

The First Disciples Are Called

Mark 1:16-20

Jesus Demonstrates His Authority

Mark 1:21-28

Miracles for a Mother and a Multitude

Mark 1:29-34

Therefore Came I Forth

Mark 1:35-39

Rev. Rodney Kleyn

Pastor of Covenant of Grace
Protestant Reformed Church in Spokane, WA
Email: r.kleyn@prca.org

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town and every synagogue of Galilee what happened this first Sabbath in Capernaum. He spoke with authority; He was confronted by the demons and He rebuked them and cast them out. And the people marveled, and they flocked to Him for healing. And over and over Jesus moves on because they come to Him only for His miracles and He will not be diverted from His mission to preach the glad tidings of the gospel and to call people to repentance from their sins.

I want to finish this message by emphasizing and applying that to us, to you, personally. The ministry of the Word should have the same priority in our lives as it did in Jesus' life. Maybe not for most of us as preachers of the gospel, but still the Word and the preaching of the Word should remain central. That means attending to the ministry of the Word in a church where it is faithfully declared and where it is front and center in the church. Where a church does not major on preaching, that is the wrong place to be. A church will have

many faults, there is no perfect church. We have many faults. We are a company of sinners. But there is one thing that is our central task and something that holds us together and that equips us as Christians. That is the preaching of the gospel. And, having the preaching of the gospel central in your life means attendance and participation. That does not mean that you have to get up and preach. But it does mean that you regularly hear and that you prepare to receive the preached word; that you pray for the application of the word in your own life and thinking; that you support the ministry of the word with your prayers and with your finances. It is the truth declared that sets us free. It is the preaching of the gospel that equips us to minister and serve in the church. It is the truth of God that brings us together in our fellowship.

Jesus was a preacher. Let us see the importance that He puts on preaching and let us despise not prophesying.

Amen.

THE REFORMED WITNESS HOUR

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The First Disciples Are Called
Rev. Rodney Kleyn

Dear Radio Friends,

We are looking at the gospel according to Mark. We will be considering Mark 1:16-20:

Now as he walked by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men. And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him. And when he had gone a little farther thence, he saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the ship mending their nets. And straightway he called them: and they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after him.

Now, as we look at these verses, there are two main elements from which we derive instruction. The first is the call to discipleship that He gives to these four. The second is the statement He gives to these disciples: "I will make thee fishers of men."

This brief passage is very instructive for you and me personally as disciples of Jesus Christ. The word "disciples" does not appear here in Mark 1, but it is there in the commandment of Jesus, in verse

17: "Come after me" or "follow me." That is what a disciple is: a follower of Jesus. Now, just as these four were called by Jesus to be His disciples and forsook all to follow Him, so we are called. The call may not be to a full-time ministry; the call may not have such a radical impact on our minds that we have to forsake our occupation and leave our family. Nevertheless, the call to follow Jesus is a call to forsake all and to go after Him.

There are three elements in the call of these four disciples-to-be that I want us to think about that are especially instructive for us. The first is the disciples themselves. Who are they whom Jesus called? Four of them are named here: Peter and Andrew, who were brothers, and their fishing partners, James and John. These four were very ordinary men. They were not rabbis, they were not highly educated, they were not lawyers, but they were fishermen, common laborers and tradesmen. This is what they did for a living. And, besides this, what was true of them all is that they were men of weakness, men with weaknesses and men who were sinners.

Why did Jesus call such

men to do this work? Why did He not just do it Himself? Why call Peter, who is so often proud in his own strength, or James and John, who, when there is no fruit on the gospel in Samaria, want to call fire from heaven to destroy the listeners? Or we can look at all the twelve and see this: Levi, a tax-collector; Simon, a zealot—a former political radical. I think there are three things for us to see here in this. The first is that, for the sake of the glory of God, Jesus is pleased to use weak vessels to communicate the good news of the gospel. So aware of this was the apostle Paul that he says in II Corinthians 4:7: “We have this treasure [that is, the treasure of the gospel] in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.” God is pleased to call ordinary people to be His disciples and to be the instruments to communicate the gospel so that all the glory may go to Him.

Then, looking at these disciples and who they were, we see also this, that no one really qualifies to be a disciple of Jesus. He calls people to be disciples from every walk of life. His saving grace comes to

people young and old, male and female, from every nation and every color. And in this way, we see His grace is indiscriminate. So in the New Testament they had to learn that it was both Gentile and Jew, kings as well as common people. In I Timothy 2, Paul says to Timothy, “I exhort, first of all, that supplication, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men.” Then he says, “for kings and for all that are in authority,” and so on, for this reason: “that God will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” He does not mean there that God will have every last person to be saved, but all kinds of men. And that is what we see here in the call of the disciples.

That means that, whatever your situation or occupation is, Jesus calls you as a disciple to follow Him right where you are. As I said, it may not mean the abandonment of all other occupations, but it does mean the abandonment of all other masters, so that Christ is your master as you are His disciple and follower. If you are a king or a ruler, if you are a painter or a cook, if you are a mother in the home or

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needed prayer, how much more do not *we* need prayer.

At this moment in His ministry, Jesus could have said, “I’m tired, I need sleep, I’m busy, I’ve so much to do.” But, in the midst of the chaos, He pulled away to pray. And His prayer kept Him on task, His prayer gave Him perspective as He consciously walked in God’s will. And, if we look at Jesus’ ministry, we see that His entire ministry was characterized by prayer. In one of the commentaries I perused, there is a whole list of references of when Jesus prayed. I do not have time to read all of them. But here are some of them. Jesus prayed before His baptism, before He called His disciples, before His miracles, before His transfiguration, and in His transfiguration on the Mount, while He was teaching His disciples, at Lazarus’ tomb, during the Last Supper, in the Garden, from the cross, after His resurrection. And, you see, Jesus’ prayer was a part of His ministry. It was His High Priestly office.

And like Jesus, we need to pray. We face mounting pressures and schedules that are

full, and all too often we are too busy for prayer. We go out in our own strength. We live on autopilot. Then we are tempted and weak and we are distracted and selfish because we are not praying.

You see in Jesus here the discipline of His prayer. Martin Luther, who was known as a man of prayer, said this once: “Work from morning until late at night. In fact, I have so much to do that I shall have to spend the first three hours of the day in prayer.” Do we have that kind of discipline in prayer? So we learn from Jesus’ prayers.

Then, third, we have here His public preaching. We have seen already in that statement in verse 38 that His preaching was His priority: “Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth.” This was the will of God for Him, to preach, to be

a preacher. So the next verse says, “And he preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and cast out devils.” And in that verse, Mark summarizes months of the ministry of Jesus in which He repeated in every

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this. He already knew that He must not give in to this temptation of popularity, that He had to fight that. So, He went out to pray. He began the day: "Lord, what about today? Show Me Thy way." And when Peter came with his suggestion, He knew that this is not the way, not that. He did not come just to do miracles, but to teach.

And third, Jesus' praying was intercession. Now, what we see in His prayers of intercession is an amazing selflessness and serving.

What I mean by that is that Jesus did not turn to God in prayer only when He felt that He needed it Himself, but in prayer He always had before Him the glory of God and the salvation and

Jesus did not turn to God in prayer only when He felt that He needed it Himself, but in prayer He always had before Him the glory of God and the salvation and the needs of His people. And the beauty of it is this, that He still, today, makes intercession for us like this.

the needs of His people. We can be sure that this morning Jesus is praying for His newly-called disciples who, the previous day, had received first impressions of His power and His popularity. And He must have interceded for them, that they might learn the priority of His preaching. His intercession included as well prayers for the forgiveness of His people: "Father, forgive

them"; prayers for faith in His audience: He prayed before He taught and did miracles. And one of the most beautiful and somewhat surprising prayers of Jesus is recorded in Luke 22:31, 32, after Peter has boastfully said he would never leave the Lord or deny Him, Jesus says this: "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." Jesus Himself is facing the suffering of the cross, and here He is praying for them: "I've prayed for thee, Peter, that thy faith fail not." He anticipated Peter's temptation. He was already praying for him, for Peter himself would be tempted.

And His prayers would be the power of Peter's sanctification and of Peter's repentance and Peter's restoration. And the beauty of it is this, that He still, today, makes intercession for us like this.

That is what is going on here. Jesus is praying. There are some lessons for our prayer life from Jesus' praying, Jesus' example in praying. If He

a pharmacist or a police officer or a dad—in every occupation, forsake all other masters and follow Christ. Ordinary men.

The second thing that we should notice here as regards discipleship is the call of Jesus. That comes in verse 17 in a very striking way when He says, "Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men." Now, Mark knows as he

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writes this that this is not the first time these men encountered Jesus. If you read the gospel of John, chapter 1, you see that they were there at Jesus' own baptism, almost a year earlier. They became acquainted with Him and they even began to follow Him, so that in John 4 we see that they were with Him as He traveled back to Galilee, from Jerusalem, through Samaria. But what Mark wants to emphasize here in the clearest way is both the demands of discipleship and the power of Jesus as He calls to discipleship. This is a summons. It is clear. Come after Me. He means, Fall in line, follow Me. He means that in a very literal way. They followed Him for years in His public ministry. There is no negotiating here. It is binding. As He said elsewhere, there is no going first to bury the dead

or to sell some land, but come after Me, forsake all.

And the setting here at the Sea of Galilee emphasizes this sovereign aspect of the call of Jesus to discipleship. History tells us that this fishing spot was so popular that, on a typical day, two to three hundred boats

would go out unto the Sea of Galilee. So you can imagine that, on this day,

as they were casting nets and cleaning nets, there was a buzz of activity on the Sea of Galilee in this little village of Capernaum. And Jesus walks along the shore, through all this activity, looking for these four. He picks them out and says to them, "Follow Me." He knew them. And He knew them not just because He had previously met them. He knew them eternally. In love He had picked them out and chosen them to be His, to heed His call and to follow Him. This brings home the effectual call of the gospel that we talked about last week. It is a very important and a very comforting truth for us today. Are you a disciple of Christ? Do you follow Him? Do you daily take up your cross and carry it after Him, dying to self in repentance? Are you one who walks in His steps in obedience to God? If so, that is because He

has come, He has called you, He knew you. He came with the gospel and effectually called you in your heart, by the Spirit, to follow Him.

The third thing you notice here is the impact of this call on these disciples. In verse 18 and in verse 20 it is repeated this way: “And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him.... And straightway...they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after him.” That is discipleship. They were aware of the sacrifice, but they were convinced of the importance of the task to which He called them. So immediately they forsook all and followed Him. You see, God had opened their eyes to see who Jesus was and to see the infinite worth of His kingdom. To this day, no one will forsake the world and take up a cross and follow Jesus but those who see Him as incomparably valuable to everything else. Psalm 73:25: “Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee.” That is the heart of the disciples of Christ.

Have you counted the cost of discipleship? Have you taken up a cross and died to yourself? Do you forsake the world and all other to follow the Savior? Are you willing, come what may, to lay down your life for Him? That is discipleship.

The second thing we learn in this text is from what He says His purpose is for them. He says, “Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men.” Now, before I explain those words, I want to say two things that are really two dangers that we can fall into here. The first is this. Even though all Christians are called to be disciples of Christ, to follow the Master, not all are called to be “fishers of men” in the way that these four disciples are called. What I mean by that is this, that God can call you to be a disciple without calling you into full-time ministry. A Christian must not feel guilty if he or she has some other employment than full-time ministry. So long as what you are doing is not immoral, you can, and you must, serve God in that calling, whatever it is, just as Joseph served the Lord as a slave in Potiphar’s house. That is one thing.

But, second, I want to say this, that even though the work of the ministry of the gospel, that is, the preaching of the gospel, is limited to those who are called and sent by Christ and the church, there is a calling that we all have to be a witness to those who are lost, both in word and in deed. The church cannot do its work of missions and evangelism without members of the church being active in personal witnessing. Yes,

Now, what we must see here is not just the perfect obedience of Jesus to the way that the Father has laid out before Him, the way of suffering; but we should see also here His deep love and commitment to us and to our salvation. I could put it this way: Jesus’ concern for us is not our temporal health and happiness here on the earth. Christ Jesus came into the world to *save sinners*. “I am come that they might have life.” And “this is the Father’s will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing.” That is the beauty of Jesus’ resolve here.

And it is this resolve that explains His private prayers also early on this Sunday morning. Verse 35: “And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.” He crept out quietly, to be away from the multitudes, to be away from the disciples, to be alone with His Father.

There is a lot for us to learn here from the example of Jesus praying. I want to come back to that in just a few minutes. But, first, we must ask this question: Why did Jesus pray? Why did He have to pray? What does it teach us about Him? There is something very intriguing, something very telling, in the fact of His praying. Three things. Dependence upon God,

submission to God, and intercession for us.

Jesus expressed in prayer His dependence on God. Really, there is nothing in all of His life and ministry that demonstrates His complete humanity so much as this, that He prayed. Prayer was His strength. He who lived as God in the flesh and in a constant, continual consciousness of God Himself, and in communion and fellowship with God, He still needed these extended times of prayer. And that is because, in His human nature, He did not know what a day would bring. He was assailed constantly by all kinds of pressures and temptations. And He depended completely on the strength that God supplied by His Spirit. He says in John 5:19: “I can do nothing of myself.” So, first, His praying showed His humanity.

Second, His praying showed His submission. In His prayers, He subjected His own human will to the will of the Father. We know this especially from His prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane as He struggled with the impending suffering of the cross and submitted His will to that of the Father, “not my will but thine be done.” And that really is what is going on here in Mark chapter 1, when Peter comes with the promise of popularity and success. Well, Jesus had already prayed about

in Capernaum. He preaches with authority. But, at the end of that first Sabbath, when the focus and attention of the people have turned away from the words that Jesus had spoken, the authority of His teaching, to amazement at His healing powers and coming for that, He says, it is time for Me to move on. "Therefore came I forth."

Now that expression, Jesus' consciousness of why He came, we find repeated over and over in the New Testament. We can list a number of texts (as many as 30) that use this kind of language. And that explains the work of Jesus as coming from the Father, into the world with a purpose. He has come to destroy the works of the devil (I John 3:8). He has come to give eternal life (John 6:51). He has come to do the will of the Father (John 6:38). He has come to save sinners (I Timothy 1:15). He has come as the light of the world (John 12:36). He has come

to witness to the truth (John 18:37). He has come for judgment (John 9:39). And all of these look to the cross, have as their goal the cross. This is why here at the beginning of His ministry, He preached. Because this would lead to the cross. The repentance and the

This is why here at the beginning of His ministry, He preached. Because this would lead to the cross.

remission of sins that He began to preach, and the coming of the kingdom had its basis in the cross. The offense that His preaching would bring, the offense that was caused among the Jews, was in the end the way that would bring Him to the cross. And this was His obedience that would lead to His rejection and His crucifixion.

You see Jesus emphasizing this to His disciples, teaching them this as their years with Him progress. So that Peter, later on, confesses: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Then we read this, that Jesus began from that time to show how He must suffer and die. And Luke tells us that, in the final months of His life, Jesus set His face like a flint toward Jerusalem. All His life and all His ministry were lived not just in the shadow of the cross but with the goal of the cross before Him. For Jesus, rather than aspiring to popularity, aspired

to rejection and death by crucifixion. That was His resolve. And that is going to be so difficult for the disciples to grasp. In fact, they really will not understand it until the Spirit is poured out on the day of Pentecost. Therefore came I forth.

the official means of grace is the preaching of the gospel. But we must not limit the work of God to the preaching from the pulpit, or use the principle that the preaching is primary for the salvation of sinners as an excuse to do nothing ourselves by way of being a light and a witness to those who are unbelievers. So, really, as we look at this call to be "fishers of men," what we should see is that what Jesus has in view here is what the New Testament church will do collectively, under the direction of the apostles, after His ascension into heaven. "I will make you to become fishers of men."

Fishers of men. What is Jesus talking about? He has in view, very specifically, the work of the preaching of the gospel to which these four and the other apostles will be called. He uses the occupation of the disciples here, something that they are very familiar with, as a metaphor for the preaching of the gospel. What Jesus is saying here, as He uses this metaphor of fishermen (I will make you fishers of men), is that the world is like a sea filled with lost men. And these disciples must go out

with the gospel and cast it forth as a net to catch, to gather, men and women and children into the church of Jesus Christ. "I will make you fishers of men."

Now, we can develop this metaphor a little bit, and it is appropriate that we do that. How will Jesus prepare these men to be "fishers of men"? The disciples, as I said, are very familiar with this work because

We must not use the principle that the preaching is primary for the salvation of sinners as an excuse to do nothing ourselves by way of being a light and a witness to those who are unbelievers.

they were fishermen themselves. A fisherman needs equipment. Jesus is going to equip these men,

He is going to give them the equipment they will need to be fishers of men. You cannot go out and fish without the right equipment. If, for example, you are going to catch king salmon that swim very deep in cold, dark waters, then you are going to need something (some big weight) that will take your line hundreds of feet deep into the water where those king salmon are. Jesus will equip these men, and He will equip the church, to catch men. What will He equip them with? He will equip them with the gospel, the gospel of salvation, which He has just proclaimed in verse 15, the gospel that is the power of God

unto salvation. He will prepare them by giving them the proper equipment.

But these disciples also know that fishermen need a certain expertise. Just as they had learned from their father Zebedee how to fish, so they will have to learn from Jesus what it is to fish for men. Then think of all the hours over the years that they watched and learned from Jesus. I think that it is important for us to see that, right here when He calls them to follow Him, He is not yet calling them to preach the gospel. He speaks about the future: “I will make you to become fishers of men.”

Now He says, “Follow me.” So He is calling them now to be disciples, and He is saying, “I will train you.” I think that teaches us some important things. Before one can be a preacher of the gospel, he must first be a disciple and a follower of Christ. A man who is called to preach must be properly prepared and equipped for the great task of preaching the gospel.

These disciples, familiar as they were with fishing, also understood that a fisherman needs diligence. To catch fish, a fisherman has to give himself to the work. He has to go out in the night, sometimes fish all

night long. He must, as they were doing here, cast out the net. And Jesus is saying here that the work of the ministry will be, for these men, a life calling that will require diligence on their part.

Further, something that is required of a fisherman is patience. As we are fishers of men, engaged in the work of missions and the work of evangelism and in the work of preaching the gospel, we need patience. And that patience is a trust that *God* will draw in with His gospel, that

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but faithfulness and diligence
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God will fill the net. It is *God* who gives the increase. What is required of us is not success

in numbers but faithfulness and diligence in the work. And we wait on Him with patience. Sometimes He gives much and sometimes little.

But there is one more thing that is required of a fisherman and that is this: a fisherman needs a certain optimism and confidence as he does his work. We ought to have the same as we do the work of preaching the gospel. It would be hard to be enthused in fishing if you believed that there were no fish in the lake. And it is important for us to remember that, as long as earth remains, both of these are true. First, that there still

level, as it were. Here was a core group of interested seekers. Jesus had an opportunity here, really, to get something going.

Sadly, this shows how little these disciples understood. This is why Jesus called them to follow Him, so that they could learn these lessons. Here is Peter. He is a leader. He is a planner. He has a plan for Jesus. He is going to be Jesus' campaign manager, we would say. But what they do not realize, and what they must learn, is that Jesus did not come into the world for popularity. Jesus did not come simply to heal the sick and be a miracle-worker. He is not motivated by the whims of the multitudes and popular opinion. But, instead, He is come very consciously to *do the will of His Father*. And that day, though He could have returned to Capernaum and healed many more, He had something more important to do. And He knew why He had come. His purpose was not humanitarian, His purpose was not social, His purpose was not political. So He surprises His disciples in verse 38 when He says to them, “Let us go elsewhere—into the next towns. There they will not know Me. There the crowds will not follow Me for healing or for relief from suffering.” And what explains this answer of Jesus to the disciples is an amazing consciousness of and resolve to do the will of God. He will not be distracted from His task by the

urgent press of the multitudes. He did not come to create this side-show, as it were. But He came to accomplish the purposes of eternal God. This was His priority. As He said in Luke 2, at twelve years old, “I must be about my Father's business.”

As we reflect on this, we ought to ask ourselves about our own priorities and our own motivation. How easily are we not distracted from the task at hand that we have from God by trivial things? Hebrews 12 exhorts us this way, to run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the author and the finisher of our faith. Then it describes His perseverance. And that is what is happening here in Mark, chapter 1. Think Hebrews 12:3: “...who, for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of God.” So, He came to do the will of the Father. That is what He means here. “Therefore came I forth” to do the will of God.

Now, what exactly was the will of God that He came to do? Here in this chapter Jesus expresses that, in contrast to the miracles of healing, the will that the Father has for Him at this point in His ministry is the task of preaching the gospel. This is how He bursts onto the scene in verses 14 and 15. This is how He begins His public ministry

came into the flesh. So, in the whole of Jesus' life, in every moment of His consciousness, He is deeply aware of this, that He has come *from* God with a task, as the Messiah, the Anointed, to fulfill.

Now, we, of course, are not surprised by that because we understand the person and the work of Jesus. We know who He is, we know His identity, and we know why He came. We know why He came in our flesh. But here, in this passage, the statement of Jesus is a very surprising thing for the disciples to hear. This is one of the things that they must learn as they follow Jesus—not only who He is, but why He came.

You remember that, the previous evening, the end of the Sabbath, after it was dark, many had gathered at the door of Peter's house to be healed. People brought their sick and those who were demon-possessed, and Jesus labored late into the night walking among them, touching them, rebuking the demons. And it is not wrong for us to assume that this went on very late into the night. In verse 32, the present tense indicates that they kept on bringing all that were diseased and possessed with demons. And verse 33 says, "the whole city was gathered together at the door." So Jesus labored long into the night. He gets to bed very late.

And now, in verse 35, we read that He arises very early in the morning, with perhaps as few as three or four hours of sleep. And He gets out of town, He beats the crowd. I say that because in verses 36 and 37, this is what Peter describes. He wakes up and he goes to the door of his house and finds that the crowds have gathered again. He says to Jesus, "All men [everyone] seek[s] for thee." And, in verse 36, we see that Peter and the other three disciples (Andrew, James, and John) and perhaps more, go on a hunt for Jesus. "Simon and they that were with him followed after him." The word *followed* here does not mean that they knew where He had gone and that they went with Him, just at a distance behind Him, but it has the idea of pursuing. When Paul is in prison in Rome and none of the Christians knew where he was, in II Timothy 1:17, he says of Onesiphorus, that he "sought me out very diligently and found me." That is the same word here: they sought Him out very diligently, they hunted for Him. Then they found Him, and the interaction that they have with Jesus here shows why they were looking for Him. Their intention, of course, was to bring Him right back to Capernaum where all men, everybody, is waiting for Him. They saw this as an opportunity for Jesus to bring His ministry to the next

remain out there God's elect who must be gathered by the gospel and, second, that we still have the task of preaching the gospel and we can do it with the confidence that God will use that to gather His own. We have sometimes much, sometimes little. But we must be confident as we do this work. Follow Me, He says, and I will make you fishers of men.

I want to finish with the encouragement here for the disciples and for all disciples, for us as well. You see this in the promise of the text. It is a promise that we can easily overlook, but it is there, in the words of Jesus in verse 7: "Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men." Especially there in that word "become." The promise is really twofold. First, it is a promise here, for the disciples personally, of individual growth and change (personal growth). They are fishermen, and He will make them fishers of *men*. You can imagine that they may well have thought, "Who me? A fisher of men?" Certainly that was the mind of the apostle Paul when he said, "I am the least of the apostles and not worthy to be called an apostle," and when he says of himself, "chief of sinners." Jesus says here, with promise, to these disciples, "I am going to make you to become fishers of men."

The Christian life is a life of becoming. Jesus is saying, "I will change you, I will equip you." And for these disciples, that was not merely an intellectual preparation, for the gospel ministry, but it was especially a spiritual preparation in which they had to learn to take up the cross, to deny themselves. They had to see more of their own pride and selfishness. And they had to learn especially what it was to follow Christ, to be a disciple of Christ. They were prepared, in the end, every one of them (except, perhaps, for John), to die by martyrdom for the sake of the gospel. You talk about change! Last week we saw that this is the basic meaning of the gospel call: Repent and believe. Repent is change. Are you being changed as you follow Christ? Are you willing to be humbled, to have your prejudices be defeated, to undergo the painful process of sanctification, of dying to sin and self? This is the Christian life. And Jesus is saying here (it is a promise), "I will change you, I will make you to become what you were not when first I called you." How is God working change in your life? He that has begun a good work in you will perform it to the day of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:6). I will make you to become, He says.

Then, the second thing. He promises to prepare them for a task far greater than any earthly occupation. That is the privilege

of being used as an instrument to bring others to Christ. What a high, noble calling! Proverbs 11:30: "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise." James 5:20: "He which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." Daniel 12:3, "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." Shining in glory.

That is an encouragement.

*And it is a privilege
that we have personally as well.*

I want to close with this. That we stop and realize the wonder, the privilege, of now being called to be instruments of Christ to communicate the saving grace of the gospel to sinners. That is certainly a privilege that I have personally as a preacher of the gospel. With Paul I marvel and say, "Who is sufficient for these things," and with Isaiah, "I am a man of unclean lips," and yet I know that God has been pleased to use my ministry to bring salvation and spiritual growth to His sheep. What a privilege!

But it is not just a *minister's* privilege, it is the *church's* privilege. And not just here in

Spokane, but everywhere. We are able to be involved in the proclamation and spread of the gospel through our missionaries, through the Internet and printed material, through the radio. And God has actually given fruit on that work. What a privilege!

And it is a privilege that we have personally as well. Are you a father in the home who reads the Scripture with your family and goes over the catechism with your children? Are you a mother

who gently leads her children, encouraging them with the promises of God's Word? Are you a member who has prayed for and reached out to a needy person in the congregation? Have you spoken the good news of the gospel and testified of your joy and your hope to an unbeliever? What a privilege, that God is pleased to use us as the funnel through which He pours the good news of the gospel.

Let us never forget that privilege as parents, as Christians, and as the church of Jesus Christ. Follow Me, He says, and I will make you to become fishers of men. Are you following Christ?

Amen.

THE REFORMED WITNESS HOUR

March 28, 2021

No. 4082

Therefore Came I Forth

Rev. Rodney Kleyn

Dear Radio Friends,

The gospel of Mark, chapter 1, and we will begin reading at verse 35, and read through verse 39.

And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.

And Simon and they that were with him followed after him. And when they had found him, they said unto him, All men seek for thee. And he said unto them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth. And he preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and cast out devils.

If there is one thing that stands out in this chapter that records many remarkable events at the beginning of the ministry of Jesus, it is this: that what took priority in the mind and ministry of Jesus was the preaching of the gospel. As we noted before, the Gospels are written to tell us about the person and work of Jesus Christ. And this little section tells us what it is that motivated Jesus, what it is that kept Him going, what it is that caused Him to get up early in the morning and to stay up late in the work that He was doing. We have looked

in this section at one day in the life of Jesus. And what a day it was! What was it that moved Him in His work in the synagogue, in His healing, and now in His prayer? We find the answer to that in the words of Jesus in verse 38: "Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth." That is a very telling statement. He is deeply conscious of the fact that He has come from heaven, that He is sent from God into this world, and that God has given Him a task to perform. "For therefore" He said, "came I forth." As the Messiah, He is the anointed of God, He is appointed by God, and there is nothing that will move Him from the course that He takes and the task that He has been given. That is behind these words. When He says, "Therefore came I forth," He is not merely saying, "I came from Nazareth to Capernaum to do this." He is saying, "I came forth from God, I came forth from heaven with a task."

This is prophesied in the Old Testament in Psalm 40 when it says, "I come to do thy will, O God." And that prophecy is quoted twice in Hebrews 10 as the words that Jesus spoke as He came into the world, as He

partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” Do you see that here? That is the significance of the miracles. This is what Isaiah means when he says He has borne our grief and carried our sorrows. Really, what this is telling us is that all we can see here in the miracles of Jesus, what is on display here, is the grace of God. Not to all that receive them, but as signs. As signs of the saving power and grace of God that affirms the message that Jesus preached. That He is the Messiah, who comes to lay down His life, to deliver His own from sin.

Then, there is really one more thing in these miracles that we must not miss. It is this. That these miracles, in a beautiful way, look forward to the day of perfection and final delivery. On display in the miracles of Jesus here is the power, the same power, with

which He will come on the day of His return, when our bodies will be raised from the grave in perfection. Body and soul will be reunited. And all the dominion of sin will be gone. There will be no more sorrow, pain, or suffering. And that day will be something like this evening in Capernaum as the sun sets. As the sun sets in history, then we, as it seems, will be surrounded by darkness. We will be waiting, as it were, at the door at the end of time and Christ will come through that door. He will lay His hands upon us. And on the multitudes of His people. And they will be perfected. Dead bodies will be raised. All illness will be gone. All sorrow and crying will end. All demons and the devil himself will be expelled to the lake of fire. And we will enjoy fellowship together with our Savior—something like what these disciples must have experienced this Sabbath afternoon in Capernaum. And because of that, we pray, Come, Lord Jesus, yea, come quickly.

Amen.

THE REFORMED WITNESS HOUR

March 14, 2021
No. 4080

Jesus Demonstrates His Authority
Rev. Rodney Kleyn

Dear Radio Friends,

And they went into Capernaum; and straightway on the sabbath day he entered into the synagogue, and taught. And they were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes. And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the unclean spirit had torn him, and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him. And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? what new doctrine is this? for with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him. And immediately his fame spread abroad throughout all the region round about Galilee.

The gospel accounts are not written as biography, or to tell a story, but their purpose is to convince the reader that Jesus of Nazareth, the main subject in the gospel, is the Christ, the Son

of God, who came into the world to save sinners. And the Gospels accomplish that by presenting to us the divine authority of Jesus.

Mark, having introduced us to Jesus, begins in these verses to treat the public ministry of Jesus. There were four disciples who were then being trained to be fishers of men. Jesus enters into the synagogue of Capernaum on the Sabbath.

On this Sabbath, when the people of Capernaum came to the synagogue, they came expecting things to go as normal. A synagogue was a place of assembly where the Scriptures were taught. On a typical Sabbath, after prayers were made and a portion of the Old Testament Scriptures were read, then various teachers, or visiting rabbis, would be invited to comment on the passage that had been read. Now, as a visiting teacher, Jesus is given the podium. The passage says nothing about the content of Jesus' preaching on this Sabbath, but rather describes the effect of and the response to His sermon.

Mark describes that for us here in verses 22 and 27. The two words that he uses here are the words “astonished” and “amazed.” These are very de-

scriptive, vivid words. They tell us that, in His preaching, Jesus did not simply pique the interest of the audience. The idea is that when Jesus spoke, He left His audience in a state of shock and terror—the kind of fear you would have in a near-death experience. That is the word in verse 22. It really has the idea of panic—they panicked when they heard His teaching. They were disturbed by what they heard. There was no one who was sitting there in the audience of Jesus that morning who felt safe. It was disconcerting, it was a troubling experience to them to hear Jesus teach.

We need to ask the question: What was it in Jesus' preaching that did this? And, really, also this: Do *we* have this kind of preaching? I ask the second question, because we should. And I say that here because Jesus is training the disciples to become fishers of men, to do what He is doing. So, what was it about Jesus' preaching that was so fresh, so new, so unique, and so frightening? We will look at what Mark says here about it, and then take some examples of Jesus' teaching. As we do that, we can identify four unique characteristics of Jesus' preaching.

First, He spoke with authority. They were astonished at His doctrine (or teaching), for He taught them as one that

had authority and not as the scribes. The word for authority here speaks of dominion and rule, having the full right of power and privilege over others. It tells us that Jesus spoke with absolute conviction, and that what He taught them came right from His heart. He was sincere. It came, we can say, right from the heart and from the Word of God. That is in contrast here to the scribes, who were mostly Pharisees, and who brought a scholarly and a second-hand theology. They loved to quote from the rabbinical authorities, to tickle the intellect with theological distinctions in moral questions, and they were always making a show of their learning. But they never came with decisiveness or power. They gave the people something to live up to, but they never addressed their hearts. They were protectors of a tradition, but they were not communicators of God's Word.

But when Jesus, after the Word had been read, sat down to preach this Sabbath, it was very different. He never quoted a rabbi or appealed to any authority outside of God's Word. Instead He spoke like the prophets: "Thus saith the Lord," and "It is written." And He said "the Scriptures cannot be broken." He used phrases like this to introduce what He said: "I tell you the truth. I say unto you." He had not come to

Father. In Psalm 119:136 we read: "Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law." Jesus grieved at sin, which is the cause of our suffering.

Third, He fulfills this prophecy in Isaiah by taking on Himself, not only human suffering, but the curse of God. And that is really what Isaiah is talking about when he says, "He has borne our grief and carried our sorrows. The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all," that is, the guilt and the condem-

nation. He will conquer sin. He will overcome the curse. He will defeat all illness. He will cast out Satan. And the way He will do that is by going to the cross and bearing the curse and the wrath of God that we deserve. Already in the miracles at the beginning of His ministry, Jesus is demonstrating the truth of substitution—that He will take our place. And that is where that key verse from Mark 10 fits into the Gospels. He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, to serve. And to do that especially by giving His life a ransom for many. And it is by that that

He delivers us from the power of sin.

That is really the fourth thing that we should see here. We see Christ here not just as a teacher and a healer, but especially as a Savior and a deliverer. He liberates His people here from disease. He sets them free from the effects of the curse. That is how these miracles

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are signs. They look forward to the cross and to our liberty through the cross from the curse of sin and the dominion of sin. He comes to rescue us from

sin and Satan, to rescue us, not just body, but body and soul. He is strong to save, and He shows here by His miracles and the two kinds of miracles, the two presenting conditions: illness and demon-possession. He shows His dominion over the physical and the spiritual realms that have been devastated by sin. He shows that He delivers us in our bodies from the curse, but also in our souls from the dominion of sin.

Now, listen to how that is beautifully described for us in Hebrews 2:14 and 15: "Forasmuch then as the children are

ways. “Himself took our iniquities and bore our sicknesses.”

First of all, we see in these miracles the sympathetic Savior, the One who understands our pain and our agony and our suffering. That is part of what it means in Hebrews, where it says that He was touched with the feeling of our infirmities. In the incarnation He came into our flesh and He suffered with us. Do you not see this sympathy of the Savior displayed in the Gospels

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here in the tender way in which He touches the hand of Peter’s mother and takes her and raises her from the bed? We can look down to verse 41. We read there: “And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him,” talking about a *leper!* That was unheard of—to reach out and touch a leper! Jesus sympathized with the man, He touched him. You think of the compassion that Jesus had for the multitudes when they were hungry (Matt. 15:32), or it is expressed in the figure of a shepherd in Matthew 9:36: “When he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them because they fainted,” they were weary, they were hungry. And it says there, “they were scattered abroad

as sheep having no shepherd.” He is the good Shepherd, who cares for His sheep. He knows their pain. And we see here the pity of the Savior, to reach down into our suffering to help us.

And it is more than just a sympathy for and a suffering with us. It is also this, that He understands the cause of our suffering. He comes to save us, body and soul, from that cause of our suffering, which is sin and the curse.

And that is the second way in which He fulfills that prophecy in Isaiah. He grieves at the destructive power of sin, which is the curse of God upon us. And every time He witnesses human suffering or every time He has to suffer Himself, He is deeply conscious of the curse of God that rests on man and the effects of sin.

So, when Jesus wept at the grave of Lazarus, it was not so much because He had lost a friend, but because He witnessed the effect of sin and death, and He witnessed the suffering that it brings into human existence and to history and to all people, and what especially grieved Him was the unbelief and the rebellion of man to His

share insights with them, but He tells them: “I am the Lord of the Sabbath. I have authority on earth to forgive sins.” He addresses them on all issues from the Word of God. “It has been said by this or that rabbi, but I say unto you.” And He spoke of the biblical teaching on morals, on marriage, on hatred, on prayer, and on eternal life—with authority.

Second, He spoke with substance. There was substance, there was content, there was relevance to what Jesus said. He never preached academically. He was not interested in abstractions or knowledge for knowledge’s sake. He did not just share His ideas and opinions but, in a very profound way, He brought the Scriptures that spoke to the realities of sin and salvation, of life and death, of heaven and hell, of God and man, of sin and judgment, and of eternity.

You see, there is a difference between a theological treatise on a subject and a simple, modest statement from Scripture. The theological treatise will soon drive you to boredom, the modest statement from Scripture will bring you before God and His Christ, before heaven and hell. And that is what Jesus did. He said, “The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life. What does it profit a man if he gains the

whole world and loses his own soul? How hardly shall a rich man enter into the kingdom of heaven?” There was substance to what He said. And His hearers trembled. They were terrified.

Third, what distinguishes Jesus’ teaching was the application. He took the Word and He applied it to the audience, to the congregation. Under the ministry of the scribes, the Jewish audience did not look at themselves. Instead, they considered the “thought for the day.” Or they listened to the interesting observations and opinions of certain rabbis. It was something like looking at a painting. It did not call you to do anything. It was easy. You just observed as a bystander. And if you looked at anything in the light of God’s Word, you would look at others and you would say, “they are sinners. I thank Thee that I am not like this man or that man.”

But now Jesus comes and He turns the camera around, as it were, and points it at the hearts of His hearers and confronts them. He addresses their hypocrisy and their legalism and their notions of racial superiority and their security in their institutions and their works’ righteousness. He comes and He speaks directly to them using second person pronouns. “You,” He says, over and over

again. "I say unto you. You have Abraham as your father...." Even when He speaks to His disciples, He brings the Word to bear on them. He speaks to them of their fear: "Why are ye so troubled?" He speaks to them of their silence: "Why don't you answer?" He speaks to them of their blessing: "Blessed are ye." He speaks to them of their heavenly Father: "Your Father which is in heaven." You see, what there is in Jesus' teaching is a rich, personal application. It is not abstract. It did not matter if you were young or you were old, rich or poor, male or female. What Jesus spoke was relevant. Sometimes it would be like a sword that pierced to your soul and your heart and uncovered your sin. At other times it would bring a rich warmth over you and a comfort to your soul as you believed His promises.

You see, that is how God's Word must come to us. It is not an abstraction. It is not a philosophy. What we must feel under the preaching of the gospel is the conviction of sin. And we must know that the blood of Jesus Christ is shed to

cover our sin. And we must know that in humility and repentance we stand exposed to the wrath of God.

So Jesus preached. He preached with authority. He preached with substance. He preached with application.

Then, fourth, He preached with clarity, with a gripping clarity. He taught in such a way that what He said was understood by all, so that, as Luke says, the common people gladly received His words. His teaching was clear. It was persuasive. It was fascinating. It was compelling. It was controversial. It was provocative. It moved the audience. This was not so much

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because of the style or His rhetoric (though I am sure that Jesus was a master with words). But this was because He was God in the flesh. He was the Word incarnate. And that meant that every subject matter that He spoke on He raised in relation to the reality of God in a very profound way. On the simplest of subjects, when He talked about birds or flowers or farmers or money

demonstrated, in their mind, by the amount of money you give to their ministry, if you just have enough faith, you will be healed. But what we see Jesus doing here without any return is healing, walking around and healing every person who came to Him that night. And they were not all believers. Maybe some of them believed on account of the miracles of Jesus, but many of them came to Him only for His miracles and the benefits they could get from them, for physical health, for food. Throughout His ministry, Jesus will rebuke those who have only miraculous faith.

Then there is one more thing, and that is the distinction between disease and demon-possession. These are two distinct conditions in Jesus' ministry. Many today will attempt to cure people of sickness or illness, or even of besetting sins, by exorcism, by expelling demons. And we see here that these are very distinct. Some came with illness and others came possessed with demons. We talked last week about demon-possession. What we should see here is that the miracles, and probably demon-possession too, belonged espe-

cially to the age, the period, of Jesus' ministry and the apostolic age. They were part of this new revelation of God to affirm the gospel that was preached, to affirm and confirm the identity of Jesus. And today, rather than looking for them to be repeated and continued, we should ask, "Why are they here in the biblical record? What can we learn from them?"

As we ask that, we remember two things: the Gospels were written to demonstrate who Jesus is, not just stories and biographies. The miracles are commonly called in the Gospels signs, which means they direct us to something else. To find the things that these miracles point to, the spiritual significance of the miracles performed on this Sabbath in Capernaum, we need not look far, because Matthew tells us what it is in Matthew 8:17: "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the

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prophet saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses." Isaiah 53 takes us to the cross, does it not? It is a suffering Savior. And there is the spiritual significance.

Jesus fulfilled this prophecy from Isaiah 53:4 in at least four

That confirmed who He was, and it confirmed the word that He spoke, but He did not want to be famous for miracles.

This is what happened that day in Capernaum. What a day! It started in the morning with His going to the synagogue, with the people shocked at the way that He preached. Then a confrontation with a demon-possessed man. And Jesus commanding the demon to go from him, and the man screaming as the demon departs. Then a quiet afternoon of beautiful fellowship at Peter's house. And then the evening, as the sun sets, throngs coming to the door and Jesus walking among them. We should think about what, perhaps, the headlines in the newspaper would say the next morning: "A small-town boy from Nazareth challenges the Pharisees, shocks the people, dispels demons, heals the multitudes."

What we have here in this passage and its parallels is a careful, biblical description of the miracle-working ministry of Jesus. It stands in striking contrast to the faith-healers of our day who prey on the physical suffering of desperate people in order to get money from them. That is emotional crowd manipulation with no genuine power to heal. I want you to see here some of the notable differences.

First, the undeniable reality

of Jesus' miracles. He not only healed a woman with a fever here, but He made the blind to see and the lame to walk and deaf to hear. He cured people with terminal illnesses, He reversed the effects of their diseases, for example, leprosy. He reconnected an ear so that it was perfectly restored after it had been cut off with a sword—no surgery, no stitches. Even more extreme than this: He raised the dead. Nothing like this had ever been seen before. The faith-healers today, with their miracles, are nothing like this at all. And then also, you will note, Jesus' miracles were instant. They were complete. They were sudden and they were total. There was no time of recovery, no instruction to those who had a miracle performed on them to sit and take it easy for a little while. Peter's mother-in-law goes from languishing in bed under a fever to full strength and work and service. She felt fine, she felt healthy, she felt strong. Then, also, there is no screaming, no controlled environments, no preselection of candidates to be healed. But Jesus, in full view, heals anyone with any kind of illness in any place.

Then, also, His miracles (and this is quite striking in this passage) did not depend on the faith of the recipient. The faith-healers will tell you that if you just have enough faith, which is

or food or clothing, He spoke with a gripping clarity. And His words always came with such an impact that the hearers were confronted with the reality of God Himself. And that was the case whether the one who heard what Jesus was saying was a believing disciple or an unbelieving Jew.

Let me give you one example of that. In John 7 Jesus is teaching in the temple. The Jewish leaders have had enough of Him, so they send the temple police to arrest Him. They return empty-handed. And the Pharisees say, in John 7:45, "Why have ye not brought him?" They had been sent to the temple with an assignment. But they could not lay hands on Him. And it was not because Jesus had evaded their arrest or because the multitudes who stood around had protected Him. No, the only thing that the guards can say to explain their failure to do what they were sent to do was this: "Never a man spoke like this man." The words of Jesus were like thunderbolts. And they dared not to touch Him.

That was what happened this first Sabbath in Capernaum. Imagine, the people came like typical churchgoers. They wandered in. It was what they always did. Now they sit riveted to their seats. They are shocked. Fear is written all over their faces.

And then this happens, in verses 23, 24: "There was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God." Now the tension, as it were, escalates. The confrontation increases. This confrontation emphasizes the power of Jesus' words. The people are stunned. But the demons cannot be silent before Him, confronted by the Word of God and hating it.

There is so much in this miracle. I want just to highlight several points regarding it.

First is the whole idea of demon possession. Demon possession was a real condition in Jesus' day. This is not a way of describing an illness or a mental condition. But, rather, it describes a condition in which a distinct evil spirit, foreign to the person, possesses and controls that person. In verse 23 there was a man with an unclean spirit. Literally *in* an unclean spirit. And the idea is that it surrounded him, it dominated him, it possessed him. One of the commentators is right when he says this: "When Jesus came onto the earth there was so much demon possession because all hell broke loose against Him." That is, Satan and his demons came with the full onslaught,

assault, against Jesus. Part of the way they did that was by demon possession.

Second, I want you to see here that this demon's threatening confrontation, the words that he speaks in verse 24, are fighting words, all of them, fighting words. "What have we to do with thee?" That is Old Testament language that is really a declaration of war. Jeroboam said to Israel: "To your tents! What have we to do with the house of David?" Now the demon says here: "Thou Jesus of Nazareth." He speaks in disdain concerning who Jesus is—of Nazareth, or "You Nazareen. You are lowly, nothing." And then at the end of the verse he says, "I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God." A kind of dominance in the declaration. Remember when Jacob wrestled with the angel. He held onto the angel and said, "Tell me your name." This demon says, "I know your name." It is an expression of dominion.

Why was this demon so confronted, why so threatened? There are two things in the text that indicate that. First is this. He has a personal fear: "Art thou come to destroy us?" He knows that Jesus' coming spells his end and his doom. And, second, he speaks as representative of the whole world of demons, the whole demonic kingdom: "Art

thou come to destroy *us*?" So he is confronted.

Third, we should see in this miracle at the outset of Jesus' ministry what Jesus' ultimate aim and victory will be. Just think of some of the words of Jesus concerning demons and the devil throughout His ministry. He has come to destroy the power of the evil one. He speaks of casting out the strong man of the house. He says as He goes to the cross, "Now is the prince of this world cast out." He says, "I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." He speaks of a lake of fire prepared for the devil and his angels. So here, in this confrontation, He swiftly banishes the demon: "Hold thy peace, come out of him," or more literally, "Be muzzled and get out!" Jesus is a destroyer of the works of darkness. He destroys them with the power of His Word.

Fourth, here in this miracle we see a parallel and a picture of the power of the gospel that defeats sin in our lives. Just as this demon-possessed man is under the dominion of this demon, so our besetting sins have a power that dominates: envy, lust, anger, greed, deceit, doubt, many more sins that have tyranny over human hearts and souls and a man can sometimes be so possessed by his sin that he seems to have, as it were, a double personality. One even

says, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is your reasonable service.*" Here God has given her life and health and salvation. And she is grateful and she shows a love to the Savior by serving not just Him but others as well. A beautiful picture of a mother in her love and service in the home.

Then in verses 32-34, we find out that something else is going on in Capernaum this afternoon while Jesus is at Simon's house. It is this. The people who were at the synagogue that morning, or perhaps those who had heard about what took place in the synagogue that morning, are making plans to bring the sick to Jesus and, under the Pharisaic regulations, they were waiting for the sun to set so they could implement their plans. Verse 28 speaks of the fame of Jesus being spread abroad immediately and everywhere in the region. Someone who has a sick family member or who knows someone who is demon-possessed, they are talking to one another and they are saying, "He is down at Simon's house. And as soon as the sun sets, let's go. I'm going to take my blind brother, I'm going to take my demon-possessed daughter." So verses 32 and 33 describe that. "At even, when the sun did set, they brought unto him all that were diseased,

and them that were possessed with devils. And all the city was gathered together at the door." There is a picture here of a crowd gathering at the door of Peter's house. In verse 32, where it says "they brought unto him," it is in the present tense. The idea here is that they were bringing to Him. And a great crowd was forming at the door. So, what you have here is the idea that as the darkness settles on the city, the people come from every direction to the house where Jesus is.

And Mark says that He healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils. Many. The idea here is not that some were healed and some were not healed. But the idea has to do more with the multitude. He healed so many that evening. Luke and Matthew both tell us that He healed *all* of them. The emphasis is on the great number here. And Luke tells us that He went out and walked among them and He laid His hands on the sick. And Matthew says that by His word He cast out the evil spirits. Then Mark notes one more thing here: He "suffered not the devils [or demons] to speak, because they knew him." That probably has to do with the fact that He did not want His miracles, and the fact that He came to do miracles, to be spread abroad. That was not the purpose of His coming.

walked from different parts of the village. We worshiped God together. I preached through a translator. Afterwards we were invited to the home of one of the elders of the congregation. We had good food and fellowship and it was one of the richest experiences of my life. And all of this really is the part of the beautiful celebration of the Sabbath—hospitality amongst strangers. And you ought to be encouraged by what we read here to not only do this yourself—show hospitality on the Lord’s Day—but also yourself to experience the same by visiting believers in other places.

The story here is kind of like that. It is a very domestic scene. Jesus has preached in the synagogue, He is a visitor in these parts, and Simon invites Him to his home for the noon meal and an afternoon of fellowship with his family and the three other disciples, Andrew, James, and John, who are also there. As they come into the house, they are told that Peter’s mother-in-law, who probably lived with the family, is ill. Mark says that she lay sick of a fever. Luke describes this as a great fever, a high fever. Now, a fever is usually temporary and very rarely is it life-threatening. But she obviously feels ill enough that she cannot do anything. And, if you look at the last part of verse 30, there is a beautiful description of how they told

Jesus about it. “And anon they tell him of her.” They are waiting for Him to come so they can tell this. Jesus is coming, the right one to come to their house. And they tell Him. There is faith and hope in that as they communicate that to Jesus.

Verse 31 describes the miracle. It is a very low-key kind of description, not dramatic, somewhat like the scene itself in this domestic setting. What we see here is the compassion of Jesus. “He came and took her by the hand, and lifted her up.” Matthew describes it as His touching her on the hand. Luke, the doctor, says, He stood over her and commanded the fever from her—rebuked the fever. What is on the foreground here in the verse is the suddenness and the completeness of her healing. There was no time of recovery. She got up and immediately resumed her domestic duties. That is the idea of “she ministered unto them.” She served them. That is a beautiful part of the picture here of fellowship, too. She shows hospitality as a mother in the house. She humbly and faithfully ministers to others. And in this, she shows her love and her gratitude to the Savior for the health that He has given to her.

Really, it is a vivid picture, is it not, of what we read in Romans 12:1, where the apostle

wonders, where does that come from? How did I do that? And in that condition, which is the condition of all mankind, there is no hope for the sinner. There is no power. The power must come from Jesus Christ to overcome sin. You see that here in a startling way. The same man who comes to Jesus crying against Him in hatred and in fear with a soul that shrinks back from the presence of Jesus Christ is delivered by the word of Jesus from the power of darkness. He alone is the One who could deliver you and me from the dominion of sin.

In this miracle, there is one more thing. And it is really a warning because what we have here is a concrete illustration of what the Scriptures say in James 2:19: “Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe and tremble.” You can put that best this way: The mere belief of the facts and reality of God and the gospel and Christian doctrine is not true faith. The soul of the demon, unredeemable, here confesses that Jesus is the Holy One of God. The demon knows that Jesus will destroy the works of darkness and cast him into a lake of everlasting fire. An empty consent of truth without the faith that is demonstrated by works (James 2) is no better than the faith of a demon. So let us be warned. Let us take care that our faith is more than

knowledge, that our knowledge has a sanctified influence in our desires and our living so that we not only know Christ but that we love Him and rejoice in Him and cling to Him day by day, not merely saying “Jesus is Lord,” but “Jesus is *my* Lord!”

That, finally, brings us to verses 27 and 28: the response. And I title it a *telling* response, because this response tells us something. It indicates some things that will follow in the ministry of Jesus.

First, it tells or shows us something of the connection between the miracle and the teaching of Jesus. Despite the miracle, the teaching that preceded it remains on the foreground in the minds of the audience. They say, “What new doctrine is this? for with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him.” You see, they were shocked at His authority and His doctrine, and then they saw that display as He commanded the demon to go out of the man. The connection between Jesus’ preaching and the miracle here is very obvious. What He did by His miracle confirmed what He said and confirmed who He said He was. Jesus is not merely a prophet, as other prophets were. Nor is He simply a miracle worker. But He is the divine, wonder-working Son of God, the Messiah.

Second. The response here

leaves the audience in Capernaum without excuse. Look at verse 27: “They were all amazed, inasmuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? what new doctrine is this?” They turn this into a disputation. This will be a typical response throughout the ministry of Jesus, so that they dispute, who is this. He says He is bread from heaven.

Well, He can do such wonders, and yet they did not believe. Verse 28 indicates that He became immediately famous: “And immediately his fame spread abroad throughout all the region round about Galilee.” There is a fascination in Him. There is an amazement at His miracles. Perhaps they are amused when He challenges the leaders. But, ultimately, they reject Him. In Matthew 11:23, Jesus says, “And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.” Left without excuse.

Then, third. In this response we see again, and that is the main drift here, the sovereignty and the authority of Jesus. And now especially in the work of salvation. As these Jews reject the Savior, God’s purpose with regard to Israel becomes complete. The gospel goes out into all the world. You

read in Matthew chapter 13, and in John chapter 12 as well, that God’s purpose in Jesus doing miracles and teaching was that the heart of the audience would be hardened. Jesus tells us in Matthew 23 that God’s purpose in this is that the gospel be taken from this kingdom (Israel), and given to another kingdom, that is, the Gentile nations of the earth. We must recognize that Jesus knows exactly this as He begins His earthly ministry. He is no respecter of persons. His goal as Savior is to gather His church from all the nations of the earth. So verse 28, in speaking of His fame being spread abroad through all this region, is just the beginning of where Mark will end in this gospel. It is this: that the gospel goes out from the disciples to the ends of the earth. That is God’s purpose in the ministry of Jesus.

I want to finish with just one question (which is really the key to understanding the reading of these gospel accounts): What do we learn about Christ in this passage? We learn this: His divine authority, the power of His Word, the nature of His kingdom to overcome sin in the heart, His victory and dominion over Satan so that the demons obey Him. And it is that emphasis on the authority and power of Jesus that will continue in the upcoming section of the gospel of Mark.

Amen.

THE REFORMED WITNESS HOUR

March 21, 2021
No. 4081

Miracles for a Mother and a Multitude
Rev. Rodney Kleyn

Dear Radio Friends,

Mark, chapter 1:29-34:

And forthwith, when they were come out of the synagogue, they entered into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John.

But Simon’s wife’s mother lay sick of a fever, and anon they tell him of her. And he came and took her by the hand, and lifted her up; and immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them.

And at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils. And all the city was gathered together at the door. And he healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils; and suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew him.

In the preceding verses last week, we looked at the morning of the Sabbath Day. Mark records Jesus coming to the synagogue in Capernaum as the beginning of His public ministry. We noted that Jesus demonstrated His authority in the synagogue of Capernaum in two ways. First, by His teaching. He taught them with authority, not as the scribes and Pharisees. And, second, He demonstrated His authority by commanding

an unclean spirit to leave a man. And we noted the connection between that miracle of the casting out of the demon and the Word that Jesus spoke with authority. The miracle confirmed both the message that Jesus spoke and the claims of Jesus concerning Himself. It confirmed the authority with which He brought the message.

And we emphasized last week that Jesus came not as a miracle-worker primarily, but as the revelation of the truths of God, as the Word who became flesh with a heavenly authority as the herald of the gospel with a heavenly message. And that, we saw, needs to be emphasized because the church’s work today, too, is primarily to preach the gospel.

In the text that we consider today, we have more recorded miracles. I want first just to tell the wonderful story of what happened that day in Capernaum.

The way that Mark tells the story here, after Jesus has preached in the synagogue, reminds me of visiting and preaching the last two summers in a little village in Mexico. We drove four hours, we showed up at a church building to a small part of the population in the town. They