



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Mark 1:14-31

Mark

“The King, Subjects and Authority”

TRANSCRIPT

We’re continuing in our study in the Gospel of Mark, so if you have your Bibles – and I hope you do – turn to Mark chapter 1 and we will look this morning at verses 14 through 31.

“Now after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, – ”

Let me make a brief editorial note at this point. We’ll say more about this in the lesson itself, but this is about a year after the events in verse 13. Some time has elapsed, and we know that as we compare the various gospels. This particularly with John, because in the earlier – in the first chapter of John, he describes a ministry that took place in Judea prior to this. And so Mark is beginning his description of our Lord’s ministry about a year later, after His baptism, after His tempting in the wilderness. One might get the impression that He comes out of the wilderness having been tempted, enters into Galilee, where He begins His ministry, and that’s not the case. We know that He goes down to the area of Judea. He ministers there. He meets these men and then only later does this formal ministry begin. But we touch on that when we come to it in our lesson.

Verse 15, “and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.’

“As He was going along by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew, the brother of Simon, casting a net in the sea; for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, ‘Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men.’ And they

immediately left the nets and followed Him. Going on a little farther, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who were also in the boat mending nets. Immediately He called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went away to follow Him.

"They went into Capernaum; and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and *began* to teach. They were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as *one* having authority, and not as the scribes. Just then there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, saying, 'What business do we have with each other, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!' And Jesus rebuked him, saying, 'Be quiet, and come out of him!' Throwing him into convulsions, the unclean spirit cried out with a loud voice and came out of him. They were all amazed, so that they debated among themselves, saying, 'What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him.' Immediately the news about Him spread everywhere into all the surrounding district of Galilee.

"And immediately after they had come out of the synagogue, they came into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. Now Simon's mother-in-law was lying sick with a fever; and immediately they spoke to Him about her. And He came to her and raised her up, taking her by the hand, and the fever left her, and she began to wait on them."

May the Lord bless this reading of His Word and bless our time of study in it together. Let's bow now in a word of prayer.

Our heavenly Father, we come to You with praise, praising You for the creation, praising You for the new creation that we are in Jesus Christ. Praise You for it because of ourselves, we could not have changed ourselves. We could not have replaced hearts of stone with hearts of flesh. We could not have given ourselves a new birth by which and only which we can enter into the kingdom of God. We praise You for who we are because You are our creator physically and spiritually. And we thank You, Father, for the gifts and the blessings that You have bestowed upon us. And thank You that we can draw close to the throne of grace because we so

desperately need to do that at every moment, to look to You for our spiritual as well as our material well-being.

And we do that now, Father. We remember those who are in need, and there are many at this time who are undergoing physical affliction and financial difficulty. We present them to You, Father. We lift them up and ask for Your blessing upon them. You instruct us in that model prayer to ask of You our daily bread, which is more than simply bread, but all of the provisions of life. We're to seek them from You because You're the One who gives them. We do that, Father, for ourselves and for others. We recognize that every crumb that we have, every material blessing that's ours is ours from the hand of a good and a faithful God. And we ask that You'd provide that for us and for those who are in need.

We pray for the sick. We're reminded as we go through this passage today that You are the source of healing ultimately. And we pray that You would extend that mercy to those who are in need of it. But if that not be Your will – and often it is not Your will – Father, we pray that You would encourage them and draw them close to Yourself. And may they sense Your presence and through it all be able to rejoice because they've grown closer to You.

We pray, Father, for this assembly spiritually. We pray that You would build us up in the faith. Make us more like Your Son, that we might go forth to proclaim Your truth well. Thank You for those of this church that do proclaim the gospel as they go out into the marketplace and the various areas of life, they represent You well in their life and in their word. Help us all to do that. Help us all to become fishers of men. We might faithfully serve You in that way.

Bless us as a church with our teaching of the young people. We thank You for the Sunday school teachers that You've raised up. Pray that You'd bless their efforts and encourage them. May we see many young people coming to faith and growing in the grace, the knowledge of Thee. We pray that not only for this assembly, but for this land in which we live and for your church as it meets throughout the world at this very hour. We pray that You would build up Your people. May they be good and effective lights in a dark and evil world.

Bless our leaders. We pray that You would give them wisdom as they rule over us. We pray that through them this nation would progress in righteousness. And so we ask that You would move upon their hearts. We pray that they would make wise decisions and that this land would be governed well. We recognize that our destiny as a nation is in your hands, and so we pray that You would bring great blessing upon it. Most importantly, spiritual blessings. May we be used to that end. Bless us now to that end. Bless us this evening as we meet together for the Lord's supper to that end. We pray that You'd prepare our hearts for the week to come, that we might serve You well, serve You faithfully. And we pray these things in our Savior's name, Amen.

In the early church and through the Middle Ages, it was a custom to associate the four gospels with the four faces of the cherubim found in Ezekiel 1:6 and 10. The face of a man, a lion, a calf, and an eagle. When Augustine made these identifications, he found the lion in Matthew, since the lion answers to the Lord's royal office, His authority and His power. Mark, he associated with the man speaking of our Lord's human nature. Luke, he saw as the calf, revealing the Lord as a sacrifice. Some have made that association seeing the Lord in the calf as a servant. And John was the eagle, representing the Lord's heavenly origin.

Now that was Augustine's arrangement of things, and for the most part men have followed that, I think. But there are variations on all of these. And that's particularly true of the Gospel of Mark. Some have identified Mark as that with the ox or with the servant and the sacrifice, but frequently, Mark was identified with the lion. The city of Venice, for example, claims Mark as its patron saint. And if you've been there, you've visited Saint Mark's Square and the Basilica of Saint Mark, and you've seen all over the city the symbol of the lion. Sometimes it's a winged lion, other times simply a lion. But the lion is throughout because they believe that that's the symbol of Mark.

However we understand Mark's interpretation or his presentation of Christ, and we can say that he is presented in the Gospel of Mark in His humanity as well as in His deity. He's presented as a servant and as a sacrifice. But very clearly Mark pictures Him as a king. I think that the lion is well associated with this gospel

because, as you remember from last week, John has introduced Him as King. Heaven has approved Him as King. Satan's temptations have proved his moral qualifications as King and as Savior. And now we see Him acting as King as He goes forth announcing the kingdom, gathering His subjects, and revealing His authority.

Mark takes up our Lord's ministry after the arrest of John. This is, as we mentioned earlier, about a year after His baptism in the Jordan and His testing in the wilderness. The Lord had engaged in an informal ministry in Judea, which is recorded in the Gospel of John. But His formal ministry begins in Galilee. With John's arrest and the conclusion of John's ministry, the Lord traveled back to Galilee to begin His ministry in fulfillment of prophecy and fulfillment of Isaiah 9:1-2, which speaks of "Galilee of the Gentiles" as a place where "people who walk in darkness Will see a great light;" And then Isaiah goes on to prophesy Israel's King in that same passage. It's a well-known passage which states "a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders;" He underscores the importance of government being upon Him. "His name is Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God," who will be given the throne of David and his kingdom.

And when Jesus enters Galilee, He enters as a King, He enters preaching the good news of salvation and the kingdom of God. We read in verse 15, "and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.' " Now the word "kingdom" can be understood in different ways. It can be understood as referring to God's universal and eternal rule. He was Israel's King, recognized as such. Samuel reminds him of that when they want a human king, don't need a human king. God is their king. But He's also King of the nations. He was recognized as such. That's how Jeremiah describes Him in chapter 10 of his prophecy. And His kingdom, as Psalm 145 states, "is an everlasting kingdom."

But it's unlikely that our Lord comes announcing that the universal government of God is at hand. It's unlikely because it was always present and they realized that. Nor would He have merely come announcing the spiritual reign of God in the hearts of men, and that is often the way this is explained. Although the kingdom certainly involves that, it is essentially that realm in which God's will

prevails. And I think that's probably Paul's meaning in Romans 14:17, although there's some debate about that.

But that's likely the meaning. It begins in the hearts of men, with God ruling there, God reigning there. Wherever His will prevails, there is His kingdom. But it's not exclusively that, and probably not here because the announcement that God would reign in the hearts of men would have had no special significance to Israel since God's spiritual rule among His people had always been recognized by His people, just as His eternal sovereignty over the world had been recognized by them.

What is clear from reading the gospels is that Israel was anticipating a kingdom on the earth like David's kingdom in which God would rule and His glory would be displayed among men. So the question that we ask or we should ask as we come to this expression here, verse 15, is was there any basis for that anticipation, any basis for that hope from the Old Testament? And I think the answer to that is yes. In Genesis 13, God promised land to Abraham and to his descendants, and they would possess that forever.

Second Samuel chapter 7, He promised David that He would establish a kingdom in which David's descendant whom we know to be our Lord would sit on his throne forever, just as Isaiah prophesied, He would have the throne of David. There's the kingdom of Daniel chapter 2 described in that vision that Nebuchadnezzar had and that Daniel interpreted for him of a stone which is cut out without hands, and it's in the heavens, and it comes down and it strikes that great image, that glorious image, which is representative of all the Gentile kingdoms, and it crumbles and it turns to dust, and that stone grinds it and it's blown away. And then the stone begins to fill all of the earth, becoming a kingdom and a universal kingdom of which Daniel says, "the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed."

And Zephaniah speaks of this. Zephaniah is, I'm sure, a passage, a book you've been reading lately, very familiar one to us. Well, Zephaniah is one of the minor prophets and one that we're probably not very familiar with, though we should be. But the Jews were very familiar with it and familiar with its promises. Zephaniah 3:20 promises or states the Lord's promise to regather Jerusalem and give them "renown and praise among all the peoples of the earth," and restore their fortunes.

And this is what Israel anticipated, its restored fortunes. Because at this time, its fortunes were in bad condition. They were under the iron heel of Rome. They were no kingdom. They were a people in subjugation. So they looked forward to those restored fortunes. They looked forward to what would occur in the messianic kingdom. And the Lord doesn't challenge that. It's significant that when the Lord came announcing the kingdom of God, He didn't feel it necessary to explain what He meant by "the kingdom."

His preaching, in fact, begins with the assumption that the people knew what He Meant and that He and they were in agreement on the meaning of the kingdom of God as a kingdom on the earth. And I think that that meaning is borne out by statements that our Lord makes throughout the gospels. We see that particularly in the Gospel of Matthew, and there, for example, in Matthew 8:11, He states that, "many shall come from east and west, and recline *at the table* with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven;" Now that's a future kingdom that He's speaking of.

In Matthew 19:28, our Lord also tells His disciples and here the context is that of disciples giving up much, sacrificing much in following Him. And He tells them that they'll be well rewarded for the sacrifice that they've made. We read in verse 28, "And Jesus said to them, 'Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.'" Now there He speaks of the kingdom as the regeneration. That is a time when the earth will have a new birth, when there will be an earthly renewal. And He will sit, "the Son of Man will sit, on His glorious throne."

But later in the Gospel of Mark, in 14:25 when the Lord was instituting the Lord's supper, He tells the disciples, "Truly I say to you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God." Now that can't be understood as being fulfilled in the church as though the church is the kingdom. It can only be fulfilled upon His second advent. I like the words of George Eldon Ladd, who sort of summarizes all of this when he writes, "Everything in the gospels points to the idea that life in the kingdom of God, in the age to come, will be

life on the earth. But life transformed by the kingly rule of God when His people enter into the full measure of the divine blessings."

Now, "the full measure of the divine blessings," we enjoy as citizens of His kingdom, as men and women whose names are written in heaven, we enjoy blessings now. We shouldn't think that we don't. And Paul speaks of this in Ephesians 1. We have the Holy Spirit, who is the earnest, the down payment of glorious things that are coming. But the fulness of those blessings will be enjoyed in the future and we'll enjoy it in that kingdom on the earth. And that's what John says in Revelation 5:10, where he states that those who had been purchased by Christ, who have been redeemed by His blood, will in the future reign upon the earth, a reign that Revelation 20 states will be 1,000 years in length.

Now this, I think, is the kingdom that was promised to Israel, of which we should note the Gentiles who have believed in Christ have been given an equal share. It is the kingdom of God that Christ said was at hand. Now what did He mean by that? What did He mean by "the kingdom of God is at hand"? Well, simply that it was imminent, that it was about to occur. It had come near because the king had come. And it would be manifested in its glory if the nation responded to its king. And so the Lord says, "Repent and believe in the gospel." That's the offer of the kingdom. But, of course, they rejected it because they rejected their King. Israel failed to understand that the kingdom would come through the cross. Don't believe that they failed to understand that there would be a geographical kingdom on the earth, but they failed to understand that that kingdom can only come through the cross, that in order to have a kingdom, they needed first to have an atonement. They needed to be made fit for that kingdom.

And with their rejection, the stewardship of the kingdom that had been entrusted to them was taken from Israel as our Lord says in Matthew 21, taken from them and given to a nation producing the fruit of it. But He does not mean by that that it's taken away permanently. As Zephaniah said, He will restore their fortunes. And that's what Paul explains in Romans 11 with his illustration of the natural branches of the olive tree being broken off, speaking of Israel and unbelief, and the wild ones, the Gentiles, being grafted in. Time doesn't allow us to develop God's

amazing plan of history and salvation whereby Israel's rejection became the means and the occasion of Gentile inclusion into the kingdom and into the blessings of God, and in which Gentile inclusion will become the means of Israel's reintroduction into those blessings, re-inclusion in the olive tree, followed by worldwide blessings.

And that will occur in the future when, as Paul says, the fulness of the Gentiles has come in, when our Lord returns. And that is when Israel will turn to its Lord, and it's only when Israel repents and believes in Christ, in the One whom they have rejected, that they will enter into those kingdom blessings. No Jew or Gentile will enter into the kingdom apart from faith. And that's underscored by what our Lord says as He comes preaching. He comes announcing the kingdom and calling men to repentance and faith in the gospel.

He came preaching a kingdom, preaching and speaking as a King. But a King needs subjects, and so with His ministry having officially begun, He begins calling disciples. He begins gathering subjects, men who will be trained by Him in the ministry that they will then carry on, His ministry that they were going to carry on after His crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. He knew that He would be rejected by the nation. He came to die. And He knew that He would build His church, and so He called to Himself disciples who would be the foundation of His church. They would be the link between Him and His ascension and His session at the right hand of the Father and the church and they would carry on the ministry of preaching the gospel of God and the kingdom of God.

Mark here records the calling of four men from Galilee: Peter, Andrew, James, and John. And he records their immediate response in following our Lord. Now remember, a year has passed since the Lord was baptized. This was not the first time that these men had met our Lord. And so it's not as though they are fishing in the Sea of Galilee and they see this stranger who calls them and they are sort of drawn, as it were, by a magnet to Him without understanding it. That's maybe the impression that we get by reading this text, but they have known Him and they have had an association with Him. But at this point, as our Lord begins His official ministry, officially begins His ministry, they become His steady companions in that ministry. What is striking about this – and there are really a number of things that are striking

about the call of these disciples by our Lord – is that this is Christ the King calling to Himself fishermen for His disciples. He doesn't enter into the rabbinical schools and recruit the best and the brightest, the men of training and prestige. He chooses simple men. He chooses the common men. But then that's the pattern of the Lord's choice of people.

Paul speaks of this in 1 Corinthians 1:26-27 very significantly. Paul speaks on more than one occasion in a way that will lower the Corinthians' estimation of themselves. He had to deal with their pride. And 1 Corinthians 1:26-27 certainly does strike at one's pride because there he says that God has chosen "not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise." So He chooses fishermen, common men. Not that they were unintelligent men. They weren't. But they were not the kind of men you'd think a king would collect.

Notice, also, it's the Lord who takes the initiative. They don't seek Him out. He seeks them out. And He seeks them with authority. He calls Simon and Andrew in the midst of casting their nets and "immediately – " Mark writes " – they left their nets and followed Him." A little further along the lake, He calls James and John, who were mending their nets. And they left their work and they followed Him. Their response tells us a great deal about discipleship, about the nature of being a disciple, what a disciple is to do. A disciple of Christ loses his or her life in becoming a disciple. We're not our own. We are His, and we're to live our life in that way.

Perhaps you read an interview in the Dallas paper a few weeks ago with a well-known sports figure here in town. I mention this because this passage was called to mind to me, at least, as I read the passage. I won't tell you who he was. If you read it, you probably know. But he's a man who has every hair in place. Unlike me, he's not going like that all the time. And you can see him on television this afternoon. You're probably saying, "I know, Duncan, so keep moving so we can do that." But it was an interesting interview because in it, he states that he doesn't like people to be too close to him, and so he doesn't invite many people into his house. And the reason is because if they get too close to him, he may lose control of the relationship and he wants to control the relationship.

Well, I suppose we all want that in one degree or another. We want autonomy. We want self-government. We want to control things. And I suppose that in some ways that's good. But in regard to Christ and in regard to our relationship to Him, we have to yield complete control to Him. We cannot control that relationship. We are to be controlled in that relationship, and that means we are to submit to Him in every area of our life. We are, as it were, to let Him in in every area of our life. There are not compartments of our life that we can say, "Well, this is mine and this is not yours. You can have these areas. You can come into these rooms of my heart, but not this one. This is my special room. This is my secret room."

There's no room for that. He claims everything, everything in our life. And if we are to follow Him acceptably, that is the only way we can follow Him, by submitting to His rule in our life. That's what Paul told the Corinthians later in chapter 6. He said, "You are not your own. For you have been bought with a price." Every one of us are not owners of ourself. Christ owns us. Put your faith in Him. He owns you. And so if you belong to Christ, your whole life is to be lived to His honor, to His glory and not for your own. You can't put your business, your career first. Like these men at the Sea of Galilee could not put their fishing career ahead of our Lord. Can't put your family first, and they did not do that, either.

Everything is to be submitted to Him, and there will be no blessing in this life if that is not done. When we don't submit to the Lord, we don't do it because we think really, "If I give that up, I'm not really going to be very happy. I'll really be much more happy in this life. I'll really have joy in this life if I can just hold onto that, if I can just be in control of this area, whatever it may be." The reality is we will never be fulfilled, we will never have joy, we will never experience genuine happiness apart from complete submission to the Lord. And there will be no blessing in this life apart from that. And that's what it means to be a disciple, to be in submission to Him.

Well, finally, notice the promise that He makes to these men. "Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men." That's an obvious play on their occupation, but it's a beautiful picture of what disciples are to do and what they are to be. Peter and Andrew were casting their nets on the water, trying to catch fish, when

our Lord comes along and He says to them, "I've got something greater for you to do. You've been catching fish. You're going to catch men for the kingdom of God, and the net that you'll use will be the gospel."

Now, fishing is strenuous work and it involves skill of which I have none. I can't speak with any kind of authority about fishing. I think in my entire life, I've caught two fish and I had to throw both of them back. So I don't speak with much authority, but what I know of fishing I know is that it involves skill. I used to think you just throw your line out there, and the fish come to it, and you catch it, and one guy is as good as another, just that some are a little lucky and others aren't. Come to find out there's skill involved. There's knowledge of the lake. There's knowledge of how to do things. So skill is involved in it and it involves a great deal of effort, particularly this kind of fishing, where they threw great nets out onto the water, had to draw large schools of fish in.

And we can see in all of that they, a parallel with evangelism and giving the gospel. In fact, we could develop quite a lesson around that comparison. Evangelism is strenuous work. It's not easy. It's daunting. It's threatening. It calls for patience. It calls for skill, just as good fishing does. And it involves rejection. Maybe that's what's particularly difficult about it. But notice our Lord doesn't say, "Follow me and become fishers of men." He says, "I will make you fishers of men." At the heart of Christianity is the sovereign work of God. He takes the initiative. He accomplishes the work. We have responsibilities, it's true, and we can't diminish those.

And our Lord emphasizes our responsibilities with the command, "Follow me." No one will become a fisher of men who does not first follow our Lord. But we follow because He first calls. He begins the work. And for all who act in faith, for all who submit in obedience, He promises to make something of us, to change us, to make us soul winners. We're not that by nature, but we can be that by the power of God.

Augustine captured the primacy of grace in all of this with his prayer in the *Confessions*. "Give what you command and command what you will." Pelagius, the great champion of free will and human autonomy hated that. It made him mad when he read that. He came to Rome and had a very popular ministry and challenged

Augustine and Augustine and he had an ongoing debate, so to speak, that outlasted Pelagius and involved Augustine and Pelagius' disciples. But what he didn't like was the point that Augustine was making, and Augustine's point was simply this. Command what you will, but give to me the ability to carry it out, because I can't do it of myself. I can do nothing of myself. I'm helpless of myself. But if you supply the ability, then you can command whatever you will and I can do it in your strength by your power. So, "give what you command and command what you will." And He does that. What He commands, He supplies. We, for our part, are to be obedient. We are to act in faith.

Now, in verses 21 through 31, the Lord shows His authority as King. He has come announcing the kingdom. He has come as King gathering His subjects. And now He displays His authority as King. First, authority with the Scriptures, then authority over the spirit world, and finally authority over sickness. He went to Capernaum, a town on the northwest corner of the Sea of Galilee. This was the home of Peter, and it became our Lord's base of operations in His Galilean ministry. When the Lord came into town, He either immediately or sometime thereafter "entered the synagogue and *began* teaching."

It was the Jewish custom of the synagogue to invite visiting teachers to preach from the Scriptures. And the Lord did that, and His teaching, Mark writes, amazed all in attendance. They said "He was teaching them as *one* having authority, and not as the scribes." For the most part, the scribes were teachers of the law and its application to daily life, what you could or could not do on the Sabbath, for example. Their authority was grounded in tradition that had been handed down to them.

And so they leaned heavily on previous rabbis and very frequently, they would cite formulas like "the school of Shammai declares such and such, but the school of Hillel declares such and such." And they by quoting various rabbis and their decisions, they would reason to their conclusion, and that was their authority. It was grounded in tradition. It was the teaching of other men. And, as you can imagine, it could be very dull, very detailed. I can testify to that. I've read some of that in the Mishnah, and it's very, very involved, intricate, and dull, and rather obscure teaching on the law and its application.

Well, our Lord didn't do that. When He spoke, His teaching had the ring of authority. He didn't rely on other men. He taught the Scriptures in His own authority, and we see that, for example, in the sermon on the mount. He would say, for example, "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you –" not rabbi Shammai or Hillel, or anyone else, but "– I say to you that everyone who looks on a woman to lust for her has committed adultery with her already in his heart." He spoke in His own authority. He opened up the Scriptures for the people in a way that they'd never had them opened up before. He taught on subjects that were relevant to life and death and eternity. He unfolded the hope of the gospel. He touched on very real needs that they had and captured the interest of the people. That's clear from what they say in verse 27, that this is "a new teaching with authority!"

Well, Mark doesn't record the sermon for us. It would be nice if he had and we could examine this amazing sermon that He delivers in the synagogue, which would have been typical of all the sermons that He gives. He doesn't do that because his primary interest, as we have noted before, is in our Lord's deeds rather than His words. He does emphasize throughout this gospel that the Lord taught, but what is important here is the authority of His teaching, authority that the people recognized eclipsed that of the rabbis. No rabbi ever taught like this. They never heard teaching like this. This was new. This was teaching with authority.

And His authority was recognized by more than the people in that synagogue. The demonic powers also acknowledged it when a man in the audience with an unclean spirit interrupted the service and cried out in verse 24, "What do we have to do with you, Jesus of Nazareth?" Now, demons don't fit very comfortably in the modern mind. Men today are apt to dismiss the subject of demons as a development of superstition which we've outgrown. I confess, to my knowledge, I've never met a person possessed with a demon, but the Scriptures clearly teach their existence, and they distinguish demon possession from physical or mental illness.

In this case, the demon possessed an individual. It controlled his personality, manipulated his vocal cords in order to rail against Christ in a combination of fear and defiance. C. E. B. Cranfield, a British scholar, captures the sense of the demon's

statement or its question, "What do we have to do with you?" with the paraphrase, "Mind your own business." Now that's what he seems to be saying. "What do we have to do with you, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!" Well, all of this is a plea by this demon to be left alone, to go away. But the Lord can't leave evil alone. He came to destroy the works of the devil and evil in all of its forms must be cast out. And so the Lord responds to Him in verse 25 saying, " 'Be quiet, come out of him!' Throwing him into convulsions, the unclean spirit cried out with a loud voice and came out of him."

The Scriptures clearly teach, as I've stated, the existence of Satan and his demonic forces. But it doesn't have a preoccupation with the subject. The writers of Scripture were not fascinated with the occult as I think many today are, even many Christians. In fact, they say relatively little about the devil and his angels. If it were left to us, I think we would write whole books about the devil, what he does and how we can control, and all of that. But the Scriptures are relatively brief about that and say just enough to say that they're involved in our spiritual conflict. There is an invisible war in which we are under attack. We should understand that.

But the emphasis of the New Testament is that the powers of darkness have been defeated. They don't control us. We have triumphed over them in Christ and our Lord demonstrates that here. And He demonstrates something beyond that. Not only does Christ have authority over evil spirits and their whole domain, but He has power over all forms of evil. He has power over the evil, over the sin in all of our hearts, and we have that.

Read Romans 7. If it's not clear from your own experience, look at Paul's description of his experience. There's that law of sin in his members. And the Lord is dealing with that and He's dealing with that in all of us the way that He dealt with the demon. He casts it out. He will not leave it alone in any of us. And we may want Him to leave it alone, to let it be, to let us have that area of our life to ourselves that we think gives us such pleasure, but He won't do that. He can't. He's holy. He is the Holy One of God and if we are going to be His disciple, then we may as well get used to the fact that our whole life is going to be a process of Him dealing with the sin that is in us, casting it out from us. As members of His kingdom, we must conform to the

standards and the rules of His kingdom, and we must be conformed to the image of His Son, conformed to Christ, and because that's the case, He will not let us be at peace with our sin. So to be at peace, we must then strive to be in obedience to Him.

The demon was obedient. The Lord said, "Leave," and it left. And in that subduing of the demon, I think we have a portent, a foreshadowing of the final day when Satan and his host will be dealt with completely and finally and cast into eternal perdition. But having said that, let me give the demon its due.

It recognized its master. It confessed that Christ is "the Holy One of God," who had come from heaven. And James says the demons believe and shudder. Men, on the other hand, show less insight and greater blindness by the fact that they don't recognize that. They don't recognize who He is. They don't recognize the need to submit to Him. So there is in this something of a profound confession on the part of the demon. It spoke the truth. But interestingly, the Lord refuses to accept it, refuses not to accept the truth of it, but to accept it from the demon. He won't receive the praise of an unclean spirit, and so He says, "Be quiet." "Be muzzled," literally.

The Lord would not have His ministry in Galilee heralded by a corrupt demon. He doesn't need the testimony of demons to further His cause, just as the church of Jesus Christ doesn't need the support of unbelievers to further its cause. To lean on that is really to lean on the flesh. God is sufficient. We rely on Him. And I think our Lord is displaying that here. He obeys the Father. He follows the leading of the Spirit, and His mission will be successful as it was. And so He refuses the acknowledgment of the Spirit and commands it to leave. He uses no formulas. He uses no magic, no liturgy, just a straight command with the power of His personal authority, and immediately, the demon obeys, throwing its victim on the ground, causing him to convulse and scream as it came out. It was a shocking scene, as you can imagine, and again the people were amazed with the result that the news of our Lord spread throughout the region of Galilee.

Immediately, the Lord left the synagogue, we read in verses 29 and following, and entered the house of Peter, where again He shows His power and His authority as King, and this time over sickness. And here we have an interesting detail that Mark supplies us. Peter had a mother-in-law. In other words, the first pope was married.

Well, I don't know how they deal with that, but there it is. He was married. He had a mother-in-law, and his mother-in-law was sick, lying on a bed, burning up with fever, and they immediately told Him of her condition.

Now if the Lord was stern with the unclean spirit, He was tender with this sick woman. And that's one of the special features of this passage. Mark is the only writer to note that Jesus took her by the hand. The others mention that He healed this woman, but Mark states that He took her by the hand. And it's details like that that caught his attention because later in chapter 5, he states that the Lord took a young girl by the hand and raised her from the dead. In chapter 8, He takes a blind man by the hand. In chapter 9, He takes a young man with a dumb spirit by the hand. Later in that same chapter, He took a child and put him in the midst of them, and taking him in His arms, taught the disciples. The Lord touched people, and that touch was an expression of compassion on His part and His touch had power in it.

Donald Grey Barnhouse writes of a man he knew who had said his words were "had been an infidel." Well, we all had been infidels at one time in our life, and that's what he's saying. Before this man's conversion, he was an infidel. But this man told Barnhouse the story of his conversion. He had been in a car accident and soon after that accident, soon after he had come out of the hospital from that accident, a friend asked him, "Was it the accident that that led you to Christ?" "No. Not at all," he said. "Was it the fear of death?" "No," he said. "I'll tell you what it was."

And then he goes on to tell him the story of how after the accident a limousine pulled up, stopped, a lady got out – she was evidently dressed very well – and walked toward him. And he was staggering around in a daze, covered with blood, and she caught him by the arm. And he said, he supposed out of a natural instinct of manners, he cried out that he was bleeding, not to come nearer because he would get her dirty. She had the chauffeur come and lift the man up and put him in the back seat of her limousine, and he says when he complained about the blood, she said, "What is a dress? What is upholstery? You are hurt." And evidently, she was a Christian woman, because that gesture of not caring about her own appearance or the condition of her car, but touching him and helping him, he says, "It broke my heart."

Barnhouse commented, "I tell you, my dear friends, if you are going to minister the gospel of Jesus Christ, you've got to take people by the hand, and you mustn't look to see if their hands are dirty." Now that's the way our Lord ministered. And by His touch, He raised her up and the fever left her. And not only that, she suffered no effects from it. We might think she'd be exhausted after it, exhausted from this innervating fever that she had. But instead, she's filled with energy and Mark writes that she began to wait on them.

The Lord not only heals, but He enables the healed to serve. He healed Peter's mother-in-law, and she served with strength. He called Peter to Himself and He made Him to become a fisher of men. That's the power and the authority of Christ. That's the power and the authority of the King. By His teaching in the synagogue, His authority was witnessed as the revealer of God to men. By His authority over demons and disease, He was revealed as God among men. He is the conquering King who cleanses men of sin. And all men are in need of cleansing. And He gives new life and He gives new ability, ability to serve.

And what a privilege it is to serve the King. We don't have to leave our professions as lawyers or doctors or laborers or engineers or teachers or housewives, or whatever we are in as our calling in this life, but we can serve Him and should serve Him in that calling, where we are, with lives that are submitted to Him with a willingness to leave if He should call us to leave. And when we do, when we serve the King of kings, we lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven. We invest our lives with eternal blessing, eternal reward in the eternal kingdom to come.

Disciples of Jesus Christ make sacrifices in this life. That's very clear from what they say in the gospels as they interact with our Lord. It's very clear as we consider our own lives and the things that we are challenged with. But the rewards in the kingdom are far, far greater than any losses that we can sustain here. And so as we consider that, consider the kingdom to come, consider our role today as His disciples, preaching the gospel of God, announcing the kingdom, we should realize that in doing so, we are laying up treasures that can never fade away and realize that we can't do this in our own strength, and so we should be asking God to help us to devote ourselves more and more increasingly to His service in whatever we do,

wherever we are. That should be our prayer, that God would give us the grace to serve Him well and serve Him faithfully.

If there are any in attendance this morning who have not become disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, may God give you no rest or peace until you do that, until you become one of His disciples, until you recognize your need of a savior. The fact that you are a sinner and that you need to repent of that sin and turn to Him, the only One who can save, the Lord Jesus Christ, who has died in the place of sinners, so that all who do believe will receive the forgiveness of sins and life everlasting. May God give you the grace to do that. Shall we stand now for the benediction?

Gracious Heavenly Father, we do thank You for the picture we have of our Lord as One who is in complete control, and it becomes very clear from the outset of this gospel and all of the gospels that when, at the end of His life, He was apprehended, taken into custody, tried and then nailed to a cross, it was because He willed it to be so. He submitted to that. He could have destroyed all who approached Him with malevolence in their heart, but He did not. He submitted to evil men in order that evil men and women might be saved. Thank You for the cross and what it's accomplished, how it's changed our lives, and pray that You would continue to change and make us more and more like Jesus Christ. It's in His name we pray, Amen.