

**Scripture Reading: Mark 1:21**

**“21 Then [Jesus & His disciples] went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and taught. 22 And they were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. 23 Now there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, 24 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!" 25 But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be quiet, and come out of him!" 26 And when the unclean spirit had convulsed him and cried out with a loud voice, he came out of him. 27 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." 28 And immediately His fame spread throughout all the region around Galilee. 29 Now as soon as they had come out of the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. 30 But Simon's wife's mother lay sick with a fever, and they told Him about her at once. 31 So He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and immediately the fever left her. And she served them. 32 At evening, when the sun had set, they brought to Him all who were sick and those who were demon-possessed. 33 And the whole city was gathered together at the door. 34 Then He healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; & He did not allow the demons to speak, because they knew Him. 35 Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed. 36 And Simon and those who were with Him searched for Him. 37 When they found Him, they said to Him, "Everyone is looking for You." 38 But [Jesus] said to them, "Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth." 39 And He was preaching in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and casting out demons.”**

## **'Jesus Confronts the Demons'**

**As I continue our short survey of the Gospel According to Mark this year leading up to the Easter season we see Jesus casting out demons and healing the sick: Something we will see often in the three synoptic Gospel accounts of Matthew, Mark and Luke. This morning we will consider the interaction of Jesus with the demons and next week we will see Him as the Great Physician!**

**Mark in his narrative gives us details about three encounters with demons which we will review this morning. I think there is an important and reasonable question that can be asked about these encounters:**

- **Why is there so much demonic activity here in the synoptic Gospels?**

**The simple answer is that it should be no surprise that Satan and his minions focus their efforts to stop the plan of salvation at this critical point in history. Jesus has come to save His people and Satan will do all he can to stop Him.**

- **So, let's step back and look at the big picture.**

**As we will study in detail in the coming months when we begin our study of Genesis, God created the world and made man in His image to fill the earth and take dominion with their godly rule as God's stewards.**

**This plan is disrupted by Adam's rebellion & fall into sin, but in the end the second Adam, Jesus, completes the work that was to be done and we see the glorious garden/city filling the earth and lasting forever at the end of the Book of Revelation.**

**The Bible gives us great detail about man as made in God's image, about sin & death, and about our great salvation that comes through Jesus.**

We also see Satan from the beginning to the end of this story: From his tempting of Eve in the garden to his being cast into the Lake of Fire at the end of revelation. However, we are given very little detail about Satan nor the angels who rebelled with him. We are not told about their creation, none of the details about their fall from grace, other than it being a result of pride and even very little about the nature of their being.

- What we do know is that Satan and his fellow fallen angels are real and that we must take them very seriously even today.
- The greatest temptation in our modern age is to simply ignore them or to even doubt their existence.

If we have eyes to see and ears to hear, we know that the Bible clearly tells us about them and we can see the evidence of their existence in the world around us when we honestly consider the evil we see on all sides. So Satan comes to disrupt things in the garden and Adam joins in his rebellion: Death enters God's good creation and immediately we have God's promise that His love and justice will prevail:

- The Seed of the Woman [Jesus] will crush the head of the seed of the Serpent [Satan].

In the early generations of man we see the utter wickedness of his fall where within just nine generations God brings His judgment in a world-wide flood because of man's wickedness. From that point forward we have God's promise that He will not destroy the earth again and the Holy Spirit restrains the sin of man.

- God soon calls out Abraham to be the man through whom He will bless all the nations of the earth.

From the Book of Job we know that Satan continued to have access to God in heaven and whatever power on earth God was willing to grant him. Until the time of Jesus, Satan was allowed to deceive all the nations of the earth save one, and we see discussion and accounts of evil spirits throughout the Old Testament.

- At His appointed time Jesus comes as the seed of the woman who will crush the head of Satan and save His people from their sins.

When we see this flow of history it should not surprise us when Satan immediately tempts Jesus in the wilderness just as he did Eve in the Garden. He even has all the nations of the earth who have been under his sway to offer as part of the bargain.

- Where Eve was deceived in the midst of great plenty in the garden; Jesus holds fast to the Word of God in the midst of hunger & beasts in the wilderness. *[what a great picture of why we must trust Jesus for our salvation rather than man!]*

It should also come as no surprise that a great host of Satan's demons are now present when Jesus comes, right there in the midst of God's chosen people, as they attempt to disrupt God's great plan of salvation. It is no accident that the first demon that Jesus encounters in Mark's account is found in the Synagogue! The last desperate act by Satan was to fill Judas so he would betray Jesus:

- A betrayal that sends Jesus to the cross where His great victory is won!

Satan & his fallen angels are defeated & cast out of heaven. The Spirit is poured out at Pentecost & now rather than just restraining the sin of man He begins to bring glory to the Son by filling the earth with His Kingdom as we learned at length in the Book of Acts.

We know from the Revelation given to John that Satan has now been bound so that he can no longer deceive the nations and that they will now all be made subject to Jesus.

It is important to note that while Satan is bound his demons are not: This is why we continue to see their activity in the Book of Acts & down through history.

Satan will be released at the end of time for a final rebellion and then he, along with all the forces of death and hell, will be cast into the Lake of fire for all eternity.

**So with all that in mind we come to our first reading in Mark: Again where did we find the demon?**

**Right in the midst of the synagogue. Right in the midst of God's people.**

**We are quickly reminded that an intellectual understanding of who Jesus is does not in & of itself bring salvation. Listen again to what the demon said to Jesus: "'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!'"**

**It did this demon no good to 'know' that Jesus was the eternal Son of God! Just as it did the religious leaders of that day who had hardened their hearts against God's truth, no good to know that Jesus had risen from the dead... Which they were told by the soldiers who were eye-witnesses!**

**James gives us the same lesson when he argues that we must have a lively faith, telling the skeptics: "You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe--and tremble!"**

- **Not only does this demon know who Jesus really is, he knows the end of the story, asking if Jesus has come to destroy them?**

**Such is the nature of hardened rebellion and it should remind us of our dependence on God when it comes to crying out for someone's salvation...**

- **Without the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit no amount of right knowledge will move the heart.**

**The fame of Jesus spreads and He heals many people and casts out demons, but Mark notes that "He did not allow the demons to speak, because they knew Him." I think there are at least two reasons for such a command from Jesus:**

- 1) **First and foremost, it was not yet His appointed time to go to Jerusalem as the great sacrifice for our sins.**
- 2) **And Jesus had no need for the forces of darkness to proclaim He had come as the light of the world!**

**So Satan and his minions were doing all that they could to stop the great salvation that Jesus had come to bring, but it was a fool's errand...**

**The next encounter with the demons comes in Mark chapter 5, where we have one of the most famous accounts: Jesus crosses the sea of Galilee and meets a man with an unclean spirit, 3 who had his dwelling among the tombs. Mark tells us that "no one could bind him, not even with chains, 4 because he had often been bound with shackles and chains. And the chains had been pulled apart by him, and the shackles broken in pieces; neither could anyone tame him. 5 And always, night and day, he was in the mountains and in the tombs, crying out and cutting himself with stones."**

**Mark then tells us "6 When he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and worshiped Him. 7 And he cried out with a loud voice and said, "What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore You by God that You do not torment me."**

**The demon's prostration reminds us of the truth revealed by the Prophets Isaiah & Ezekiel and declared by the Apostle Paul to the Saints at Rome and Philippi where he tells them that "Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, 11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."**

**Worship here by this demon is not what we as those who love God lift up on the Lord's Day...**

- **This worship demonstrates the fact that his knee bowed before Jesus even in the midst of his great rebellion.**

**Paul is very clear: Each and every one of our knees will bow before Jesus, either willingly, as those who know His love and worship Him as the eternal Holy God who saved us from our sins, or as this demon was forced to do as he begged for mercy.**

We learn that this demon was not alone when Jesus asks for his name: "My name is Legion; for we are many." Again they ask for mercy and Jesus agrees to let them depart into a herd of pigs that careen down a hillside and drown. This was very upsetting to the shepherds and town folks, but I am sure it was quite surprising to the disciples as well.

- The spiritual realm is vast AND real, but we are often not aware of their presence...

And it is not just the forces of evil that are often concealed from our sight. There is an account in the life of the Prophet Elisha that reminds us of this: The Prophet is confronting the King of Syria who comes with a mighty army: II Kings 6:15 "And when the servant of the man of God arose early and went out, there was an army, surrounding the city with horses and chariots. And his servant said to him, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?" 16 So he answered, "Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." *[at this point the servant saw only the evil army of men]* 17 "And Elisha prayed, and said, "Jehovah, I pray, open his eyes that he may see." Then Jehovah opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses & chariots of fire all around Elisha.

- How many times in our lives have we faced a crisis where we seem completely overwhelmed, not realizing the support God is giving us?

The final account that Mark shares reminds us that demons are not to be taken lightly. As Jesus returns from the mount of Transfiguration, he finds the other disciples battling a demon they could not cast out...

Mark 9:20 "Then they brought [the boy] to Him. And when he saw Him, immediately the spirit convulsed him, and he fell on the ground and wallowed, foaming at the mouth. 21 So [Jesus] asked his father, "How long has this been happening to him?" And he said, "From childhood. 22 And often he has thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us." 23 Jesus said to him, "If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes." 24 Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!" 25 When Jesus saw that the people came running together, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "Deaf and dumb spirit, I command you, come out of him and enter him no more!" 26 Then the spirit cried out, convulsed him greatly, and came out of him. And he became as one dead, so that many said, "He is dead." 27 But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose. 28 And when He had come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, "Why could we not cast it out?" 29 So He said to them, "This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting."

This account reminds us of the power that these dark forces have! We see this kind of power in the Book of Acts when some Jewish exorcists try to cast out demons without real faith, even using the names of Paul & Jesus: The demons said, Paul we know and Jesus we know, but who are you and proceeded to viciously attack them.

- AND we must remember that these forces remain with us today!  
*[tell the story of the young girl or missionaries in other lands]*
- Jesus confronted the demons and defeated Satan and it has changed the flow of history!

From the creation to the flood we see Satan and sin dominating all the families of the earth save one which God saves in the Ark.

From the flood to the Incarnation we see all the nations of the earth deceived by Satan, save one and from that nation only the tribe of Judah brings forth God's Son Jesus to save His people from their sins.

- The Old Testament focuses on the faithful remnant and the coming Messiah.

- With the coming of Jesus all things are made new.

Jesus now reigns as the Lord of Lords and King of Kings and Satan is bound.

The parables of Jesus, the Book of Acts and the rest of the Epistles speak of the Kingdom of Jesus filling the earth.

We as the followers of Jesus are commanded to disciple ALL the nations of the earth.

- The New Testament focuses on conquest and filling of the earth with the Kingdom of Jesus.

In closing I want to briefly address the question of whether a Christian could be possessed by a demon today. That depends on what you mean by 'Christian' and to some degree what you mean by possessed.

- We need to remember that many of those from whom Jesus cast out demons were members of God's covenant people.

We are warned about the possible influence of Satan and his minions in the New Testament: James says that in the battle against our own desire to be worldly we must "Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you."

If we don't resist, then obviously we are in danger of some sort of demonic influence.

- Keep your heart right with God in proper submission and there will be no problem.

In the conclusion of his Epistle to the Saints at Ephesus, the Apostle Paul gives them these closing instructions:

" 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places."

- Obviously Paul is telling us that we still have spiritual battles to wage, but we are not to be fearful because he knows that Jesus has won the battle!

He tells the Saints to "Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. 14 Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16 above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; 18 praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints..."

This is how we carry out the command of James to resist the devil:

- We are to make sure that we have on the full armor of God...

We are to know & believe the Gospel which is why we are doing this review of the Gospel According to Mark. We are to be continually in the Word and prayer, knowing that the devil & his minions must flee such a one. All of this does not mean that there will not be times that we are tempted or even times where we let down God's armor and have to deal with the results of one of those fiery darts.

- We may have times where we cry out like that father whose son was tormented, Lord I believe, help Thou my unbelief.

There may be times where we forget that we live in the midst of those heavenly hosts that the prophet revealed to his servant...

**BUT**, if we have looked to Jesus for salvation, we have the promise that He made to the Father that we considered last week: He will lose none of those who are His own!

**Jesus has won the battle, Jesus has saved us from our sins and Jesus will bring us to glory at the final day! In the mean time when we find ourselves beaten down we can turn to the same comfort that Martin Luther found in his darkest hours.**

**The song of response that we will sing this morning was one of his finest efforts to bring music back for the Saints in worship and it is based Psalm 46. A Psalm that Luther often turned to for comfort in those trying times, telling his friend and companion Phillip Melanchthon, ‘come let us read the words of Psalm 46.**

➤ **A Psalm that can bring us great comfort today as well:**

**“God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble.**

**2 Therefore we will not fear, Even though the earth be removed, And though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; 3 Though its waters roar and be troubled, Though the mountains shake with its swelling. Selah 4 There is a river whose streams shall make glad the city of God, The holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High. 5 God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved; God shall help her, just at the break of dawn. 6 The nations raged, the kingdoms were moved; He uttered His voice, the earth melted. 7 Jehovah of hosts is with us; The God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah 8 Come, behold the works of Jehovah, Who has made desolations in the earth. 9 He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in two; He burns the chariot in the fire. 10 Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth! 11 Jehovah of hosts is with us; The God of Jacob is our refuge.**

### **Communion Meditation: Psalm 23**

**“A Psalm of David. The Lord is my shepherd;  
I shall not want. 2 He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. 3 He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake. 4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. 5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over. 6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the Lord Forever.”**