

EPIPHANY FOUR: DIGNITY & BLESSING

BACKGROUND

In Mark's Gospel, there are 18 recorded miracles of Jesus. Thirteen of them are **healing** stories, and four of those involve people who seem to be overtaken by forces they can't control. In today's text, **Mark 1:21-28**, we are ushered into a synagogue on a Sabbath day where we find Jesus teaching. We have no idea what Jesus taught, as Mark chose not to relay it to us. The focus of the story is on someone else, a man in their midst who has "an unclean spirit." This phrase ("an unclean", **akathartos**) is a bit vague. It's unclear what exactly is wrong with this man, but it's something in his "spirit." This word ("spirit", *pneuma*) was used to refer to someone's persona or the thing that animates a person's life. Something about this man is out of control, he's unpredictable. He's also very conscious. He knows who Jesus is, and it bothers him at some level. Jesus seems to know that this man feels trapped in his own body. This healing story has the components of a kind of exorcism, where Jesus appears to have separated the man from what was troubling him. This is the way Mark understood the event. Most important, however, is the outcome: the man is freed from his condition. He has been blessed with a new life, and his dignity is restored.

DISCUSSION: LECTIO DIVINA

Read **Mark 1:21-28** three times. After each reading, allow group members a minute to sit still and process what they've heard. Then move through the following for each reading:

After the First Reading

What words or phrases stood out to you? Why?

After the Second Reading

What words or phrase spoke to you personally, more directly? Why?

After the Third Reading

What do you hear this story saying *to you*? How does it challenge your faith?

Leader Notes: You may choose to read the "background" information (top) before you head into the lectio readings, or you may choose to hold off and use it at the end...or not at all. Your call!

CLOSE IN PRAYER