

Lectionary Bible Study Our Savior Lutheran, Vero Beach

Epiphany 4B - Jan 31, 2021

Readings:

Deuteronomy 18:15-20; Psalm 111
1 Corinthians 8:1-13; Mark 1:21-28

Live Bible Studies Hosted on Zoom
Wednesdays @ 10:00 AM

More Info & Link at

www.OurSaviorELCA.com/BibleStudy



MARK 1:21-28 (NRSV)

²¹[Jesus and his disciples] went to Capernaum; and when the sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught. ²²They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. ²³Just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, ²⁴and he cried out, “What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God.” ²⁵But Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be silent, and come out of him!” ²⁶And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him. ²⁷They were all amazed, and they kept on asking one another, “What is this? A new teaching—with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.” ²⁸At once his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee.

It is often said that the gospel of Mark is extremely fast moving, and indeed the author often uses the words “immediately.” This gospel has already given us John the Baptist in the wilderness, the baptism of Jesus, time in the wilderness and the calling of disciples. This gospel has moved so quickly that we are still only in the first chapter (with more stories to come)! In this gospel that moves so quickly, it is important to take note of the context clues in the text:

1. Region: Capernaum
 - a. Capernaum becomes the locus of Jesus’ ministry in Galilee, not his hometown of Nazareth (remember, they tried to throw him out). This is a small Jewish village on the Sea of Galilee.
 - b. *Why did Jesus begin in Galilee vs Jerusalem? Capernaum vs Nazareth? Capernaum vs Tiberias?*
2. Time: Sabbath
 - a. *Why is this important? What is the sabbath for?*
3. Location: Synagogue
 - a. Teaching was an opportunity for any adult Jewish male, but in practice teaching had become a function of scribes and rabbis. Visitors would preach at the invitation of the local rabbi. In this case, it appears Jesus is taking the initiative.

4. Who:
 - a. “They” who went to Capernaum – the newly called disciples?
 - b. “They” who were astounded – the folks in the congregation.
 - c. Man with an unclean spirit – the Greek alludes to being controlled by demons.
5. Form of the text
 - a. The text begins and ends by noting Jesus’ authority while teaching. Sandwiched in between is a story about Jesus exorcising a demon.
 - b. The form of the text helps us to identify the pivotal point of this story: Jesus’ authority as evidenced by his commanding a demon to
 - i. Be silent
 1. This is important because the demon tries to name Jesus.
 2. Naming has power, especially in Jesus’ time.
 3. Mark’s gospel shows Jesus’ naming at his baptism – what is it?
 - ii. Come out of the man
 - c. The text’s bookending about authority means that we are to focus on Jesus’ authority, not on healing of an “unclean spirit.” We are not to be concerned with the origin of the unclean spirit and its modern day equivalent.

In this text we see Jesus as one having authority. We are to deduce that this contrasts with the power position of the religious leaders of his time.

1. What is the difference between power and authority? Is it possible to have both?

2. What is the source of Jesus’ authority? Why doesn’t the text tell us that yet?

3. What does Jesus’ authority mean to us today?

Soon Mark’s gospel will show Jesus sending out the disciples (Mark 3:13-19). Jesus will give them his authority to cast out demons.

4. Do we have Jesus’ authority? What do we have his authority to do?