is, His "service" to God and people. He entered Capernaum a town on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. He returned there many times. Capernaum would become His new "hometown." Interestingly, the name Capernaum means "village of comfort." Jesus brought much comfort to the people of Capernaum. You too have come to "Capernaum" today to hear Jesus and receive comfort from Him.

It was the Sabbath Day, that is, the weekly Jewish "Rest" Day, the seventh day, Saturday, of which God had commanded, "Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy," a day for worship. Jesus went directly to the synagogue. A synagogue was not a gym, or a pool, or a get-away place; literally, it was a "gathering place." The people gathered there for rest—for SPIRITUAL rest—hearing again, from God's Old Testament words, His promise of mercy and love, by which He would rescue them from their sins and the death that comes with it. You have come to our "synagogue," our gathering place, to receive the same rest. God's house of worship is not a place to which you come to do something for God. You come to have God do something for you—to pick you up from the rubble of another week, to brush you off, to announce to you that the sins of this past week or month that weigh down your conscience and disturb your peace are off the books. In the blood/death of His Son—poured out for you and for your sins—you have forgiveness—100% forgiveness from God. What sins did you commit this past week? Likely the same ones from the week before. Although you promised not to do them again, you did. In His Son who died, and then rose in victory over sin and death (for you), you are spared! His gift! Peace and rest for your heart, at the "Capernaum" of comfort, the place of Rest for your hearts and souls. A worship service is not a social gathering, nor a self-help program, nor a responsibility owed to your family. It is a place of rest for sinners. This rest is not to be despised or taken lightly, as if a "get out of jail free" card and you can do whatever you want. Dedicate again your week and life to Him. Serve Him, not mechanically, but from a heart that loves Him for His love for you.

At the synagogue, Jesus taught these sweet, refreshing truths of the Lord's compassion. "Salvation" was His reason for coming to earth as the God-man—the eternal Son of God, also son of Mary. The people were "struck" by His teaching, astonished at His message—forgiveness! This was not what they were hearing from their scribes—Old Testament copyists and experts—whose teaching must have been a hemming and hawing—"we think, doesn't it seem, it could be, we figure that." Jesus knew the points of

God's message and directly spoke them. He spoke with authority. In grasping the Bible, forget about sin-corrupted human logic. Trust the Word of Truth and stand firmly in it, in the faith worked in you by God's Spirit, as you hear that beautiful message. If the Bible says, Arise and be baptized and wash away your sins (Acts 22:16), stand by it. Do not cling to sinful human logic which says that baptism is only a symbolical act. Do not "hold hands" with those who espouse such teaching. Cling to the Truth! I'm not saying that all who hold such teaching will spend eternity in hell. But for you, is such a stand pleasing to God? The devil is a liar and the father of it (John 8:44). Jesus says, "If you abide [stay] in My Word, then are you My disciples indeed; and you shall know the truth, and the Truth shall make you free" (John 8:31-32).

The people were astonished, as if they had been struck/ jolted outside of themselves. Here was real comfort, love, and security, which they sorely needed to approach and stand before God in heaven. Without the news of Jesus' sacrifice for them, there was only "dead and dread." Jesus is comfort for you too!

Jesus was about to amaze them again. At the synagogue there was a man with an unclean spirit, a demon—obviously more than one, because he spoke of himself in the plural "we." Do you wonder, "Have Satan and his demons existed forever?" Not so. Only God—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—is eternal. When God created the all things, He created even the spirit world. "In Him all things were created in heaven and earth, visible and invisible" (Colossians 1:16)—which includes angels. All the spirits were godly, but some rebelled. "The angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day" (Jude 1:6). The devil and his minions have been cast down from heaven. "The great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him" (Revelation 12:9). They strive against God and labor to get God's children to burn.

As do all demons, this demon / unclean spirit knew who Jesus was and what He had come to do. The demon/man called out, "Jesus of Nazareth, the Holy One of God. Let us alone!" The devils "know" Jesus. but do not know Him / honor Him in their "hearts." "Demons also believe and tremble" (James 2:19). This demon wanted to have nothing to do with Jesus and wanted Jesus to have nothing to do with him. The devil and demons still work to lead Christians to have nothing to do with Jesus! He is after you too, like "a roaring lion" (I Peter 5:8). But Jesus has the last word. He came, "That through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil" (Hebrews 2:14). This demon feared Jesus and the eternal chains of hell that awaited. Jesus ordered the demon, "Be quiet" – literally, "Muzzle it!"—and then ordered him out. With a last ditch "rending" of the man and with a "loud voice," the demon came out. All was well, all was quiet. --- The same is true for you. You are safe and free from Satan's clutches—in Jesus!

Why were there so many cases of demon possession at Jesus' time? The devil was going all out, to derail Jesus and God's children any way he could. However, Jesus was and is the victor! See how the tomb is empty and Jesus has risen! --- Is demon possession still around today? Yes--listen to the news! - --- Can a Christian, can you, be demon possessed? Physically only. Consider a woman who had a spirit of crippling in her back for 18 years (Luke 13:10-17). Jesus healed her. When the leaders objected to His healing on the Sabbath, He replied, Do you not free your donkey on the Sabbath and take it to water? "Ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham [a believer!] whom Satan has bound these 18 years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath Day?" Though afflicted by a demon in her body, she was a believer! On the other hand, spiritual possession is not possible for those clinging to Christ. "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. . . . They shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand!" (John 10:27-28).

The crowd was "amazed" a second time. *They were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, "What is this? What new doctrine is this? For with authority He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him."* --- Likewise you. Comfort and "Rest," are here for you at our gathering place. It is the most astonishing thing you will ever "see"—sins forgiven. Death and the devil? OUT!

Amen! So be it!

---Pastor Kanzenbach