

“The Compassionate Care of the Powerful Messiah”

Series: Jesus and His Gospel: Studies in Mark – Part 4

Mark 1:29-34

Introduction: Take your Bibles and turn to Mark 1, Mark chapter 1.

When we left Mark’s account of Jesus’ life last week Jesus had just cast a demon out of man who had verbally confronted him as he was teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum. His teaching on this particular Sabbath day had arrested the amazement of the crowd as they were confronted with his incomparable authority. You’ll remember that He taught in ways that did not just convey what he thought to be true about a certain text of Scripture – like the Scribes did – but rather he taught as the one who had written those Scriptures and who had the authority to expound their meaning and implications for life. In the midst of this authoritative teaching this demon possessed man cried out and confronted the unblemished Holy One of God. Jesus quickly rebuked the demon and demanded silence and then cast him out of the man. The response of those in the synagogue on that Sabbath was a new level of astonishment. Not only did this Jesus of Nazareth teach with incomparable authority, but he also commanded the evil spirits and they obeyed Him. And now in our text for this morning we will see what happens on the rest of this Sabbath day in Capernaum. Let’s read 21-34.

The incomparably authoritative Jesus leaves the synagogue and heads to the house of Simon and Andrew with James and John coming too. Jesus has already made Capernaum his base of operations for his ministry in the region of Galilee, and it is quite possible that the house of Simon and Andrew is what Jesus considers to be his home during this period of ministry. And after making known his authority through his teaching and his casting out of a demon, the 5 of them head to Simon’s house. Remember that the Sabbath day is to be kept holy by the commands of the Mosaic Law and so they were to not work. Not only were they not to work, but the experts of the Law had developed quite a number of things they were not to do on a Sabbath so as to keep them far from breaking the Law of Moses at all. And yet, as we just read, this Sabbath day was anything but ordinary. As they return from Sabbath service at the synagogue they are confronted with news of Peter’s mother-in-law being sick with what Luke calls a great fever. Jesus proceeds to heal her and she proves the effectiveness of the miracle by immediately serving the others in the house. The individual account of Jesus healing the demon possessed man in the synagogue and the individual account of Jesus healing Simon’s mother-in-law lead the way to the whole town gathering outside Simon’s door after the sun had set and the Sabbath was over. They had seen and heard of this Jesus who could cast out a demon and who could heal a woman with a great fever and so they brought all of their sick and all of their suffering to Jesus. And we are told that Jesus heals them all. There is much to chew on in this passage, but let’s focus for a few minutes on Jesus. What kind of a man is this Jesus? What kind

of a Messiah is this Jesus? What kind of a Lord is this Jesus whom we now serve? Well, this Jesus has complete authority. We saw this authority displayed in unique ways in the synagogue last week, but now let's see this authority displayed in other settings.

I. Jesus Has Complete Authority

a. Authority recognized by the disciples – vs. 29-31

- i. Notice that his authority is recognized by the disciples. They return with him to Simon's house after the services at the synagogue and after seeing Jesus cast out the demon by simply speaking authoritative words, and after listening to him teach with incomparable authority these men know that most certainly he has authority to do something about Simon's ill mother-in-law. They immediately bring the news to him and inherent in that statement is that they brought it to Jesus because they were convinced He could do something about it.
- ii. Now Jesus' authority is not made authoritative simply because they recognize him as having authority. So it is not in any way like they are vesting him with authority in this account – like we do when we recognize someone through a popular vote that we want them to be our leader and carry authority. Jesus does not get authority by the disciples recognizing him as authoritative. He was already full of incomparable authority and they have just seen a wondrous glimpse of that authority through the casting out of the demon in the synagogue. How they respond to the news that Simon's mother-in-law has a great fever proves that they are convinced of Jesus' complete authority. Certainly if he can cast out a demon with words, then he can heal a woman of a fever.

b. Authority recognized by everyone – vs. 32-34

- i. This authority was also recognized by everyone else in the town. The news of the demon being cast out and of the fever being healed spread throughout Capernaum and the common man and woman of this very common town realized that this Jesus of Nazareth is no normal teacher or prophet. This man has unique and unrivaled authority over spiritual and physical matters. Most certainly there was not perfect knowledge of the extent of Jesus' authority and there was not perfect faith in Jesus' work, but they most certainly knew he was unique. And so, when the sun finally sets and the Sabbath rest is over, the townspeople gather their sick and suffering and bring them to Jesus. They recognize that this man has authority unlike any other teacher they know.

c. Authority over physical problems – vs. 30-34

- i. This complete authority of Jesus is not just recognized by the disciples and the greater crowd, but it is also evidenced by his healing of physical problems. He had already evidenced his unique authority over the unclean

spirits earlier in the day, and now he heals Simon's mother-in-law of her fever and everyone from the city who is brought to him that night. In other words, the hospital in Capernaum is empty. There are no sick people left when you get to the end of this day. Jesus has exercised complete authority over all disease in the town. There is no physical malady that has proven too tough or too ornery for Him.

- ii. Now, in verse 34 it says that he healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons. This does not mean that there were also some that he did not heal and cast out. Rather, it is a general statement by Mark that the many who came were healed. We know this to be true especially by looking at the parallel accounts in Matthew and Luke which both make clear that Jesus healed all who were sick and cast out every demon. So, there is no disease too hard for Jesus. He proves to have complete authority over physical problems.
 - iii. Joni Erackson Tada has been a quadriplegic for 46 years and has written several books on suffering in the life of the Christian. She tells the story of how early in her quadriplegia she and her sister went to a Kathryn Kuhlman healing service. Kathryn Kuhlman was like the Benny Hinn of those days. And they got to the event early only to be escorted to the wheelchair section. As the service progressed they saw Kuhlman doing something on the far end of the big room – as far away from the wheelchair section as possible. Was she healing people over there? She must have been. Joni began to wonder why Kathryn didn't come over to where all the hard cases were, but before she knew it the event was over and she was being ushered out early to get in a long line of wheelchairs waiting for the elevator. It was obvious that this service had been a show put on to bring fame to Kuhlman, not to actually heal the sick and suffering. Haven't you often wondered why these people who claim healing ministries don't go to the local hospitals and clear them out? Well, that is exactly what we read about on this Sabbath day in Capernaum. Jesus heals all who were sick and suffering that were brought to him that night. No case is too difficult for him. He has complete authority!
- d. Authority over spiritual problems – vs. 32-34
- i. He also proves himself to be one who has complete authority over spiritual problems. We have seen this in one case with the man in the synagogue, but now in verses 32-34 we see Jesus confronted by many who are possessed and oppressed by demons. In the face of the demonized the text tells us that Jesus cast these demons out. No one demon proved to be too powerful or too mighty for Jesus. He had complete authority over the spiritual problems that confronted him in Capernaum.

- ii. Not only did Jesus have the authority to cast them out of those they were possessing and oppressing, but he also had the authority to keep them quiet. Mark says that Jesus would not permit them to speak because they knew who he was. Luke is a bit more specific in that he tells us that these demons were confessing him to be the Son of God as they were cast out and Jesus responds by not permitting them to talk because they knew that He was the Messiah. But this seems kind of counterintuitive doesn't it? Jesus was the Messiah and he was indeed coming to the Earth to reveal God to men and to redeem mankind. The Kingdom of God was at hand in the sense that the Messiah was right before them performing miracles and teaching with authority. So, why would Jesus not want that message spread? Well, the simple answer is that he does want that message spread but he wants it spread in a certain way and by certain people. Just because the demons know that He is the Son of God and that he is therefore the Messiah does not mean that they will communicate this truth in the way it needs to be communicated. After all, demons are opponents of the truth and of righteousness. You would not entrust the most precious of messages to your vilest of opponents! And so Jesus here commands them to be silent and to not speak of his person or his work. What we must not miss though is that Jesus has the authority to do this. They must obey Him because He has complete authority not just over the physical realm, but also over the spiritual realm.
- iii. Last week we drew attention to the prominence of demonic work in Mark's Gospel. We saw that about a quarter of Jesus' individual miraculous works involve the casting out of demons. Just here in Mark one, we have been confronted with a demon possessed man in the synagogue, and now in verse 32 we are told that many demon possessed people from Capernaum were brought to Jesus. This confronts us with some questions about demon possession and demonic activity. Where do these demons come from and why are they oppressing and possessing people? Why does there seem to be so much demonic activity during the time of Jesus' ministry? What are the signs of demon possession and oppression? How do you know if someone is possessed or oppressed by demons? Is every illness or disease or bad thing in the physical world caused by underlying demonic activity?
- iv. Well, the cliff notes version of all of the answers to those questions is that demons are the same thing as the fallen angels that decided to rebel against God when Lucifer decided to rebel against God. We are told that he took a 1/3 of the angels with him in this rebellion and it is these fallen angels that now roam God's physical world. They are enemies of God and they seek in every way to thwart His work and frustrate His plans. Satan

is their Captain and he hates God and commands this army of evil forces to deceive, destroy, and corrupt. They are agents of destruction and death and they wreak havoc and evil through their work. We know that not every disease or problem in the physical world is caused by demonic activity for in our passage Mark distinguishes between simply physical illness and demonic possession. It is hard to know from the text of Scripture how it was determined that someone was demon possessed. Obviously Jesus knew perfectly because Jesus is God and He sees perfectly to know what the real problem is in any situation. But how did the people know? In part they knew by some of the symptoms that were present. So, in the Gospels different demons cause blindness, some deafness, some cause a person to not be able to speak, others, like the legion that possessed the man from the Gerasenes caused psychotic behavior, while others caused epileptic conditions, they often caused the person to inflict pain upon themselves like the boy who would throw himself into the fire or the water. In other words, the symptoms are different, but they were discernible by Christ to be caused by demonic oppression and possession. And from the variety of symptoms we must recognize again that their influence was always destructive and corrupting. These demons are evil, and the possession of mankind is one of their main avenues to accomplishing their evil. In fact, from Luke 11 we find out from Jesus that these demons do not like to be dispossessed. They work out their destructive purposes best when they are possessing a human body. And this was not just the case in Jesus' day, but it also remains true today. We are told clearly in Ephesians 6 that we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, and the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Not every physical problem has a spiritual force of evil behind it, but probably more do than we know or could begin to understand. But I believe the Scriptures make a clear case for the fact that believers cannot be possessed by demons because their bodies are the Temple of the Holy Spirit. However, the oppression of demons and the spiritual warfare of the enemy is a real and dangerous thing of which we are to be well equipped to fight against even in our day and age.

- v. And yet it seems that Jesus faced an immense amount of this work of demons during his earthly ministry. Why is that?
 - 1. Well, we must remember that Jesus had perfect eyes to see and so he confronted these evil forces when he saw them. Certainly if we were given eyes to see like Jesus had we too would perceive the great spiritual struggle going on around us.

2. We also must remember that great works of God never go unchallenged by Satan. In other words, when God is doing something unique and great and glorious, Satan is working overtime to undermine it and destroy it. And so, in Jesus we have God's glorious work of revelation and redemption and so Satan is fiercely opposing this great work of God by sending evil underlings to do his destructive work. This began in the wilderness where Satan tempted Jesus seeking to destroy his holiness, and it continues throughout Jesus' ministry on Earth. And so, in a passage like this when we see Jesus confronted with many who are possessed by demons in a relatively small town we see the overtime work of the forces of evil to counter the glorious work of the Messiah.
3. We also know that Satan is a mimicker of God. He apes God's every move so as to create a shadow reality that will deceive some and pull them away from the ultimate reality. God has taken on flesh in the person of Jesus of Nazareth and so Satan is mimicking that move by possessing mankind and taking over their physical health and their emotional stability and their psychological powers and destroying them. And so in the presence of the God man, Satan takes over men and women as a mimic of God to draw people away from the one True God. It is of interest to note that there is no record in the Old Testament of a demon possessing a human being. We have the evil spirit sent from the Lord that came and tormented Saul in 1 Samuel 16, but we don't have an account of possession by a demon. Therefore throughout the Old Testament we also do not have any recorded exorcisms of demons. What is true in the Old Testament writers though is that they often associate the worship of idols with the worship of demons. So, the main avenue of the forces of evil during the Old Testament days seems to have been the crafting of idolatry among the nations. But then we come to Jesus of Nazareth coming to Earth and Satan now sends his evil hoard to possess mankind and destroy them. The very people Jesus came to save Satan seems Hell bent on destroying.
4. But the glorious truth to remember in this whole conversation is the truth that is the main point we are trying to make. Jesus has complete authority over these forces of evil. This is proven in this text and it is confirmed all throughout Scripture. One passage that is especially encouraging in this vein is Colossians 1:

- a. ¹³ He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. ¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶ For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities-- all things were created through him and for him. ¹⁷ And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. (Col. 1:13-17 ESV)
- 5. No wonder the demon in verse 24 was so concerned about what Jesus was going to do to them. His very existence depended upon this Son of God who had created Him and against whom this demon had rebelled. His every second of existence was dependent upon the One who had complete authority.
- 6. And so we see it confirmed again from these verses that Jesus was the One who possessed complete and unrivaled authority. But coupled with this authority in this text is perfect compassion.

II. Jesus Has Perfect Compassion

a. Compassion for the Common Woman – vs. 30-31

- i. Jesus was filled with and guided by perfect compassion. He knew the plight of mankind under the curse and weight of sin and he was here to deal with that. He knew the depths of their suffering and as Hebrews says, he was tempted at every point like we are. And so we see throughout his ministry a man filled with compassion for those whom he came to serve. And here in this text we see this compassion exhibited to the common woman. It is obvious that Jesus does not just have a public agenda and image to put out there. He is not some faith healer with a set schedule and scheme for how to draw a crowd. He wasn't planning to buy the Coliseum in Rome someday and hold healing and exorcism services so that he could see his name on the marquee. He isn't going to write the latest best seller entitled – "From Capernaum to Jerusalem – How I spread my fame through a fine-tuned healing extravaganza!"
- ii. NO, he is not in this for his own fame and glory to be spread. In fact, he would prefer that the word stay under the lid a little longer than it does. He will even say later in this book that the Son of man did not come to serve, but rather that he came to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. These miracles are not about Jesus. Now, I know that strikes you as blasphemous – and it is if they are taken the wrong way. Everything is about Jesus, and in this passage we see the wondrous glory of Jesus. But in the moment of the miracle, Jesus was not putting his hand on Simon's mother-in-law's head thinking – wow, I wonder how many headlines this

is going to get me. No, rather, he was thinking something like, this lady is in desperate need as she suffers under the weight of disease and my healing of her will show everyone that there is hope of being delivered from all of sin's evils. My healing of this woman will point the hearts of people to the fact that I am indeed their only hope to overcome sin and death and hell. In that sense – this most surely is all about Jesus!

iii. See the compassion in this. If he were indeed out to gain a name for himself and chart a course to be the big show in town he wouldn't have cared twice about some very common woman suffering from a fever. But He does care because He is God. God is love and love is compelled to sacrifice self for the good of others. Being confronted with a need Jesus is compelled by His compassion to heal her.

b. Compassion for the needy crowd – vs. 32-34

i. Not only does his compassion compel the healing of this common woman – the mother-in-law of a local fisherman, but his compassion also compels him to heal every person that comes to him that night. Luke tells us that he put his hand on each one that was sick and healed them of their disease. Just like he had touched Simon's mother-in-law, so Jesus identifies with their plight and personally conquers it through the touch of his hand the words of his mouth. It's as though through his touch he is taking the disease from them and conquering it on the spot. Matthew makes known to us that in this we should understand Jesus to be operating in an Isaiah 53:4 mode in that he is bearing our infirmities and carrying away our illnesses. So, it is obvious that Jesus is that Messiah – that Isaiah 53 Messiah – the one who is filled with compassion as he takes upon himself all the pain and the suffering that we have because of our sin. Jesus is that Messiah who knew no sin himself, but who willingly became sin for us so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. This is compassion – this is Jesus!

III. Conclusion: Jesus' Complete Authority was Expressed with Perfect Compassion

a. And so, what do we learn about Jesus when we put these two things together? So, we have seen that he is the Prophesied Messiah of the Old Testament in that he has complete authority. We also see in this passage that he is obviously the Isaiah 53 Messiah who is filled with compassion as he bears our sin upon himself. So he has complete authority and he has perfect compassion. In our sin dominated hearts these two things do not go together. They are like peanut butter and pickles or fat guys and tutu's – well come to think of it – any human being at all and a tutu! They just don't go together. And this is how we view authority and compassion. Someone who has compassion is not someone who is likely to be in charge. Someone who is in charge is not likely to be someone who is filled with compassion for the plight of others.

- b. Rather, we tend to view our authority as a means for serving our own interests. And so, the president of the company hires and fires based on what he likes and what will serve him best. The supervisor at work demands the reports to be turned in a specific way because it serves him best to have it done that way even though it creates a ton of extra work for everyone under him. The coach hears a player lip off about some decision he made and so he forces the team to run until they are all throwing up. The government official brokers a back room deal that compromises his principles but gets some financial benefit for his district thereby assuring he gets reelected. The parent yells at the child who made a mess on the floor right before the company arrives and demands instant clean up and over the top punishment so as to protect their perfect image with the soon to arrive guests. The husband domineers his wife and demands submission over silly matters just to make sure they both know who is in charge. You see, the list could go on and on and it all points to the fact that we often use our authority to serve ourselves. We see in authority the perfect opportunity to subject those under us for our own personal gain. We exploit authority to make much of us and to gain more authority, and when others oppose us we flex the muscle of our authority and demand submission. Authority and compassion rarely meet in our sin stained hearts.
- c. Now think about Jesus. He was the One who had complete authority. This authority was not something he had to strive after or invent or hope for or clamor after. No, this was his authority fair and square. No one else had authority like Jesus. And yet, with our authority we ask – How can this authority serve me? Jesus looks at his authority, which is true and complete and unending, and he asks – How can I serve others with this authority? And in this we see that Jesus' complete authority was expressed with perfect compassion. Compassion perfectly guided the expression of Jesus' authority. This is not what we do in our sinful hearts. When we have authority it corrupts any compassion that we might have had before. Compassion gets trampled down by authority in the normal human heart. But Jesus' is not the normal human heart. In the heart and head and life of the perfect God-man Jesus of Nazareth – His complete authority is guided by his perfect compassion.
- d. And so this should cause in our hearts awe and wonder at our glorious God. Who is like this Jesus? Who of us if we were vested with such authority would use it to serve others for their own redemption from sin? None of us would. How different and gloriously unique Jesus is!
- e. We all need to be touched by the compassion and authority of Jesus. He used His complete authority as the perfect God-man to lay down his life for you and me on the Cross of Calvary. He took our sin upon himself and bore our grief and carried our sorrows. He was wounded for us, so that we might be healed. And so I ask this morning – do you know the healing touch of Jesus of Nazareth? Have you

realized your sin and seen it as the problem that it is? Have you admitted that you have no hope of overcoming your eternal sin problem? Have you seen that Jesus alone can heal you? Have you understood the hope provided in the Gospel of Jesus Christ? This is truly good news – he took your sin and placed it upon himself on the Cross of Calvary and died in your place. He resurrected himself from the grave and thereby made known that he had paid it all and we can be free. Do you know this salvation – this healing? If you don't – may today be the day of your repentance and belief.

- f. For those of us who have repented and believed in the Gospel and are following after Jesus I say to you that this is what it looks like to follow Jesus. He has led the way for us and set the perfect example. He has allowed his authority to be expressed with perfect compassion. And so to follow Jesus looks like evaluating your areas of authority and seeing how you are exercising and expressing that authority. Are you domineering others for the sake of personal gain? Are you most interested in what you can gain through the relationship in which you have authority? Do you find yourself reacting in pressure situations with anger and fits of rage because things are not going according to your plan? Do you prey upon the weak over whom you have authority demanding respect and obedience?

Conclusion: Oh how different Jesus is from us, and oh how different we must be if we are to be true followers of Christ. He has shown us the path and His grace will allow us to take each step. So follower of Jesus, may God's grace enable you to be filled with compassion for others as you seek to serve others. Let's pray!

¹⁰ And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.

¹¹ To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen. (1Pe 5:10-11 ESV)