

***PRAISE INTERNATIONAL***  
***WHEN JESUS WENT TO CHURCH***  
***MARK 1:21-28***

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**Good Morning**

**Prayer Needs**

2007 I had the privilege of spending 10 days in Northeast India and one unforgettable night in Delhi. We had purchased our flights on a discount web-site that routed us from the Northeast city of Guwahati India to Delhi - after a 5 hour taxi ride from Shillong to Guwahati - it was supposed to be an overnight in Delhi. After booking the tickets I realized that our overnight in Delhi was not just find a hotel and awake early...it was that Air India was landing at the old airport on one side of Delhi and our next flight was out of the 'New' international airport on the other side of Delhi. I was thrilled to discover a hotel that I could book that included 'transfers' to and from both the old airport and the international airport - problem solved! What I discovered on leaving the old airport with shouts from every cab rickshaw driver was a crazy atmosphere and I walked up to what I thought was our driver who gladly took all 5 of us to our hotel....not near the airport but in old downtown Delhi near the old bus station. Here I am leading a group of 6 into the wild unknown in the dark in a country I don't know in a language I don't know to an old hotel - after checking realizing we had to 'pay' our drivers because the transfer advertised for the hotel simply meant 'it was available'. You see in a country like India the reality between what people say and mean can have some scope...especially when money is involved. Its now midnight and we have finally arrived in our room and I get a call from the manager who informs me that to actually make our flight we would need to leave the hotel at 4 am - and he would arrange for drivers to meet us. After that nap we arrived at the airport to check in for our flight to Amman Jordan in a line that seemed it would never end...when we finally got close to the counter we were moved to another line on the other side of the airport..when we got to that counter we were informed that we needed to have our luggage scanned before we could check in - in that line I watched as person after person walked to the front of the line paid the attendant some ruppies and had their luggage scanned but when I attempted to inform the attendant of our time constraint he forcefully told me to get back in line. Finally we were almost at the front of the line and another man spoke in Hindi to the attendant and he held his hand up to me pushed my luggage to the side and reached for the other mans luggage - and then it happened....it was like I was watching an out of body experience as I grabbed the mans luggage off the conveyer and said firmly NO placing my bag on the conveyer - 'we have waited'....

In case you are wondering the attendant that I had not tipped did not take that well and he turned as if ready to come to blows now yelling while removing my bag and replacing it with the other mans bag...as I stood staring heart pounding and suddenly realizing....5 people are watching me loose my mind in the Delhi airport. We did finally get checked in and after finally making it to the gate I sat quietly as I felt so ashamed of how I behaved - and as soon as our team was reassembled I apologized. I was so embarrassed to have to own how I had let anxiety over missing a flight take over me - I lost my patience raised my voice in demand with the very people I wanted to go and 'minister' to - did I mention we were on a ministry trip? It was one of many unfortunate times in my life that I became like the man in today's gospel.

**Someone with an unclean spirit, no not convulsing in full demonic oppression but clearly not under the control of the Spirit of Jesus!**

The word 'unclean' means something of the wrong mixture. Yes there is such a thing as a demonized person but here is something to chew on - there is little difference between an oppressed demonized person and me in that moment. Paul describes it this way in 2 Timothy 2:24 as a person who has been

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taken captive to do the will of adversary... meaning you do not have to be a devil worshiper to be living 'unclean' just living surrendered to another spirit than the spirit of Jesus.

**Curious thing about that whole experience?** I had just finished 10 days of ministry and leading prayer meetings for the people of India. I have been leading Church for 10 days...is that what happens when you go to Church? Or had real Church not fully gotten a hold of me?

- Truth be told that is not the only time I have lived from the wrong mixture - not from love for God or my neighbor - moments of compromise - and I became **that 'guy'** demanding my way.

**Part of my own growth over the past few years has been a recognition of places where mixture has been a part of my life and community at times when we did not even notice.**

- These are the spaces where things like racial injustice, male patriarchy, white privilege have become so normal that it doesn't even seem strange. **How did we live in a country where folks go to church and board a bus separated by color....and it seemed normal?**

When I apologized to my son and my friends their response while intending to be reassuring was telling....when one of them said it seemed 'normal' to them.

**Part of the reason Jesus came was to reveal what Normal really is and how it lives!**

- **But it is also why the first words that Mark records from Jesus mouth is this - 'its the moment...to repent - to change your mind - to turn...' from what?**
- **From what was 'normal', to live not as every other human being, but to live as actual human beings - loved, cherished and valued by God!**

**What happens when Jesus comes to Church? The opportunity to see what is true - 'The Holy One has come' to silence the confusion and condemnation to deliver confused mixed up lives to their right mind and life and to make us whole. That beloved is indeed Good news!**

**Confused, mixed up, out of our right mind - living with something unclean and dare I say surrounded by the same - God has come to not only be recognized but that we could actually see ourselves - Paul said it this way in Col. 3:10 *have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.*(JB Phillips)**

When Jesus went to Church - **Mark 1:21-28** (KTNT) with now 1/2 dozen disciples following.

In my Pentecostal background we had an image of this and other texts that interpret any deliverance ministry of Jesus into a power encounter - which for me initially was a bit scary. I am long learned that it is not scary when you realize that confronting an evil spirit is no contest for Jesus. So Jesus encounters a man with an unclean spirit and we have this image of a power encounter with a man who in our mind is the guy is an obvious mess he is the guy are trying to get to church...get him saved...

But when you look at the text here is the 1st unnerving truth Mark reveals this story when Jesus is already 'in church'. He is in the synagogue in Capernaum - that less than 40 years ago was discovered. Now what was a the Synagogue in Jewish life in the 1st Century? The feast's and festivals centered around the temple in Jerusalem - the synagogue was the place to gather primarily for 3 things - Prayer (the prayers - mostly the Psalms), Read and study the scriptures primarily the Torah (first 5 books) and give offerings. Later it becomes a place of cultural connections for common meals and life together, but in Jesus day it is primarily these 3 things – Prayer, Scripture and Giving.

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***And the secret is simply this Christ in you!***  
***Yes, Christ in you bringing with Him the hope of all the glorious things to come.***

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Next thing to notice in our text is ‘where was the man with an unclean spirit’?

- **Not at the local Pub...**
- In Synagogue - Jacob (we will call him) is in Church - consider this for a moment when reading Marks account. Jacob and the way he lived with others was so familiar, so accepted well its just who he is - **he seemed ‘normal’ that’s just Jacob!**

Now don’t miss what is glaring in the text - **what was astonishing?**

- **Not Jacob’s presence - but Jesus!** Jesus is the one that astonishes them.

**He is teaching differently - apparently no the same rehearsal of scripture.**

- **What was He teaching I wonder?**  
Well Mark does not tell us but if we take the Gospel accounts that become specific The Sermon on the Mount - later the Sermon by the Sea...what is Jesus saying over and over?
  - *Love your enemies...*
  - *Forgive your enemies* - how often? Seventy times 7?
  - *Bless those who curse you..*
  - *Blessed are the poor...*
  - *Blessed are the peacemaker’s*
- Wait Jesus this is astonishing you seem to think God wants to deal with heart motivations Jesus?
- *The Kingdom is where?* Within....
  - So what then is the greatest of all these commandments that we come to hear taught regularly...
  - Astonishing we aren’t hearing bible verses to vindicate our chosen lifestyle but an invitation to a life lived in love to God and our neighbor...

**Then Jacob who has been listening blurts out** - *what business do you have with us?*

- The man came to Church but encounters in Jesus teaching a call to life...and then his mixture - the unclean spirit rises up - at Jesus teaching.
- Now just slowly digest that for a moment.

**That which was unclean was not revealed by figuring out the devils schemes but by revealing the Good heart of the Father!**

- As Jesus is teaching Jacob can’t just sit in his compromise and mixture....
- Can’t I just give my tithe and harbor resentment
- Cant I just say a prayer and hold onto my lust...
- What business do you have...with us...
- The answer - everything!

Jesus has come to seek and save all that was lost - restore humanity to silence the confusing lies.

When Jesus went to Church it was not Jacob that was unusual but Jesus - Stunning - is this a new teaching?

- No Jesus himself said I am not here to replace the law or the prophets but to fulfill them - that we could have life to the full! What is this?

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I read something this week from a Pastor that bears repeating - Michael Marsh

*It seems the more we look at our life in 2024 and world the stranger the good news sounds.*

*“You want me to love my enemies? I can’t do that. Don’t you know what they’ve done?”*

*And I’ve come to realize that’s more a statement about having an unclean spirit than it is about the gospel of Christ. It’s a symptom of our (own) self-alienation*

**We have forgotten who we actually are...and the life we are invited to live.**

*The great tragedy of this alienation, this self-estrangement, is that*

*We tend to let the most familiar and craziest voices among us speak for us.*

*We’re no longer surprised when the demonic shows up. I am talking about the attitudes that deny human dignity, the powers that destroy life, the self-interest and greed that refuse to see a common and interdependent life. We may not like it but we’re not too surprised at what’s on the news. Are we really that surprised when there is another terrorist bombing, another mass shooting, another scandal?*

*We let those outer voices, whether it’s CNN, Fox, a parent, our spouse, a friend, a priest, have greater influence in our lives than that deep inner voice of truth and we lose just a bit more of ourselves.*

*We forget that what is true, good, and beautiful are neither objects outside of us nor goals to be achieved, but realities within us to be recognized.*

Here is the good news of Today’s message - **Jesus still coming to Church** to our synagogue not to condemn but to silence the voices that have hindered our understanding of who we actually are as loved cherished and valued sons and daughters of God.

**What does that look like** - continue the message of Mark 1:15 - change our mind

**1. Matthew 17:15**

Jesus is on the what we refer to as the Mount of transfiguration with Moses and Elijah - represent the Law and Prophets and a voice out of the cloud verse 15 says *“This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased, listen to Him”* ( not in the text - **NOT THEM** ). To live as the person that Jesus intended I would be if He were me - is to listen to His words - He is the perfect representation of the Father!

**2. And what is He saying? Finished – Done.**

It is His voice that silences the thundering whispers in our life - *It is finished - behold I am making all things new - anyone thirsty hungry come to Me! Worn out tired come to Me I meek and gentle of hear and you will find - Rest for your Souls!*

**3. What is the goal again?**

Great question this week - what is the goal or our maturity in Christ - Perfection ? Or becoming myself? 19th Century Danish Theologian and Philosopher, Soren Kierkegaard summed this up with this simple prayer **‘Now with God’s help, I shall become myself.’** That is actually good gospel! When Jesus encounters His scared friends He said do not be afraid - in the the greatest prayer of the Old Testament - Psalm 23 we hear these words ‘The Lord is my shepherd I lack nothing...because He is with me’. Our goal is not religious perfection but actual wholeness -Shalom - nothing lacking, nothing broken, nothing missing whole and at peace! I can proclaim

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this is His intent that I would actually experience and live alive a human being representing Him upon the earth! What does that look like - looks like Jesus - or better said what my life would look like if Jesus were living my life. It looks like love, Joy, Peace, patience, kindness, self control, faithfulness....

I have begun to pray the Prayer of St Theresa of Avila almost everyday

*Let nothing disturb you*

*Let nothing frighten you*

*All things are passing away*

*God never changes*

*Patience obtains all things*

*Whoever has God lacks nothing*

*God alone suffices.*

*With God's help I shall become myself!*

**What happens when Jesus comes to Church? The opportunity to see what is true - 'The Holy One has come' to silence the confusion and condemnation to deliver confused mixed up lives to their right mind and life and to make us whole. That beloved is indeed Good news!**

**Closing Prayer**

Holy and awesome God,

your Son's authority is found in integrity and living truth,  
not the assertion of power over others.

Open our imaginations to new dimensions of your love,  
and heal us of all that severs us from you and one another,  
that we may grow into the vision you unfold before us. Amen.

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***Col 1:27b JB Phillips***

***1/28/2024***

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