



The Holy Disturber

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Mark 1:21-28

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²¹ And they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath he entered the synagogue and was teaching. ²² And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes. ²³ And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, ²⁴ "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." ²⁵ But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!" ²⁶ And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying out with a loud voice, came out of him. ²⁷ And they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, "What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him." ²⁸ And at once his fame spread everywhere throughout all the surrounding region of Galilee.

(Pastor prays)

A little over four days ago, a nefarious object floating 60,000 feet in the air, quietly drifted across the borders of the continental United States. When that Chinese spy balloon showed up, quietly hovering over our country, drifting from the top of the country all the way down to the bottom, there arose in our country and in the citizens of our country a great concern. The news couldn't stop talking about it. The White House couldn't stop worrying about it. We were tangibly, for several days, reminded of the dangerous world we live in. That one balloon stopped airplane traffic; ground traveled down to a halt. Kids were breaking out telescopes. I saw him in my neighborhood. That's how I realized what was going on. What is that kid doing with a telescope? Then I saw it on the news. That one balloon disturbed the everyday events of normal life.

In this passage, the man named John Mark is introducing us to the great disturber, Jesus Christ. And here in this passage, Mark takes us to the very inauguration when the public ministry of Jesus is launched; when his authority is established; when his power is seen; and when the world was changed. Unlike any Chinese Spy balloon that violated our rights, my sermon is based on the fact that Christ has the joyful authority to disturb our lives. He has authority to come into your life and demand anything. I want you to take this path and join me there. I want you to look at this great disturber.

The Holy Disturber

I want you to see what Jesus will do and I want to pray that he will do that in you. Let's go quietly and quickly in. We'll go gently before we get to all the action. Here's the first thing I want you to notice. Number one.

He will disturb the status quo

Jesus will disturb the status quo; the way things are normally going. The average life, he disturbs it. Join me there in the text. Verse 21 says, *they went into Capernaum*, Who is the they? They are James and John, the sons of Thunder. And along with those two brothers, are another set of brothers Andrew and Simon (who will become Peter down the road). These four men are with Jesus and they go into a place called Capernaum. Capernaum. Let's think about that little town for a little bit. Capernaum is an old prosperous seaside village. Capernaum is probably named after the prophet Nahum. It's his hometown. It's right there on the Sea of Galilee. I've been to Capernaum. There in Capernaum, is a Roman garrison. We'll find out in a little bit that Capernaum is a great place. Matthew, the tax collector, will be called to follow Jesus at Capernaum. Several miracles will happen in Capernaum. Peter's house is there. And in the next passage, for next week, Peter's mother-in-law's house is right there in the town. Capernaum has a river of miracles happen there. In the Gospel of Mark alone all kinds of things happen in Capernaum. People are healed. Demons are thrown out. We're going to see a whole lot of that as Mark establishes for us the authority of Jesus over everything. Demons are cast out, The Roman Centurion's servant is healed. At one time, Jesus tells

Peter to go fishing to catch the drachma tax. Peter goes fishing and he catches a fish. And in that fish's mouth is a gold coin. That happened in Capernaum. Capernaum is a great place. It has not changed in years and years. Later on in Matthew when Jesus is giving the woes, he says to Capernaum, his hometown, if the miracles that were performed in you had been done in Sodom, they would have repented long ago. We'll get to that.

They went into Capernaum on the Sabbath. You'll notice it's the Sabbath day. Jesus is going to change the Sabbath. The Sabbath goes from Friday at sundown to Saturday at sundown. That's when the Jewish Sabbath is. Jesus will go in on a Sabbath day. What they don't know is that he is Lord of the Sabbath. The text tells us in verse one that they went into Capernaum on the Sabbath and they went into a synagogue. See that word synagogue? Synagogue is an assembly. The synagogue doesn't show up in Jewish life until the exile. You read Jewish history and learn that when the Northern and Southern kingdoms fall, they go into Babylonian exile and Nebuchadnezzar destroys the temple in Jerusalem. They've got no place to worship in exile, so they start gathering in small groups and they call them, the assembly. That's where the word synagogue comes from. The synagogue in Capernaum had been there for years and years. It was an old one. I have stood right there in that synagogue.

In the synagogue is where you would learn the scriptures. The temples are gone so you would teach the scriptures in the synagogue. And when the temple was rebuilt, they still kept the synagogues. That's where the people would gather. It became the centerpiece of the community. So for years and years, in this sleepy little town of Capernaum, in this synagogue that Jesus considered his hometown synagogue, things are going to change. The text tells us that Jesus comes into that synagogue. Anybody could come and speak. You could visit the Rabbi. He is somebody who would have sort of ran the synagogue, but he wasn't necessarily the teacher. He just did the administration. And if you had 10 to 12 adult men, you had a synagogue. And various teachers would come. And here we find out that this is going to open up for us. Jesus has come to wreck and disturb the status quo. There will be

several things Mark is telling us in his Gospel. Mark is going to establish the power of Jesus to cast out demons. Mark, maybe more than the other gospels, shows us how Jesus has victory over Satan by casting out demons. We will also see a whole lot of healing in the book of Mark. Now Mark doesn't give us the things that Jesus taught, but he tells us over and over again, more than any other gospel writer, that Jesus was a teacher. Capernaum then is the epitome of the status quo sameness. Now brothers and sisters, Jesus almost always upsets the applecart. Almost always, when he comes into your life, there is some dramatic change that is going to happen. And if there has not been some dramatic change in your life, can you really say that Jesus has come into your life? He will disturb the status quo. We have this setting so let's get into it further. There is something else I want you to notice in Verse 22.

He will disturb the accepted cultural norms

We live in a world that has accepted cultural norms that are antithetical to what we believe is Christians. We live in a world that does not believe the things we believe about God. For the life of me, I will never understand why modern-day presidents put their hand on a Bible and swear an oath. If they knew what was in that Bible, they wouldn't touch it. Jesus comes to disturb the accepted cultural norms. Join me there in verse 22, Jesus stands up to speak and look how Mark describes it. In verse 22. Mark says when they heard this man speak, they were astonished. Do you see the word, astonished? You'll see the word amazed down in verse 27, it's a little bit like this word. But this word has a lot of power in. At this word, *astonished at his teaching*. They were struck outside of themselves. We would say they were beside themselves. They were dumbstruck! What does that word mean? Dumbstruck or awestruck or astonished, it means that they had this visceral reaction. This is an emotional reaction that was inexplicable. It doesn't make any sense. Let me see if I can illustrate. There are people in this congregation that have a deep affinity for Taylor Swift. I am not among them. But there's a concert coming up, I think in April. I'm sorry that I even had that information. But I do have it. And there are people that will go to that concert to hear Taylor Swift;

and she puts on such a show that there will be in that Coliseum some people so moved so inexplicably that they will shed tears. Let me see if I can illustrate another one. When I got engaged to Connie, back in 1992. I was living in Fort Worth, TX. She was serving at a Baptist camp in Florida. So when she would go home and see her mom and dad in Mississippi, I would try to drive over there to see her for a little bit. Our wedding was coming up and I was really anxious about the wedding. And as I was coming across the Mississippi River on I-20 one day in my 1981 Volvo DL, I had a cassette player going. It was Elvis Presley and he was singing the American trilogy. Go find it somewhere. I was listening to Elvis Presley sing the American trilogy and I could feel tears welling up in my face. So I hit that eject button, grabbed the cassette tape and threw it into the Mississippi River! What you have here in this passage is unexplained emotion. They were astonished at themselves! Look at why they're astonished in verse 22. Join me there. *And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes.*

Jesus spoke with authority. That word authority is *Exousia* and It means coming out of the inside. He had the authority in himself. That was not like the scribes. They had plenty of talented teachers that came into the synagogue and would teach the scriptures. And they could do it in such a way that the congregation could understand. But there's something different about the way Jesus did it. The scribes would come in and have authority that they got from somewhere else. They didn't have it in themselves, so they would refer to other people and other teachers. They did this so much so that by this time they've been doing it for hundreds of years, the scribes would keep citing other people. They would give one side of the argument and then the other side of the argument. It might mean this and it could mean that. They would give the first this side of the issue, then the other side of the issue but never actually taking a real stand and saying thus says the Lord. It reminds me some of the conversational preaching and puppeteering that masquerades as preaching today. It could mean this or it could mean that. Jesus stood and he didn't cite anybody. He took the Scriptures and he spoke with clarity and

conviction and forthrightness and authority. Jesus will say, Do you like to read Moses? Moses wrote about me. Matthew says that on the sermon on the mount, Jesus will say, you have heard it said, Thou shalt not kill, but I say to you, if you are angry you have broken this command. Jesus will also say, you have heard it said thou shalt not commit adultery, but I say to you, if you have lust for a woman you have already committed adultery with her in your heart. This man spoke like no other. In John Chapter 7, the Pharisees sent an officer to go and actually arrest Jesus and bring him back. And when that officer went, Jesus is there close to the temple. And when Jesus stood up and said if any man is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the scripture has said, from his inmost beings shall flow rivers of living water. When that officer heard that, he went back to the Pharisees, and they said, where is Jesus? That officer said, there has never been a man to speak like that before. The scribes explained the law. Jesus is the law. The scribes doled out a little water, Jesus is the living water. And when Jesus comes in with such authority, He directs that authority, wrecking all the cultural norms. He's still doing that today. When Jesus speaks of sexuality, he speaks against our cultural norms. When Jesus speaks about manhood and womanhood and when he addresses marriage, he speaks against our American cultural norms.

What has become normative in discussions of gender, maleness and femaleness, when Jesus speaks, it's against the cultural norms. When you see the ever-expanding LGBTQ movement. How does Christ and his authority and authority of God's word speak? Jesus addresses money. He addresses your money that you earned. What does the culture tell you? What does Jesus say? Christ speaks about singleness. The Bible talks about being single for the glory of God but the culture we live in is a hookup culture. What does the culture say about the issues of race? When we start talking about race and racial reconciliation, how do we actually apply that? What we do is we take it to God's word. How do we approach brothers and sisters, especially in the confines of a church when Christ says knock down all the walls that separate us? Jesus says, take up your cross and follow me. He stands over against the cultural norms. His teaching has authority. Here's what's happening in the

passage and what needs to happen in our lives. Jesus is disturbing the cultural norms. Before Christ comforts, he disturbs. Before you can feel accepted, there must be conviction. Before you are forgiven, there must be a forsaking. It's what has been known as the cruciform life. It's the life that has been modeled and measured and made by the crucifixion of Jesus. This is hard now, this is hard. This is hard when all of our cultural sensibilities have opinions that have been molded by how we were raised, where we were raised, what schools we went to. This is difficult because we have emotions and empathy. You know, it's difficult when you have a child that you love and that child has wandered off into the cultural norms of the day. And you of course feel abandoned. The truths of the Bible are hard because they are our kids. When you hear Jesus stand flat footed and teach with declarative authority, there's no room for caveats. Look, we are countercultural people. And in the passage, when Jesus stood and taught the people, they were in awe. But as astonished as they were, that astonishment is about to be interrupted when we see that Jesus,

He will disturb the evil among us

Join me there in the passage. Let's get to where the power is, in verses 23-26. It's an amazing passage. Let me read it. And then I'll just point out a couple of things. Verse 23. ²³ *And immediately, Mark just uses that word to keep the pace going, there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit. And he cried out,* ²⁴ *"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."* ²⁵ *But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!"* ²⁶ *And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying out with a loud voice, came out of him.* OK, there's a lot here. Let's walk through it quickly. Verse 23 says, there's a man with an unclean spirit. That phrase, unclean spirit, is always used to describe someone that is possessed by a demon. It's a demonic possession that is dirty. Unclean spirit. What's interesting is you do not find any of this in the Old Testament. You will find it twice in Acts because the apostles had the authority that Jesus had delegated them. So two times in Acts you find demon possession. But after that it's never mentioned again. Why is that?

Demons, we understand from the Bible are fallen angels. We read that when Satan fell in Revelation 12, 1/3 of the angels fell with him. Fallen angels would live undercover. The difference here is that Jesus himself has shown up. Since the first time the Satanic Force had been to the synagogue, and it wouldn't be the last, but on this day, it was a bad day for that demon. That takes us to verse 23 when that demon realized that Jesus was there. You see him there in verse 23 and what happened? ²³ *And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit. And he cried out,* That little phrase, cried out, when Mark uses that he talks about this scream of being terrified. This is not the involuntary yell you might give if somebody startled you or scared you when you walk into a room. This is not that yell. That's a little bit of a funny yell over there but this is not funny. This right here is the scream of being so terrified. Mark uses it again in Chapter 6 when the disciples are on the boat in the Sea of Galilee, and Jesus was not with them. It's a stormy, terrible night, and Jesus comes walking across the water and Mark says that the disciples screamed for terror because they thought Jesus was a ghost. That's the same word here. The demons scream out in agony. Why did they do that? Because they understand their doom. They understand what's coming on the way. When God created the Lake of Fire, he did that for Satan and his fallen angels. That's where they were to go. That's where all sinners, who are without Christ, will go. The demon speaks in verse 24. Notice what the demon says through the vocal cords of a man. We don't know anything about this man, we never see or hear any description of him. Mark doesn't slow down here. He has a point of showing us the power of Jesus over the forces of Satan. That's what he's doing. In verse 24 the demon speaks. Notice what it says. ²⁴ *"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."* The demon asked, what are you doing here? Notice the plural. There's one spokesman for all of them. What do you have to do with us? We don't belong in the same room. And notice the names of Jesus. What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth, on the back end of that verse - Holy one of God? Maybe he was using the name Jesus of Nazareth as a derisive name like Nathaniel. Can anything good come out of Nazareth? Kind of a mocking the name Jesus of

Nazareth but I don't think so. I think from the mouth of a demon, when you hear in the Gospel, Jesus of Nazareth, it refers to him as being fully man, and fully God. They are saying, we know who you are, you've come to save humanity. We know that you have the power to do it. There is the seed form of the Gospel. Jesus, who would live perfectly and would die on the cross in the place of sinners. God will raise him from the dead and the promise of the gospel is that any sinner, if they believe, will be saved. You see the people up in verse 22 were astonished because they don't know who this man is. And the demons are scared to death because they actually do know who this man is. And notice the question in verse 24. Have you come to destroy us? There's a promise in that question. The demon would ask because he knows there is an end date. Jesus speaks in verse 25. Notice what Jesus says. ²⁵ *But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!"* Shut your mouth! Literally it is to put a muzzle on it. And after that he just says, get out. Get my name out of your mouth. I don't need hell to be my PR department. You don't say my name like that. You see the authority there in this verse. In verse 26, the demon comes out and it's violent. ²⁶ *And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying out with a loud voice, came out of him.* It's always like that, violent.

There was a man whose son was possessed by a demon and he asked Jesus to heal him because the demon was throwing him into the water to drown him or into the fire to burn him. It's always Satan's design. But you see this display of power of Jesus. Jesus commands and the demon does. It's not because they want to, but because Jesus has the authority he has. We see it over and over. Brothers and sisters, take comfort here. Breathe in some great confidence and comfort. Because greater is He who is in you, than he who was in the world. And a demon showed up in the Synagogue. We see them because Jesus is there now. They're undercover as they have always been undercover. Demons are not what you see in the movie. Exorcisms are not what you see in the movie. Jesus alone has the power to do that. Demons do their best work undercover, coming in where dead religion is; where the false gospel is. And here in this passage the casting out of this demon shows the

invincible power that Christ has to save. If there's an unclean spirit, Jesus cleanses. Jesus confronts and rebukes and removes. Jesus breaks through any barrier. Jesus relieves any estrangement. Jesus washes away any bitterness. Jesus soothes anger. Jesus takes away hate. Jesus breaks addiction. Jesus can change desires. We don't have to despair. We don't give up. We don't stop praying. We don't stop fighting for people that have been blinded by the power of the devil. Right here in chapter one, Jesus defeated Satan in the desert, and now here in the synagogue, Jesus has the authority. You keep praying. He will disturb the evil among us. One last thing and I'll be on my way.

He will disturb the community around us

This of course is an amazing event. And it's interesting to me that in verse 27, the people see it and what are they amazed at? Notice what the text says. *27 And they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, "What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him."* Now business is going to pick up. *28 And at once his fame spread everywhere throughout all the surrounding region of Galilee.*

They were amazed and they started talking about Jesus. Here's the right response, fear. We should fear. He's a judge. But then we run to that judge who is also the Savior. It's the forgotten step in salvation in modern Christianity. That is the fear of God. The fear of God shows us the mercy of God found in the son of God, Jesus, so that you and I become children of God. And then after that the people couldn't help but talk about the soul-changing power of Jesus. Jesus Christ, he has the joyful authority to disturb our lives. He would disturb the status quo. He will disturb the accepted cultural norms. He will disturb the evil among us. He will disturb the community around us. Come today to this holy disturber. Join me as we pray together.

(Pastor prays)