1-31-21, The Holy Way

Sermon on Mark 1:21—28

1. Introduction
2. Mark’s message about who Jesus is
3. Jesus is amazing! Everyone is astonished by Jesus
4. Mark drives his story of Jesus by frequently using the phrase “*kai euthus*”, which means “and immediately.” This moves the story forward and drives it toward the cross. Our translation, for whatever reason, leaves out this expression in this passage where it shows up three times. I’ll be adding it back in in parentheses.
5. So far in Mark, John the Baptizer has been introduced, he has baptized Jesus, Jesus has been tempted in the wilderness (but Mark only uses two verses to describe it), Jesus has called Simon, Andrew, James, and John, to follow him, John has been arrested, and Jesus has begun his public ministry in the area of the Sea of Galilee.
6. Capernaum, where the events in this passage take place, is on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee. It is about a day’s journey from Nazareth, where Jesus grew up.
7. Prayer
8. The text
9. (v. 1 & 2) They [Jesus and his disciples] went to Capernaum and [immediately] when the sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught. They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority [as well he might, being God in human skin], and not as the scribes. [The scribes were well known for their intricate, complicated arguments about the word of God. Jesus’ teaching was welcome change.]
10. (v. 23—26) Just then [and immediately] there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit.
11. (v. 24) And he cried out, “What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of Israel.”
12. (v. 25) But Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be silent [literally, “Be muzzled!”] and come out of him!”
13. (v. 26) And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him.
14. (v. 27) They were all amazed, and they kept on asking one another, “What is this! A new teaching—with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.”
15. (v. 28) At once [and immediately] his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee.
16. What shall we take away from this passage this morning?

The first thing I want to talk about is the sense of urgency which Mark brings to his narrative with the words “*kai euthus*,” “and immediately.” Mark’s biography of Jesus drives relentlessly to the cross. God does not want us to be anxious, but I do believe that God wants for us, and the entire church, to be tirelessly on the move.

God’s love for us requires a response, and that response is much more than simply saying, Yes, Lord, I accept.” Our necessary response is to love God and love our neighbor. God is calling on the church to be making a difference today. God is calling us to feed the hungry today. God is calling us to comfort the lonely and the sick today. God is calling us to fight racism today. God is calling us to make a kingdom difference today.

A second point for us to consider is this. The demon in the story today knew exactly who Jesus was. And this is a constant throughout the stories about Jesus. While people might not know who Jesus is, the demons always know.

How well do we know Jesus today? What is our relationship with the preacher from Nazareth? Do we desire to have a closer relationship, to know Jesus better? And, if so, how do we go about that?

My answer is that, if we want to know Jesus better, we need to read his word more and to engage with him in prayer more. Perhaps we can undertake the discipline of reading some part of the Bible every day. Perhaps we can make a choice to read through the Psalms or the Gospels multiple times this year. Perhaps we can begin a Bible study. Or perhaps we can join an ongoing Bible study. It’s good for us to study Gods word to us.

And perhaps we can set aside additional times during the day for prayer. Perhaps we can find five minutes during which we can recite, again and again, a breath prayer like, “Lord Jesus Christ, draw me nearer to you.” Perhaps we can set aside a longer period of time, once or twice a week, in which we simply sit in Jesus’ presence and listen.

A third lesson I think we can take away from this passage is this: Jesus is amazing! Do we understand what an amazing thing it is that God came into the world and into human history? Are we awestruck in knowing that Jesus willingly submitted to the humiliation and the agony of the cross simply because he loves you and me that much? Do we even begin to grasp the enormity of what God’s love for us means?

My dear sisters and brothers, here is my prayer for myself and for you: I pray that we will fall in love with Jesus a little more every single day. I pray that we will comprehend the transformation that Jesus is working in us every single day. I pray that we will recognize that God is calling us to the ministry of reconciliation and peacemaking every single day. I pray that we will have eyes that see the pain and the despair that is in the world, and I pray that God will give us hearts that cannot rest until we have engaged in relieving that pain and replacing despair with hope. I pray that the love of God in Jesus, the Christ, will illuminate us in such a way that it cannot possibly be hidden from a world that desperately is seeking light.

My friends, my beloved, are you ready to join me in that prayer? Are you ready to become something new and beautiful and glorious? Are you prepared to once again, give yourself, mind, body, soul, and strength to that preacher from up in the Galilee? May it be so. Amen