

Mark 1:29-45
May 28, 2023

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Q: Why do you think Jesus spent so much time in prayer if he was the Son of God? [Let people engage]

Transition: Jesus wanted to remain in constant communion with His Father. As we read in John Chp 8, Jesus listens to what His Father tells him to say, and he says it. Or He'll listen to God to find out what he is supposed to do next. What we know is that whatever Jesus did, the overarching purpose was to seek and to save the lost. But the people He ministered to needed to know that He was the Son of God, so He performed many miracles from casting out demons, healing fevers of people on their death bed, healing people with skin diseases, etc. By virtue of his mercy and compassion and His ability to meet the physical needs of others had many raising the question of "Who is this man?!!!" Let's read the text to see how people responded to Jesus. Would someone volunteer to read our text?

BOOK:

Jesus Heals Many

²⁹ As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew. ³⁰ Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told Jesus about her. ³¹ So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them.

³² That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. ³³ The whole town gathered at the door, ³⁴ and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was.

Jesus Prays in a Solitary Place

³⁵ Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. ³⁶ Simon and his companions went to look for him, ³⁷ and when they found him, they exclaimed: "Everyone is looking for you!"

³⁸ Jesus replied, "Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come." ³⁹ So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.

A Man With Leprosy

⁴⁰ A man with leprosy (can be various skin diseases) came to him and begged him on his knees, "If you are willing, you can make me clean."

⁴¹ Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" ⁴² Immediately the leprosy left him, and he was cured.

⁴³ Jesus sent him away at once with a strong warning: ⁴⁴ "See that you don't tell this to anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for

your cleansing, as a testimony to them.”⁴⁵ Instead he went out and began to talk freely, spreading the news. As a result, Jesus could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside in lonely places. Yet the people still came to him from everywhere.

Process Observations/Questions:

Q: What did you most like about this passage? What resonated with you? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you least like about this passage? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you find in this passage that you didn't understand? [Let people engage]

Q: What do we learn about Jesus in this passage? [Let people engage]

LOOK:

We should learn some important spiritual lessons from this chapter. To begin with, if the Son of God came as a servant, then being a servant is the highest of all callings. We are never more like the Lord Jesus than when we are serving others. Second, God shares His authority with His servants. Only those who are *under* authority have the right to *exercise* authority. Finally, if you are going to be a servant, be sure you have compassion; because people will come to you for help and rarely ask if it is convenient!

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). The Bible Exposition Commentary (Vol. 1, pp. 113-114). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

The Servant's Sympathy (Mark 1:29–45)

Two miracles of healing are described in this section, both of which reveal the compassion of the Savior for those in need. In fact, so great was His love for the needy that the Savior ministered to great crowds of people after the Sabbath had ended, when it was lawful for them to come for help. It would appear that God's Servant was at the beck and call of all kinds of people, including demoniacs and lepers; and He lovingly ministered to them all.

Jesus and the four disciples left the synagogue and went to Peter and Andrew's house for their Sabbath meal. Perhaps Peter was a bit apologetic because his wife had to care for her sick mother and was unable to entertain them in the usual manner. We do not know about the other disciples, but we do know that Peter was a married man (Mark 1:30).

Peter and Andrew not only brought their friends James and John home with them from the service, but they also brought the Lord home. That is a good example for us to follow: don't leave Jesus at the church—take Him home with you and let Him share your blessings and your burdens. What a privilege it was for Peter and his family to have the very Son of God as guest in their humble home. Before long, the Guest became the Host, just as one day the Passenger in Peter's boat would become the Captain (Luke 5:1–11).

By faith, the men told Jesus about the sick woman, no doubt expecting Him to heal her. That is exactly what He did! The fever left her immediately, and she was able to go to the kitchen and serve the Sabbath meal. If you have ever had a bad fever, then you know how painful and uncomfortable it is. You also know that after the fever leaves you, it takes time for you to regain your strength. But not so in this case! She was able to serve the Lord immediately. And isn't service to our Lord one of the best ways to thank Him for all He has done for us?

What was the result of this miracle? When the Sabbath ended at sundown, the whole city showed up at Peter's door! They brought their sick and afflicted, and the Lord (who was no doubt weary) healed them all. The Greek verb indicates that they "kept on bringing" people to Him, so that He must have gone to sleep at a very late hour. Note in Mark 1:32 the clear distinction made between the diseased and the demonized. While Satan can cause physical affliction, not all sickness is caused by demonic power.

Late hours did not keep Jesus from His appointed meeting with His Father early the next morning. Read Isaiah 50:4 for a prophetic description of God's righteous Servant as He meets the Father morning by morning. What an example for us to follow! It is no surprise that Jesus had such authority and power when His prayer life was so disciplined (see Mark 9:28–29; 6:46; 14:32–38).

However, the crowds wanted to see Jesus again, not to hear His word, but to experience His healing and see Him perform miracles. Peter was surprised that Jesus did not hasten to meet the crowds but instead left for other towns where He might preach the Gospel. Peter did not realize the shallowness of the crowds, their unbelief, and their lack of appetite for the Word of God. Jesus said it was more important for Him to preach the Gospel in other places than to stay there and heal the sick. He did not permit popular acclaim to change His priorities.

Perhaps we can understand our Lord's concern for a feverish woman, but that He would meet *and touch* a leper is somewhat beyond our understanding. Lepers were supposed to keep their distance and warn everyone that they were coming, lest others would be defiled (Lev. 13:45–46).

This man knew that Jesus was *able* to heal him, but he was not sure the Master was *willing* to heal him. Lost sinners today have the same unnecessary concern, for God has made it abundantly clear that He is not willing that sinners perish (2 Peter 3:9) and that He is willing that all men be saved (1 Tim. 2:4).

When you read the “tests” for leprosy described in Leviticus 13, you can see how the disease is a picture of sin. Like sin, leprosy is deeper than the skin (Lev. 13:3); it spreads (Lev. 13:5–8); it defiles and isolates (Lev. 13:44–46); and it renders things fit only for the fire (Lev. 13:47–59). Anyone who has never trusted the Savior is spiritually in worse shape than this man was physically.

Jesus had compassion on the man (note Mark 6:34; 8:2; 9:22) and healed him. He did it with His touch and with His Word. No doubt this was the first loving touch this leper had felt in a long time. As with the fever, so with the leprosy: it was gone instantly!

For reasons already stated, Jesus commanded the man not to tell everybody. He was to go to the priests and follow the instructions given in Leviticus 14, so that he might be declared clean and received back into the social and religious life of the community. However, the man disobeyed orders. Jesus told this man to keep quiet, and yet he told everybody. Jesus commands us to tell everybody—and we keep quiet! The crowds that came to get help from Jesus created a serious problem for Him and probably hindered Him from teaching the Word as He intended to do (Mark 1:38).

The ceremony described in Leviticus 14 presents a beautiful picture in type of the work of redemption. The two birds represent two different aspects of our Lord’s ministry: His incarnation and death (the bird put into the jar and then killed), and His resurrection and ascension (the bird stained with the blood and then set free). The blood was applied to the man’s right ear (God’s Word), right thumb (God’s work), and right great toe (God’s walk). Then the oil was put on the blood, symbolizing the Holy Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit cannot come on human flesh until first the blood has been applied.

We should learn some important spiritual lessons from this chapter. To begin with, if the Son of God came as a servant, then being a servant is the highest of all callings. We are never more like the Lord Jesus than when we are serving others. Second, God shares His authority with His servants. Only those who are *under* authority have the right to *exercise* authority. Finally, if you are going to be a servant, be sure you have compassion; because people will come to you for help and rarely ask if it is convenient!

Yet, what a privilege it is to follow in the steps of Jesus Christ and meet the needs of others by being one of God’s compassionate servants.

Grassmick, J. D. (1985). *Mark*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 109-112) Wheaton, IL: Victor Books

2. THE HEALING OF SIMON’S MOTHER-IN-LAW (1:29–31) (Matt. 8:14–15; Luke 4:38–39)

1:29–31. Immediately (*euthys*; cf. v. 10) after leaving **the synagogue** Sabbath service, Jesus and the four disciples **went** to **the** nearby **home of Simon** (Peter) **and Andrew**. This house became something of a headquarters for Jesus when He was in Capernaum (cf. 2:1; 3:20; 9:33; 10:10).

He was promptly (*euthys*) **told** that **Simon’s mother-in-law** was lying **in bed** burning **with a fever**. In compassionate response **Jesus** stood beside her and without a word simply grasped **her**

hand and raised her up. The fever left completely, and without weakness **she began to** serve (*diēkonei*) her guests.

3. THE HEALING OF MANY PEOPLE AT SUNSET (1:32–34) (Matt. 8:16–17; Luke 4:40–41)

1:32–34. This summary portrays the excitement in Capernaum generated by the miracles on that Sabbath. The double time reference, **that evening after sunset**, made it clear that **the people** of Capernaum waited until the Sabbath Day was over (sunset) before moving the sick lest they break the Law (cf. Ex. 20:10) or Rabbinic regulations which prohibited burden-bearing on that day (cf. Mark 3:1–5).

The townspeople **brought** (lit., “kept carrying,”) **to Jesus all the physically sick and demon-possessed** (not “possessed with devils,” KJV, since there is only one devil). Again, a clear distinction is maintained between physical sickness and demon possession (cf. 6:13). It seemed as if **the whole town** (hyperbole; cf. 1:5) had **gathered at the door** of Simon’s house. In compassionate response to this human need **Jesus healed many** (a Heb. idiom meaning “all who were brought”; cf. v. 32; 10:45; Matt. 8:16) **who had** a wide variety of **diseases. He also drove out** (*exebalen*, from *ekballō*; cf. Mark 1:12, 39) **many demons, but** as before (vv. 23–26) He repeatedly silenced their cries of recognition, showing that they were powerless before Him.

The miracles accompanying Jesus’ preaching increased His popularity. He performed miracles not to impress people with His power but to authenticate His message (cf. v. 15).

4. A WITHDRAWAL FOR PRAYER AND A PREACHING TOUR IN GALILEE (1:35–39) (Luke 4:42–44)

1:35. Despite a full day of ministry (vv. 21–34), **Jesus got up** the next morning **very early**, before daybreak (about 4 A.M.) **and went out to a solitary** (*erēmon*, “uninhabited, remote”) **place** (cf. v. 4) **where He** spent time praying. He withdrew from the acclaim of the Capernaum crowds to a wilderness place—the kind of place where He initially confronted Satan and withstood his temptations (cf. vv. 12–13).

Mark selectively portrayed Jesus at prayer on three crucial occasions, each in a setting of darkness and aloneness: near the beginning of his account (v. 35), near the middle (6:46), and near the end (14:32–42). All three were occasions when He was faced with the possibility of achieving His messianic mission in a more attractive, less costly way. But in each case He gained strength through prayer.

1:36–37. The crowds, returning to Simon’s door and expecting to find Jesus, discovered He was gone. **Simon and his companions** (cf. v. 29) **went out to look for Him** (lit., “to hunt Him down,” from *katadiōkō*, occurring only here in the NT). Their exclamation, **Everyone is looking for You!** implied some annoyance because they thought Jesus was failing to capitalize on some excellent opportunities in Capernaum.

1:38–39. Jesus’ reply showed that they too did not understand Him or His mission. His plan was to **go** elsewhere—to **the nearby villages**, populous market towns, **so that He could preach** (cf. vv. 4, 14) **there also**, in addition to Capernaum. His explanatory statement, **That** (“to preach”) **is why I have come**, probably does not refer to leaving Capernaum (He left to pray, v. 35) but rather to His coming from God on a divine mission. His purpose was to proclaim “the good news of God” (v. 14) and confront people with the demand to “repent and believe” it (v. 15). Since the Capernaum crowds sought Him as a Miracle-worker, He deliberately departed to preach elsewhere.

Verse 39 summarizes His tour **throughout Galilee** (cf. v. 28) which probably lasted several weeks (cf. Matt. 4:23–25). His main activity was **preaching** (cf. Mark 1:14–15) **in the local synagogues, and His driving out** (*ekballōn*; cf. v. 34) **demons** dramatically confirmed His message.

5. THE CLEANSING OF A LEPER (1:40–45) (Matt. 8:1–4; Luke 5:12–16)

1:40. On Jesus' Galilean tour, **a man with leprosy came to Him** (a bold move for a leper). "Leprosy" included a variety of serious skin diseases ranging from ringworm to true leprosy (Hanson's bacillus), a progressively disfiguring disease. This man experienced a pitiful existence due not only to the physical ravages of the disease but also to ritual uncleanness (cf. Lev. 13–14) and exclusion from society. Leprosy brought anguish at all levels: physical, mental, social, and religious. It serves as an illustration of sin.

The Rabbis regarded leprosy as humanly incurable. Only twice does the Old Testament record that God cleansed a leper (Num. 12:10–15; 2 Kings 5:1–14). Yet this leper was convinced that Jesus could cleanse him. Without presumption (**If You are willing**) and without doubting Jesus' ability (**You can make me clean**), he humbly **begged** Jesus to heal him.

1:41–42. Moved by **compassion** (*splanchnistheis*, "having deep pity"), **Jesus ... touched the untouchable and cured** the incurable. His touch showed that Jesus was not bound by Rabbinic regulations regarding ritual defilement. Both this symbolic touch (cf. 7:33; 8:22) and Jesus' authoritative pronouncement—**I am willing, be clean** (decisive act received)—constituted the cure. It was immediate (*euthys*; cf. 1:10), complete, visible to all who saw him.

1:43–44. The forceful words, **sent him away** (*exebalen*; cf. v. 12), **at once** (*euthys*; cf. v. 10), and **a strong warning** (cf. 14:5) emphasize the need for prompt obedience to the instructions in 1:44.

First, Jesus sternly warned (same verb in 14:5) him: **Don't tell this** (his cure) **to anyone**. This could be a temporary prohibition that was in force till the man had been pronounced clean by **the priest**. However, Jesus often commanded silence and sought to minimize the proclaiming of His true identity and miraculous powers (cf. 1:25, 34; 3:12; 5:43; 7:36; 9:9). Why did Jesus do this? Some contend that Mark and the other Gospel writers inserted these commands for silence as a literary device to explain why the Jews did not recognize Jesus as the Messiah during His earthly ministry. This view is called "the messianic secret," that is, Jesus' messiahship was kept secret.

A more satisfactory view is that Jesus wanted to avoid misunderstandings that would precipitate a premature and/or erroneous popular response to Him (cf. comments on 11:28). He did not want His identity declared till He had made the character of His mission clear (cf. comments on 8:30; 9:9). Thus, there was a progressive withdrawal of the veil from His identity until He openly declared it (14:62; cf. 12:12).

Second, Jesus instructed the former leper to **show himself to** the priest, who alone could declare him ritually clean, **and to offer the sacrifices** prescribed by **Moses** (cf. Lev. 14:2–31).

This demand is qualified by the phrase **as** (*eis*, "for") **a testimony to them**. This phrase could be understood in a positive sense ("a convincing witness") or negative sense ("an incriminating witness") to either the people in general or the priests in particular. In this context, as in the two other occurrences of this phrase (Mark 6:11; 13:9), the negative sense is preferred. Thus "testimony" means an item of proof which can serve as incriminating evidence (cf. TDNT, "*martys*," 4:502–4) and "them" refers to the priests.

The cleansing of the leper was an undeniable messianic sign (cf. Matt. 11:5; Luke 7:22) that God was working in a new way. If the priests declared the leper clean but rejected the One who cleansed him, their unbelief would be incriminating evidence against them.

1:45. **Instead** of obeying Jesus' command to silence, the man **went out and began to talk freely** (lit., "to proclaim [*kēryssein*] it much"), making known the story of his cure far and wide. Mark did not say whether he obeyed Jesus' command to show himself to the priest.

As a result, Jesus' preaching ministry in the synagogues of Galilee (cf. v. 39) was interrupted. He **could not enter a town openly** without encountering large crowds seeking special favors. Even when He withdrew to **lonely** (*erēmois*, "uninhabited, remote"; cf. v. 35) **places ... the people** kept coming **from** all directions.

The deliverance Jesus brought transcended the Mosaic Law and its regulations. Though the Law provided for the ritual purification of a leper, it was powerless to cleanse a person from the disease or to effect inward spiritual renewal.

D. Jesus' controversies with Jewish religious leaders in Galilee (2:1–3:5)

Mark brought together the five episodes in this section because of the common theme of conflict in Galilee between Jesus and the Jewish religious leaders. Thus, they are not in strict chronological order. A similar unit of five controversies in the temple at Jerusalem is recorded in 11:27–12:37.

The conflict here concerned Jesus' authority over sin and the Law. The first incident is introduced by a summary statement (2:1–2) of Jesus' preaching. Mark often used this literary device to summarize Jesus' activity and keep his narrative moving on to events that suited his purpose (cf. 1:14–15, 39; 2:1–2, 13; 3:7–12, 23; 4:1, 33–34; 8:21–26, 31; 9:31; 10:1; 12:1).

Church, C.L. (1998). Mark In D. S. Dockery (Ed.), Holman Concise Bible Commentary (pp. 430-431). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

RESPONSE TO JESUS (1:21–45)

Jesus, like Paul, frequently taught in the synagogue (1:21, 39; 3:1). There Jesus surprised the crowds by teaching "as one having authority," not like the scribes who taught on the basis of legal precedents. Ironically, only the "unclean spirit" knew Jesus' true identity, and His authority exposed it for what it was. This exorcism evidenced the power of Jesus' words, which broke the power of evil and changed lives.

The incident in Simon's home clarifies that discipleship does not necessarily involve severing family ties and abandoning possessions. The grateful service to Jesus by Simon's mother-in-law represents the first of many women modeling proper responses to Jesus.

Jesus' response to His newfound popularity was solitary prayer. Already Simon Peter emerged as the leader of the disciples ("Simon and his companions," NRSV). For the first time Jesus had to clarify His mission for His disciples. "The message" Jesus proclaimed to "the neighboring towns" was the good news sketched in 1:15. By His dual ministry of preaching and exorcism, Jesus established the pattern for the disciples' subsequent mission (6:12–13).

Mark affirmed Jesus' full humanity by portraying the scope of His emotions. According to a few ancient manuscripts, Jesus was moved to anger, not pity, by the leper's request that expressed doubt that Jesus—and the God active in His ministry—willed his healing. Jesus' response and reference to the cleansing laws (Lev. 14) underscored God's willingness to heal.

The “free proclamation” of Jesus’ authority to heal hindered Jesus’ mission to the neighboring towns by forcing Him into the open country.

Leavell, L.P. (1972). *Mark*. In H. F. Paschall & H. H. Hobbs (Eds.), *The Teacher’s Bible Commentary* (pp. 618-619). Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers.

Authority (Mark 1:21–45)

The passage—The concentration of the early ministry of Jesus in this province was doubtless by design. It was the rural, agrarian area of Palestine as compared to the more urban Judea. The people who lived there were removed from the strong influence of the religious leaders in Jerusalem. Through this area ran the arterial highway connecting Egypt, Syria, and Arabia.

Mark moves quickly to establish Jesus’ authority. It was not the conferred authority marked by a robe, crown, and scepter. It was the inherent authority of a Spirit-controlled personality. It was obvious to those who listened that Jesus was not like the scribes.

Mark records four illustrations showing Christ’s authority over illness. The first showed how an unclean spirit yielded to the authority of the Son of God (1:23–28). Jesus came into the world as the Redeemer, but ministered to human need in such a way as to teach and to save.

The fever of Peter’s mother-in-law (1:29–30) is an entirely different kind of sickness from that of the unclean spirit. Jesus had authority over this fever, and the proof of the cure is in her ministry to them.

There seems to be a distinction in Mark between demons (1:32–34) and unclean spirits (1:23–28). Whatever the malady caused by these, Jesus Christ had authority over both.

Perhaps the most tragic illness of that day was leprosy (1:40–45). It did not immediately kill, but left one maimed and crippled. Jesus touched this leper, in defiance of the ritual law. This serves to substantiate the priority Jesus gave to persons over the petty legal restrictions of the Jewish law.

Special points—We must allow latitude in our approach to the subject of demons. It is not possible for us to positively identify these with modern day mental illness or psychoses. Whether or not these exist today in the same form cannot be stated.

It is certain that the people of the first century believed in demons. It is apparent that Jesus shared this belief, at least to the point of getting to the source and effecting a cure. We are on safe grounds when we interpret every illness, of whatever nature, as an opportunity for Christian ministry.

The Holy Bible: New International Version. (1984). Mark 1:29-45. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.