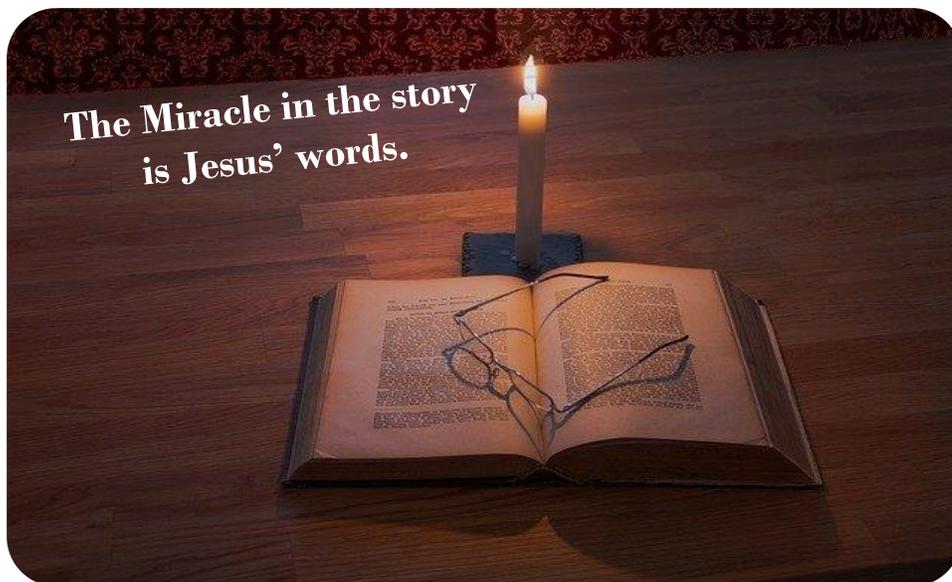


Faithnews

From Your Pastor



"Scripture guides us and leads us."



The Miracle in the story
is Jesus' words.

call. You make our paths cross with those in need and we cringe in fear that we don't have the right words to speak. Cleanse us from the offense of thinking we must respond without your help. Forgive us when we forget to ask you for healing words of comfort. Help us to draw near to you with reverent and humble hearts.

Unexpected Words

Mark 1:21-28

1/31/2021

Call to Worship

(Psalm 111:7

Passion Translation)

All God accomplishes is flawless, faithful, and fair, and his every word proves trustworthy and true.

Opening Prayer & Confession

Almighty God by grace alone you call us and accept us in your service. Strengthen us by your Spirit and make us worthy of your call. **Amen.**

Trusting in God's grace, let us confess our sin...Merciful God, you call us to follow you, and we run from that

Words of Assurance

Hear God speak these words to you:

"You are my child, my beloved.

with you I am well pleased."

In the name of Jesus Christ, we are forgiven!

Thanks be to God.

Scripture Reading:
Mark 1:21-28 (NRSV)

²¹ They went to Capernaum; and when the sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught.

²² They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

*²³ Just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit,
²⁴ and he cried out, "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 with a loud voice, came out of him.

²⁷ They were all amazed, and they kept on asking one another, "What is this? A new teaching—with authority! He^[a] commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him."

²⁸ At once his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee.

This is the Word of the Lord; Thanks be to God!

This is the moment. This is the January 20th of Jesus' life: his inaugural moment. It's not a government inaugural, though. And it's not royal service. No crown is bestowed upon him. Still, it's his inaugural moment.

This moment is his first foray into ministry. We witnessed his baptism and then immediately enter the wilderness. After the wilderness temptations he walked along the sea of Galilee and called his first disciples. They dropped everything to follow him.

Now they enter Capernaum. This is a place of relative security. Tradition thrives in Capernaum and in the synagogue. This should be a good place to begin, shouldn't it? Well, shouldn't it? Jesus teaches. His words are different. He speaks with

authority. They're fresh and new, yet as old as the Torah itself.

That's when hell breaks loose, literally. The man with the unclean, un-pure spirit erupts. "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."

Whoa! Did Jesus expect this? This man knows who Jesus is: the one from Nazareth; the one with power to destroy; the Holy One of God. The silence in the synagogue is deafening. You can hear a pin drop. And this is only Jesus' first worship service!

Two forces oppose each other: the power of the un-pure spirit in the man versus the power of the Holy Spirit in Jesus. If this were made into a movie, we would see the two of them square off in a manner like the OK Corral. Perhaps they would turn into Transformer Robots to fight it out. There would be sizzling displays of laser light beams while Jesus and the man with the spirit fight until Jesus finally wins.

The Presbyterian-Methodist Fellowship Church

But this isn't the way it plays out. The power Jesus holds is far more powerful than any spirit loose in the earth. "Be silent! Come out of him," is all Jesus has to say. And the tense moment in the synagogue has passed.

There are un-pure spirits in our world today. They are the spirits that are contrary to the sacred. We see them in hate-filled words and actions. We witness them in aggression to the underserved and undeserved. We may even watch our friends or family members struggle with them.

When have your words brought healing? When have you said just the right thing? When have you prayed just the right words? I doubt that your answer is that it's never happened. It has, I'm sure of it.

In Jesus' case, his words pointed to the un-pure spirit. His words incurred anger and vitriol in the middle of a worship service! Jesus didn't shy away from it. He used his power to evict the spirit and complete the healing of

the man. In the middle of a worship service!

Jesus' teachings are powerful, and truth filled. Jesus' teachings arrive as fresh insight on the ears of his listeners. Today, they continue to arrive as fresh words that renew and re-energize our thoughts and motives.

Most of all, Jesus' words disturb and disrupt the presence of evil.

Scripture guides us and leads us. Prayer gives us insight. Discussion with believers and non-believers alike help form our faith.

The miracle in the story is Jesus' words. Not only the words to the unclean spirit to be still and come out.

Most of all, the words of his teaching that caused the initial eruption and led to healing.

All glory and honor be to God. **Amen.**

Let us Pray...

Holy One, as you are well pleased with Christ, help us

to accept that you are well pleased with us. As you call us to listen to Christ, help us to always heed his word and seek his will.

Gracious One, give us courage to turn away from what is no longer life giving for us and toward you and transformed life.

Give us wisdom to speak words of healing and reassurance and peace.

We pray for your peace filled presence in the halls of government. While we struggle with issues of racism, we pray for a renewed Spirit of inclusiveness.

While the pandemic rages, we pray for your healing and wholeness.

Be with those who are sick, worn out, dying, grieving.

Let them feel your presence and your healing power.

Be present with our medical community, exhausted and demoralized.

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Be present with those who stock our shelves, deliver our goods, and keep the supply chain moving.

God, in these quiet moments, hear our prayers...

We pray these and all things through the One who taught us to prayer:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours now and forever. **Amen.**

Charge & Benediction

The Lord bless and keep you in your going out and your coming in from this time on and forevermore.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
The love of God the Father,
The fellowship of the Holy Spirit find a place in your heart. **Alleluia! Amen!**



Lighthouses are now a popular decorating theme for living rooms, calendars, cards, screen savers, towels and more. Many images are infused with shimmering light to symbolize Christian faith and hope.

Yet the purpose of a lighthouse isn't to look pretty against a sunny sky — although it does — but to illumine a ship's way beneath heavy, dark clouds or a moonless night. Indeed, the lighthouse itself doesn't even light up until its surroundings grow dark!

Surely Jesus loves to share our joys, and we praise his glory during life's bright times. But God's primary purpose for coming to live among us was to save us from the storm of sin; to illumine our path through the darkness of death, in all its forms; to be the light guiding all people safely home. Jesus' light shines for us day and night, rain or shine, to bless us with faith and hope.