

Power Encounters

Mark 1:21-28

Rev. Brian Bill

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A recent article in the New York Times entitled, “[Googling for God](#),” begins this way: “*It has been a bad decade for God, at least so far.*” Google searches for churches are down 15 percent over the last five years compared to the previous five years. Pornography searches are up 83 percent. Google searches for heroin are up 32 percent. Searches questioning God’s existence are up. The top Google search including the word “God” is “God of War,” a video game. If you’d like to read more check out the link on the “Sermon Extras” tab on our website.

Instead of focusing on Google web searches, we’re going to search God’s Word today. We’re going to discover that *a response is expected when Jesus is encountered*. Please turn in your Bibles to Mark 1:21-28 as we see what happened when the Savior showed up in a worship service. I can’t wait to see what will happen when Jesus shows up in our service today. How will you respond?

Last week we looked at the terrible temptation Jesus went through, we reflected on what real repentance is all about and we ended by wrestling with the demands of discipleship as Jesus calls us to forsake all and follow Him. And now we read in Mark 1:21: “***And they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath he entered the synagogue and was teaching.***”

Even though Jesus was from Nazareth, the majority of His ministry was done in “***Capernaum***,” which was located on the northwest edge of the Sea of Galilee. This city was a hub of trade and traffic.

We’ve pointed out previously that Mark depicts Jesus as moving rapidly from place to place and from person to person to help us see Him as Servant and Savior. In doing so, he skips over other ministry events. During the weeks that Mark does not mention, Jesus ministers in Nazareth, calls the others disciples, and delivers the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7. According to Luke 4:16-30, after Jesus preaches in the synagogue in Nazareth, the people try to kill Him so He moves his ministry headquarters to Capernaum.

Jesus wasted no time as He “***immediately on the Sabbath***” entered the “***synagogue***.” The synagogue was a gathering place and was started when there

were ten families. The synagogue system goes back to the time of the Babylonian captivity. Since they couldn't go to the Temple to worship, they started gathering in synagogues, which quickly became the center of every Jewish community. They were similar to local churches. The Talmud says that there were 500 in Jerusalem and because Capernaum was a good sized-city, it's likely that there were several synagogues there.

By the way, if Jesus deemed it important to gather for weekly worship, then shouldn't we as well? Luke 4:16 says that it was His "**custom to go.**" That's why our very first "G" is to "*Gather with God's people.*" Hebrews 10:25 tells us to not forsake our gathering together.

And we read that Jesus was "**teaching.**" It was common for visiting rabbis to speak in the synagogue so it wouldn't have been unusual for Jesus to be invited to preach there. It was also common for the speaker to sit while he was teaching. The service contained elements similar to ours – prayer, praise, proclamation of Scripture and preaching.

We've *praised* and now let's *proclaim* this passage as we read it together. When we're done I'm going to *pray* and then we'll move into the *preaching*.

Let's stand and read Mark 1:22-28 in unison: "***And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes. And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit. 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.'*** But Jesus rebuked him, saying, '*Be silent, and come out of him!*' And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying out with a loud voice, came out of him. 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.*' And at once his fame spread everywhere throughout all the surrounding region of Galilee."

Pray.

Since a *response is expected when Jesus is encountered*, let's look at four different responses.

1. People astonished. Check out verse 22: “*And they were astonished at his teaching...*” The word “*astonished*” means “*to be at a loss, to be knocked out of one’s senses.*” The idea is to be “*stricken as by a blow, to be dumbfounded.*” In our culture, we might say, “*their minds were blown by his teaching.*” This was a common response when people encountered Christ.

- Mark 6:2 – “*...many who heard him were astonished...*”
- Mark 7:37 – “*And they were astonished beyond measure...*”
- Mark 10:26 – “*And they were exceedingly astonished...*”

We see why the people were astonished: “*for He taught as one who had authority, and not as the scribes.*” A bit of background is helpful here. When the scribes taught, they had no inherent authority and so they ended up just quoting other rabbis. When Jesus preached He did so with personal power and intrinsic authority. The word “*authority*” means the “*power or right to enforce obedience.*” Listen to these words found at the end of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 7:28-29: “*...The crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes.*”

BTW, that’s why we preach and teach the Bible at Edgewood. We are not just giving our opinions or trying to come up with clever insights. We unashamedly and unreservedly preach the Word of God in the power of the Spirit of God so that lives change and in the process God gets all the glory. Hebrews 4:12: “*For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.*”

The scribes were known for rote recitation. They were dull and dry and dusty and would drone on and on, much like Charlie Brown’s teacher (Wah wah wah, Wah wah wah, Wah wah wah). Can you imagine a preacher being boring? Don’t answer that.

Here’s the deal. *A response is expected when Jesus is encountered.*

2. Demons afraid. The religious people responded with astonishment at Jesus’ authority but now we see that a demon has his cover blown when Christ shows up: “*And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit...*” Do you find it unnerving that an unclean spirit or demon, is present in a worship service? Don’t be. Demons love to hang out among ritualistic and religious

people. In Revelation 2:9, Jesus refers to the synagogue in Smyrna as the **“synagogue of Satan.”**

The synagogue had ritualistic services without rebirth. They had rules without relationship. They had sermons without the Holy Spirit. They sang music without a sense of God’s majesty. Demons aren’t bothered by dusty and dry services but when Jesus shows up, they go crazy.

I’ll never forget the images described in *This Present Darkness* by Frank Peretti. In one scene he describes a demon trying to get into a church: *“It had arms and it had legs, but it seemed to move without them, crossing the street and mounting the front steps of the church. Its leering, bulbous eyes reflected the stark blue light of the full moon with their own jaundiced glow. The gnarled head protruded from hunched shoulders, and wisps of rancid red breath seethed in labored hisses through rows of jagged fangs. It either laughed or it coughed—the wheezes puffing out from deep within its throat could have been either...It moved toward the front door. The hand passed through the door like a spear through liquid; the body hobbled forward and penetrated the door, but only halfway...”*

Notice what happens next in our text from Mark: **“And he cried out...”** The word here means to cry out in agony, like a death roar: **“What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth?”** Unclean spirits are normally undercover but when Jesus shows up, they reveal themselves. This is a sad commentary on the spiritual climate of the synagogue. A demonized man is in the service and no one notices until Jesus starts speaking.

The unclean spirit is literally saying, *“You have no business with us...yet.”* When he declares that Jesus is from Nazareth, he’s recognizing his humanity but is also using this title as a term of derision. Nathaniel says in John 1:46: **“Can anything good come out of Nazareth?”** Being from Wisconsin, I grew up wondering if anything good could come from Michigan.

“Have you come to destroy us?” Notice he uses the pronoun **“us”** as if there’s more than one or perhaps he’s speaking for all of them. They know their destruction is coming. This is very similar to what the demons say in Matthew 8:29: **“And behold, they cried out, ‘What have you to do with us, O Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time?’”**

The demon begins by dissing Jesus and now he declares the deity of Jesus Christ by saying, ***“I know who you are – the Holy One of God.”*** It’s interesting that demons know exactly who Christ is. In Mark 3:11 we read this, ***“And whenever the unclean spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, ‘You are the Son of God.’”*** In Mark 5:7, a demon confesses that Jesus is ***“the Son of the Most High God.”***

It’s important to note that declaring a name was considered a way to secure mastery over someone. That explains why Jesus immediately told demons to be quiet. He also didn’t want any testimony from a demon as we see in verse 34: ***“And he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.”*** Jesus doesn’t need a demon to be his marketing manager. We see this in verse 25: ***“But Jesus rebuked him, saying, ‘Be silent, and come out of him!’”*** Jesus muzzled the demon and wouldn’t let him say another word. And then He commanded the unclean spirit to come out.

Demons have no choice but to obey Christ. Please don’t ever put Jesus and Satan on the same level. Satan and his evil demons are powerless before Jesus Christ. They not only know who He is but also know that He has all authority and power. We see this in verse 26: ***“And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying out with a loud voice, came out of him.”*** Utter evil cowers in the presence of utter holiness.

This unclean spirit makes a racket before he comes out.

- **Convulses the man.** The word ***“convulsing”*** means, *“to tear and lacerate, to throw into spasms.”* I’m sure this woke anyone up who was snoozing in the service!
- **Cries out with a loud voice.** This loud voice means to *“screech.”* These were deeply-felt screams of someone suffering. The word for ***“loud”*** is *“megas,”* which refers to something big and mighty. This reminds me of James 2:19, which says that the demons believe and ***“shudder.”*** The demons scream because they know they’re eventually headed to the Lake of Fire.

Jesus uses no formula or incantation. He speaks the word and the demon cries out and then comes out! This is proof of the coming judgment and shows that Jesus came into the world to defeat and destroy the devil and all his unclean underlings.

1 John 3:8: ***“The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.”***

Unfortunately, 2 Corinthians 4:4 says that Satan blinds the minds of unbelievers. 1 John 5:19 says that that ***“the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.”*** The devil and his demons hate Christ and they hate Christians. How else do you explain why the shooter at that Community College in Oregon targeted Christians on Thursday? In John 8:44, Jesus refers to Satan himself as a murderer. I agree that we should not name the shooter so we don't give him any glory but I will name the one who was behind the murders – his name is Satan, our adversary, who is ultimately responsible for the taking of all innocent life.

Allow me to pick back up from Peretti's book...

“Suddenly, as if colliding with a speeding wall, the creature was knocked backward and into a raging tumble down the steps, the glowing red breath tracing a corkscrew trail through the air. With an eerie cry of rage and indignation, it gathered itself up off the sidewalk and stared at the strange door that would not let it pass through. Then the membranes on its back began to billow, enfolding great bodies of air, and it flew with a roar headlong at the door, through the door, into the foyer-and into a cloud of white-hot light. The creature screamed and covered its eyes, then felt itself being grabbed by a huge, powerful vise of a hand. In an instant it was hurling through space like a rag doll, outside again, forcefully ousted.

“The wings hummed in a blur as it banked sharply in a flying turn and headed for the door again, red vapors chugging in dashes and streaks from its nostrils, its talons bared and poised for attack, a ghostly siren of a scream rising in its throat. Like an arrow through a target, like a bullet through a board, it streaked through the door. And instantly felt its insides tearing loose. There was an explosion of suffocating vapor, one final scream, and the flailing of withering arms and legs. Then there was nothing at all except the ebbing stench of sulfur.

“Then the first sound was added to the picture: a soft, muffled sobbing from the end of the right pew. There, kneeling in earnest prayer, his head resting on the hard wooden bench, and his hands clenched with fervency, was a young man, very young...It all showed in his countenance, now the very picture of pain, grief, and

love. His lips moved without sound as names, petitions, and praises poured forth with passion and tears.”

There is no more dangerous place to be than where the Word of God is preached with authority and people are praying. All of hell is alarmed when dead religion wakes up. Demons scream and those in bondage are set free. And Satan doesn't like it at all.

A response is expected when Jesus is encountered.

3. People amazed. After this power encounter with the unclean spirit, we read in verse 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.’”*** To be amazed means to “*wonder with great admiration.*” It also has the idea of being alarmed, panicked or rendered motionless. They started questioning each other, wondering who this could be. His preaching had power. His message had might behind it. People were being set free from sin and Satan, right in front of their eyes! This was no ordinary synagogue service once the Savior showed up.

They had no category for Christ. What He was saying and doing had never happened before. If Jesus can quiet and cast out a demon, He can calm you and free you from any bondage you are under today. He conquers everything. Nothing is too hard for him. Jesus didn't come to just manage your sin but to master it. This man was delivered from a demon. Jesus is still doing the same today.

I was helped this week by something John MacArthur said about this passage: *“The people didn't know who He was, the demons did...the demons knew they had reason to be afraid...when sinners come to a true understanding of the authority of Christ as the Son of God, they are also terrified...the [demons]were terrified and could not be saved. The people were amazed and would not be saved...the amazed people and the terrified demons end up in the same hell.”*

Demons know more about the power and authority of Christ than many of us do...you might get His titles right but do you submit to His authority? Jesus doesn't want your amazement; He wants your allegiance. If you have never put your trust in Jesus Christ you should be terrified!

4. Gospel advanced. Notice what happens in verse 28 as the final result of this power encounter: ***“And at once his fame spread everywhere throughout all the surrounding region of Galilee.”*** The fame of Jesus spread without the Internet or without texting. No one had to Google Jesus because people were telling their neighbors and those neighbors told others about Him. His name spread in the marketplace. It went to all places because those who saw what He did could not stop talking about it.

Everyone we know deserves to know what we know about Jesus. I like what Charles Spurgeon said: “If sinners will be damned, at least let them leap to hell over our bodies. And if they perish, let them perish with our arms about their knees, imploring them to stay. If hell must be filled, at least let it be filled in the teeth of our exertions, and let not one go there unwarned and unprayed for.”

One night a church caught on fire and was burning to the ground. As the pastor watched it burn, he noticed a man standing next to him watching with great interest. He recognized the man because he had invited him to church and so he asked him a question, *“I’ve invited you to come to services many times, but you never came. Why are you here tonight?”* The man replied, *“Well, I’ve never seen this church on fire before!”*

Action Steps

1. Stay away from the occult. Don’t mess around with Ouija boards, witchcraft, astrology or the horoscope.

2. Don’t give ground to Satan. Ephesians 4:27 urges us to not give Satan a foothold in our lives. Some of you are living with unconfessed sin. Live a pure life and don’t have sex outside of biblical marriage. Don’t do drugs or abuse alcohol. Why open yourself up to demonic influences? Have you been compromising or deliberately disobeying in any area of your life? If so, it’s time to repent and confess.

3. Put on your spiritual armor at all times. Our Sunday night series is on the Armor of God. Pastor Tim is preaching this week on what we should wear on our feet from Ephesians 6:15: ***“And, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace.”***

4. Make Jesus famous by putting Him first in your life. Our lips and our lives must match up. Our words and our works must make the fame of Jesus' name spread everywhere throughout the Quad Cities area and to the ends of the earth. Is your fervent faith making Jesus famous?

I was thrilled that so many Junior Highers invited their friends to camp last weekend. You can make Jesus famous by having a block party in your neighborhood – one brand new family at EBC had a block party last month and I just heard that a long-time EBC couple is planning one for this month. Make Jesus famous by standing up for life. Speak up for Christ. Do your job with integrity. Take Christ to campus with you.

5. Get saved. Today. Right now. It's possible to be astonished and amazed and still not repent and receive Jesus Christ as your Savior and follow Him as the absolute authority in your life. It's easy to be wowed and yet not worship Him with how you live. The only one who correctly identifies Jesus in this account is the demon.

A response is expected when Jesus is encountered. What's it going to take for you to be saved? If you are not saved, the Bible says you belong to Satan. You are either in the kingdom of darkness or the kingdom of light, the kingdom of the Son or the kingdom of Satan. But at salvation, you can be transferred from the domain of demons to the rule of God. Acts 26:18 describes what Jesus does: ***“to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins.”***

While we still don't know all the details about the shooting at the Community College in Oregon, one survivor reported, *“He started asking people one by one what their religion was. ‘Are you a Christian,’ he would ask them, ‘and if you're a Christian stand up’ and they would stand up and then he said, ‘Good, because you're a Christian you are going to see God in just about one second.’ And then he shot and killed them.”*

What would you do in that setting? Would you stand up and identify yourself as a Christ-follower or would you stay on the floor? Would I? In order to help us settle that right now, I'm going to ask you to stand if you're ready for the very first time to not just be astonished or amazed at Jesus but to actually align yourself with Him. Anyone ready to do that? If you've already settled your salvation, would you also stand for Christ right now?

Let's declare that our God is greater and stronger and higher and awesome in power.

Invitation: Our God is Greater

Our God is greater
Our God is stronger
God You are higher than any other
Our God is healer
Awesome in power our God our God

Membership (10:45) – Micheal Grabosch

Benediction

Here's what I think. When we're on fire for God, people won't have to Google God. They will know all about Him when you spread the fame of His glorious name. Those in that synagogue service left and couldn't stop talking about Jesus. Let's do the same right now as we leave this service. Make him famous by living out your faith!