

The Power of Christ's Ministry

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[0 : 00] Again to the chapter we read in Mark's Gospel, Mark chapter 1. And if we can home in on maybe verse 28.

And at once his fame spread everywhere throughout all the surrounding region of Galilee. Last week we looked at the authority of Christ's teaching.

And we remember how he taught in the synagogue. And that his teaching was so incredibly different to the teaching of the scribes. Theirs was dull and dry.

His was alive and vibrant. And they couldn't get over what they were hearing. So we saw that. And that particular Sabbath that Jesus had entered into the synagogue in Capernaum.

And began to teach there. There's no doubt but that that particular date would be etched on the minds of the people. Because not only had they heard preaching like they had never heard before.

[1 : 08] But also something quite remarkable happened. And that's what we see first of all. Because as Jesus was teaching. Verse 22.

And he taught them as one who had authority and not as the scribes. We saw that last week. And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit. And he cried out. What have you to do with us Jesus of Nazareth?

Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are. The Holy One of God. So it was as Jesus was teaching that this disruption took place.

And one of the things we've always got to remember is that Satan and the demons are never far away wherever God's word is being proclaimed.

It might not be as dramatic as happened there in the synagogue. The disruption might not be as dramatic as happened on that particular day.

[2 : 06] But we've always got to remember that the demons will be around. And particularly where the word of God is being preached. In a way where people are being affected. And Jesus makes that very clear in the parable of the sower.

Remember in that parable how he's describing how the good seed is going down into the ground. And there's different reactions. And the very first one is that Satan will come and he will try and take away the good seed that is sown.

And that happens whenever the word of God is preached. And the demons, and I believe that wherever there is a preacher in a pulpit preaching the word of God, that there will be a demon within the church at work.

Whether it is in the pulpit or in the pew. And one of the things he's very, very good at, if he cannot cause an actual disruption, he will certainly cause distraction within the mind.

And if he sees you becoming interested or really beginning to be absorbed by what is being said, if he sees you in any way showing a desire to become a Christian, it's like the very alarm bells go off in hell.

[3 : 25] And he will do anything and everything to take your mind away, to take your focus off what is happening. And that so often happens in church that initially you can be quite taken up with what is happening.

Your attention can be quite focused on. And then all of a sudden something comes into your mind. Some worry about your life, what is happening.

Or just something that is just, you'd almost say that's really random. It's not that you think it's random. But all of a sudden something comes into your mind and your mind goes away with it.

And then you come back and you drift off again. So we needn't be surprised when that happens because the evil one does not want us to focus upon God's word.

So there's always this sense of disruption one way or another. But here there was a major disruption. And we find that the demon acknowledges who Jesus Christ is.

[4 : 27] And you will find that in every episode where there is demon possession in the time of Jesus, and Jesus confronts that, that the demons always yell out and they cry out, acknowledging who Jesus Christ is because they know him and they're terrified of him.

That's what we're told in the Bible, that the devil, that he believes and trembles. And we've always got to remember that. Because at this particular moment, Satan and the legion of angels, the fallen angels, have a freedom in this world that one day they will not have.

They know that there is waiting for them a doom to the very darkest and lowest part of hell. But in the meantime, they have an element of freedom roaming about.

In fact, the evil one is termed the prince of the power of the air. But that day will finish. And they know that. And the closer it will come to end times, the more that he will unleash his anger and his fury and his hatred upon this world.

Because there is this great collision, as it were, between the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of light, between God's kingdom and Satan's kingdom. And we as a human race are, as it were, caught up in the middle of that.

[5 : 54] And so Jesus instantly silences the demon. Because he does not want a testimony coming from the demon. Jesus did not come into this world to save any demon.

He didn't come to deal or to save any fallen angel. And that's quite a thought. Because we've got to remember that all these angels fell.

And they were cast from the presence of God. And we were told that hell is a place prepared for the devil and his angels. That is its original making.

That's how it was originally set apart. And it's a fearful concept. But Jesus didn't come to save one fallen angel.

Imagine if it had been the same for us. Because we fell too. We all fell in Adam. But the wonderful thing is that God's mercy and God's grace has been extended to us.

[7 : 02] An extension of his mercy and grace that was not extended to the fallen angels. And so we must never ever take for granted what we have.

Imagine if tonight that there was no gospel, that there was no future. That we were all condemned forever. And that is what is really quite extraordinary.

Because there are many people tonight who don't care that we by nature are under condemnation. Because we are.

Because as we are by nature, as we are as fallen men and women and boys and girls, as we are by nature like that, we are condemned. But it is because we are condemned and cannot get away from this condemnation on our own, irrespective of what we do, irrespective of what good deeds we might do, or good works, or how good and righteous we might be.

We don't have the power within ourselves to make ourselves right before God. And that's why God sent his son, Jesus Christ, into the world. He came and he died on the cross.

[8 : 16] And he took upon himself everything that God required in order that we might be delivered and saved. And yet there are loads of people who don't care about that.

There are loads of people who don't want to know about that. And while that is bad enough in itself, a lot of people are not content with not knowing and not caring.

They make it their duty to try and prevent others from hearing this good news. The greatest news story that this world has ever heard and ever will hear is the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And yet there are people, even in our own land, whose main drive, what they are most about, is to try and prevent this good news being shared within our communities, within our land.

That's our aim. That's our purpose. It's to silence the message of the gospel. And if ever there is anything more absurd than that, I haven't yet to hear what it is.

[9 : 26] And it's there that we see, surely, the kingdom of darkness, where it's at its very worst. We're influencing people to try and silence the great message of the gospel, the only hope that the world has, the only good news that is extended to us, that there is a Savior who can save us from our sins.

And so Jesus does not want the devil or the demons bearing testimony to who he is. And so he commands, and there was this silence.

He commanded the demon to be silent. Be silent and come out of him. And straight away, though it doesn't actually say that, but the grammar will tell us, and the unclean spirit convulsing him.

So the poor man went into a convulsing fit, and he cried out with a loud voice, and the demon came out of him. And they were all amazed, so they questioned among themselves, saying, What is this? Not so long ago, they were asking, Really, who is this? Because they had never heard teaching like that before. And now they're asking, What is this?

[10:42] And so you can see the amazement at Jesus Christ. And so there's no doubt, as we said earlier, that when the people went home, they would never forget the day.

They would be talking about it, I'm sure, for a long time after. Do you remember that Sabbath day in the synagogue there, when Jesus was preaching, and the man cried out? And they were face to face with the power of God.

And you know, that's what changes things. You can try and change everything, but unless we have the power of God, it's the power of God, that changes people's lives, changes people's hearts, changes people's lives, changes individuals, changes families, changes churches, changes communities.

And that's what we must pray for. A willing people in this day, of power, shall come to thee. That's what we must pray for, that the Lord will open the windows of heaven, and pour down his spirit upon us.

And if he does that, people will turn to him, and people will be calling out to him, in order to be saved. So that's what we pray, that the Lord will come, in a day of his power.

[11:57] And then we find them leaving the synagogue, and they head then for Simon, Peter's house. And we find that Simon's mother-in-law, lay ill with a fever.

And immediately, they told him about her. And he came and took her by the hand, and lifted her up, and the fever left her, and she began to serve him. And you see, this is the great example, that is shown us here.

Straight away, they tell Jesus. And that's something, we should be in the habit, of doing as well. Because our lives, are full of problems. Sometimes, the problem, that you might have tonight, might not seem very significant, to other people.

But it's significant to you. It might be a major problem, it might be a minor problem. But the thing is, we should tell, whatever it is, to Jesus.

Make that the habit, of our lives. Because, sometimes we're not good, at doing that. Very often, we try to figure out, the problems ourselves. We try to deal, with things ourselves.

[12:59] Instead of making, the habit of our life, to go to Jesus, with everything. Because Jesus wants us. He says that. The word of God says, in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests, be made known unto God.

And that, is where, faith grows. Where we are in the habit, of continually, going to the Lord, with our problems, with our issues, with our difficulties, with our trials, and saying, Lord, I don't know, what to do here.

Or even if we think, we know what to do. Asking the Lord, for help. And asking the Lord, for strength. Asking the Lord, for wisdom. You know, often we're, we're not too sure, just what to do.

The Lord says, ask me for wisdom. And he says, if you don't have wisdom, it's your own fault.

Because you haven't asked. If you ask, you will get it. So maybe, we be in the habit, of going to the Lord, asking him, for that wisdom.

And so it's important, that we cast, all our burdens, and all our cares, upon the Lord. Now, Jesus immediately healed, Peter's mother-in-law. And while the Lord, still heals, he doesn't heal, at the level, or at the rate, that he was doing, in those days.

[14:15] In the, at that particular time, his healing ministry, was bearing testimony, to the fact, that he was the Messiah. It was part of, what the prophets foretold, that when the Messiah, would come, that accompanying, his ministry, would be all, the evidences, through the healings, and all these things, of who he really was.

So that, that was at a particular time, where it was bearing testimony, as to who he was. But there is one, plague, that he will always, heal.

And that is our sin, if we go to him, and we seek, for forgiveness, and pardon. And then it appears, like that the whole city, the whole surrounding region, came about.

That evening, at sunset, they brought to him, all who were sick, or oppressed by demons. And the whole city, was gathered together, at the door. And he healed many. Now when it says, that he healed many, it doesn't mean, that he selected some, that he healed some of them, and he didn't heal others.

It just means, that he healed, so many people. Because it healed, in other words, he healed everybody, that was brought to him. And then it says, that at, that evening, at sunset, they brought to him, all who were sick, or oppressed by demons.

[15 : 34] And he healed many, who were sick, with various diseases, and cast out many demons. And he would not, permit the demons, to speak, because they knew him. But then we read, following on, and rising, very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed, and went out, to a desolate place, and there he prayed.

If we were to study, through the life of Jesus, supposing we went through, this gospel, and we've looked at, through the gospel of Luke, before, and John, one of the features, of Jesus's ministry, was that he kept, a punishing schedule.

He was always, on the go. That's why he said, on one time, you know, the foxes have holes, the birds of the air have nests, but the son of man, has nowhere to lay his head. It's just that, there was, he was living, this non-stop, endless work, this endless ministry.

And of course, this is what he was sent to do. And that is why, he said to the disciples, on occasion, to come apart, into a desert place, to rest a while.

There has to be, a period of recovery. But we find here, that Jesus is working, right after sundown, healing, healing, healing, casting out demons, and so on.

[16 : 50] And next morning, while it's still dark, before sunrise, he's away, into a desert place, into a desolate place, all on his own. He departed, into this desert place.

And why did he go there? He went there to pray. And that was one of the things, that was essential. It was one of the, the features, of Jesus's life, was his prayer life.

And you will always find, that there are, particular times, in the life of Jesus, when he really, had to go away, and he spent, a lot of time, in prayer.

And there's no doubt, but that on this occasion, that we find that, it's say for instance, it says in verse 38, and he said to them, let us go on, to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is what I came for.

So, Jesus is going, on a preaching tour, and he knows, that company is preaching, there's going to be healing. And he knows, this is going to be, an exhaustive period.

[17 : 56] And he knows, he needs the empowering, of God's spirit, because although, he is the son of God, we've got to remember, that in our nature, representing us, he lived, he lived, in absolute dependence, upon his father, and upon the ministry, of the spirit.

And he's setting there, a pattern, and a lesson, for ourselves. That we too, need that empowering. That we too, need, the Holy Spirit, to come upon us.

Because, we cannot, do things, on our own, in our own strength. If we try, it will fail, guaranteed failure. And the Lord knew, that he needed, the empowering, of his father, in heaven.

And so, that is, that's what he's done. And we find then, that as he is praying, Simon, and those who were with him, searched for him, and they found him, and said to him, everyone is looking for you. And you know, there's almost an element, you feel an element, of rebuke, in what is being said. In other words, what are you doing here? Because, everybody is looking for you. Why have you gone off, into this desolate place?

[19 : 07] Everybody is looking for you. And Jesus said to them, and he said to them, let us go to the next town, so that I may preach there also, for that is what I came for.

But one of the things, Jesus constantly showed, the disciples, was that they, were not to regulate, his life, or the path, that he was to take.

Only one was to do that, and that was his father, in heaven. He came, not to do his own will, but the will of him, that sent him. And you know, there's a lesson there as well, because there are people, who will try and regulate your life, and there are people, who will try and work, get you to do this, that, and the next thing.

Every day, you ask the Lord to guide you, because God has a path for you, every single day of life. And when you get up, ask the Lord, Lord, show me, show me your ways, your path, so teach thou me.

God has a path for you to go, he has a race for you to run, and it's, this again is where our faith, will be strengthened, and where we will see God at work, in our lives, if day by day by day, we say to him, right Lord, what do you have me to do today?

[20 : 21] Guide me, lead me, open doors, close doors, show me the right way. And life becomes an adventure of faith, if we do that, we can choose not to do that.

We're limiting God, we're limiting ourselves, when we do that. And so Jesus is showing that, this is the way to go. So make sure that every day, you give some time, maybe for some of you, it's going to be impossible, first thing in the morning.

Some of you may have to get up early, some of you may have little children, it might be impossible. But make sure at some point, within the day, that you make time, to be alone with the Lord.

So that you will, because this is where you get to know him more. This is where you get, become more like him. The more time you spend with him, the more like him, you will become.

And the more like him, you become, the more effective, your witness will be, in this world. Not necessarily, by what you say, but who you are.

[21 : 27] Because the more Christ-like you are, the greater your effectiveness, and the greater your impact, in this world. So, the psalmist said, each day I rise, I will be blessed.

But again, just very briefly, thinking of the prayer life of Jesus, we said that, at all the important points, we find that Jesus was in prayer. And another of these was, before he chose the disciples.

And, we find that he spent the whole night in prayer. Here is Jesus, the Son of God. before he chose his 12 disciples, he spent the whole night in prayer.

And that's a great education, as it were, for any congregation, choosing a minister, or choosing office parish, that we make this a real matter of prayer.

Because if people were to say to Jesus, you're going to choose 12 disciples, okay, let me take you to the temple. Let me show you all the Pharisees, and let me show you all the scribes, and let me show you all the priests, and let me show you all the religious leaders, and take your pick.

[22 : 38] That's not what Jesus did. In fact, he didn't choose from any of them. They were fishermen, publican, they were zealots, they were pessimistic men, they were ambitious men, they weren't the men that, if, if, in fact, in Acts, it's, it's almost derisory, the way it was, it's spoken of, that people knew that they were ignorant, and unlearned men.

That's what it says to them. And yet, these are the men, that the early church was built upon. These were the men, that were the kind of, the building blocks in God's hand, and were used, for the building up, of the early church.

You see, when God is at work, God does work. So let us make sure, that we do God's work, in God's way, with God's power.

That is the only work, that will endure. Again, Jesus shows us, that when he was concerned, about someone, he prayed over that person.

And again, that's very important for us, because Jesus was concerned, about all the disciples, but particularly Peter, when, prior to his arrest. And he told them, that he had prayed for them, but he told specifically, Peter, I have prayed for you, that your faith won't fail.

[23 : 57] And so it is vital for us, if we are concerned, over someone, that we pray, for that person. Again, Jesus shows us, in his prayer life, that, when he felt overwhelmed, that he went, to the Father, to pray.

You remember, before his arrest, while he was in the garden. It tells us, there, that he said, Father, save me from this hour. He said, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me.

But then he said, not as I will, but as you will. But it tells us, that after that, after he prayed, remember, an hour, and then another hour, and then another hour, but it tells us, that he was strengthened.

Again, when he was being tempted, in the wilderness, it tells us, that he was there, praying and fasting. That was how he overcame, the devil, through the word of God.

And it's the same, for you and for me. We will not, beat the devil, ever, ever, ever, in our own strength. It is only by prayer, with the armor of God, and with the word of God, that we can, in any way, stand, against the wiles, of the devil.

[25 : 08] And even, coming to death, we find that Jesus prayed, and he said, into your hands, I commend, or entrust, my spirit. That is a way, that we should die.

So Jesus shows us, the importance of praying. And so he was praying here, because of the, preaching tour, that he was to engage in. And then finally, just in the last, two or three minutes, verse 40, and a leper came to him, imploring him, and kneeling, said to him, if you will, you can make me clean.

And straight away, we see the great faith, of this man. This man, what's the first thing he did? He went, to Jesus. He didn't think, about going to Jesus.

He didn't say to himself, you know, if Jesus comes to me, then I'll ask him. Or he didn't say to himself, you know, if I'm going to be healed, I'll be healed anyway.

If not, well, there's nothing I can do about it. But this man knew, that Jesus, was capable, of healing. He didn't know, if he would actually heal him.

[26 : 17] But he said, I'm going to do everything, that I can. And so he goes to Jesus, and he says, Lord, if you will, I know, that you can make me clean.

And what an example, that is for you, and for me. Don't just sit there. If you tonight, aren't a believer, don't just sit there, and say, well, I'm going to wait for the Lord, to come to me.

The Lord is saying to you, seek, and you will find. He says, knock, and you will, it will be opened. He says, ask, and you will receive. He says, him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.

So there is action, on our part, as we go to Jesus, and Jesus, always responds, to the one who comes, to him.

And so, that's, we see the, the leper is so convinced, of God's greatness. So you say to the Lord, tonight, just like the leper, but change it.

[27 : 19] He says, you can say to the Lord, I know, you can make me clean. And I know, you will make me clean, from my sin, if I come to you.

And Lord, tonight, I'm coming. Because the Lord has said, he will. That's, that's the difference.

Tonight, he has said, he will make you clean. He will cleanse you, from all your sin, if you come to him.

And if you repent of your sin, and you say, Lord, please, please, forgive me. And then we see the result. As this man came to Jesus, and as he stated what he did, it tells us that Jesus was moved with pity.

Jesus was never moved with pity, with pity for the, those who came who were arrogant, or self-righteous, or full of their own self-importance. No, never tells us he was moved with compassion or pity.

But he was, for those who felt their need, those who felt helpless, those who were burdened, those who were cast down. And here's this man, in his real need.

[28 : 29] And Jesus is moved with pity for him. And it tells us then, and Jesus, he stretched out his hand, and touched him.

And indeed, in touching him, he was doing what nobody else would do. Nobody touched a leper. But Jesus did. He was like he was identifying himself, with this man, in his disease, and in his helplessness.

And that's what Jesus has done for us. He has reached out, and he has touched us, in our disease of sin, and our helplessness. And it tells us that immediately, the leprosy left him, and he was made clean.

And that's what Jesus will do for you tonight, as well. Because as he reaches out his forgiving hand, and as he touches your soul, with his healing power, your sins, will be forgiven.

And that's the greatest thing, that can happen, in the world, where you are made clean. Doesn't mean that you're never a sinner again. You are, and will be, till you die.

[29 : 37] But you'll be a saved sinner. You will be a cleansed sinner. A pardoned sinner. An heir of glory. It was as simple as that.

And Jesus hasn't changed. And tonight he is able, to make you clean. Let us pray.