

## Mark 1:21-28

### “Astonished, Amazed, Or Assured?”

As our time came to a close last week we were observing Christ's *calling*, and the *committing* of 4 fishermen to that call. Oh they'd already begun to follow Him in what we called a *saving* way, but now the Lord was challenging them, confronting them in such a way as to be committed to Him in a *servicing* way. To be disciplined *under* Him, to be used *by* Him, to make a difference in the lives of others *because* of Him; “Follow Me,” Jesus said, “and I will make you become fishers of men.” and Immediately, without reserve they forsook all that they might follow Him; not irresponsibly, but wholeheartedly.

It works the same way in your life and in mine. We see Jesus moving in our midst, begin to take interest *in* Him, we want to learn more *about* Him, next thing we know we're giving our heart *to* Him, being saved *by* Him. and That's all good and well, it's a beautiful thing. But then as time goes by the Lord begins to challenge us, He confronts us; He wants a deeper *commitment* out of us. We've followed Him in a *saving* way, but we've yet to really commit to Him in a *servicing* way. and Christ comes to us and begins to deal with us on that level, He wants us to become His *disciples*, that we might really learn *of* Him, be used *by* Him, and make a difference in the lives of others *because* of Him and His work in our lives.

and We're encouraged by the type of people that Jesus called to be His disciples. Think about it, this is the Son of God. You would think that if He wanted to take a handful of guys, and change human history through them, man I would think some pretty serious thought would go into that. You would think you would find Him at the most elite theological seminaries of His day. “I need bright minds, brilliant thinkers, people who will be able to grab hold of the deep things of God. and I need a few celebrities, people who are popular and have influence in the nation, a good P.R. man, and someone with plenty of money to get this thing off the ground.” Jesus didn't go to the seminaries, didn't look for celebrities, or guys with fists full of money. He didn't target people who He thought would be able to boost His popularity or somehow really ramp up His ministry. He grabbed hold of the blue collar guys (not that there's anything wrong if you're a white collar guy), but the guys who weren't really recognized as having status, the lowly, the weak of the world He chose; fishermen. These were just common hard working guys, patient, persevering (their vocation had taught them those qualities) not afraid to get dirty and do what it takes to get the job done. Tough times and long nights didn't scare them, that was all in a days work.

and So be encouraged, maybe you don't feel that you have a lot to offer Jesus, “Why would He take me, or use me? I don't have any real skills, or credentials that lend themselves to serving or somehow benefiting the sovereign God of the universe.” Then you're right where you need to be, it's been said that Jesus doesn't call the qualified, but that he qualifies the called. So if you can receive it, the less qualified you are, the more qualified you are; whom God *enlists* He *enables*.

There's 1 other thing I want you to note before we launch out into today's text. It's found in Vs 20 where we read that upon Jesus' calling of James and John they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants and they went after Him. Now again they didn't do anything irresponsibly, but they did place Jesus as their priority *even* over their family, they left their father to follow Jesus. What did Jesus say? "*He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.*" Matt 10:37 In Luke's gospel we read, "*If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.*" Luke 14:26

Now was Jesus saying that we're supposed to have absolute hatred in our hearts for our parents or our children, and even ourselves if we want to follow Him? No, He taught us to love even our enemies, to do good to those who hate *us*, and pray for those who spitefully use us and persecute us. What He is saying is that He demands total commitment that gives absolute priority to Him. If Jesus isn't your priority, then you're not *truly* following Him, period. In another place Jesus said it like this, "*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.*" Matt 22:37 We're to love the Lord with all that we are, we're to place Him as the chief priority in our lives.

and Here's the mystery of all of that; when we place Him 1<sup>st</sup> we're then able to love our spouse, or our children or our parents; we're able to be there for and build up others accurately as we were intended to originally. You see if Christ isn't 1<sup>st</sup> in your life, then you will be, but your tendency, my inclination is to be *selfish*, self centered, self serving. When Christ is 1<sup>st</sup> in your life your tendency, or my inclination is to be *selfless*, self sacrificing, ministering *to* and placing the priority *on* others.

The world says you've got to learn to love yourself before you can love others, the bible says that's the problem, that you love yourself too much already, you need to learn to set yourself aside for the sake of others, and that's the role of Christ in your life. It's called not walking according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. It's called being dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Well, as we've been making our way through this 1<sup>st</sup> chapter we've seen Christ's *humility*, we've noted His *glory*, now He moves in *authority*.  
Vs 21-22

A # of things to consider here. 1<sup>st</sup> thing we see is that Jesus went to church. When it was the Sabbath, He entered the synagogue. The bible teaches that we need to assemble collectively as a body; the corporate gathering of the body of Christ is an essential aspect of NT Christianity. So many people say, "You don't have to go to church to be saved." and That's true, you don't, but if you want to be obedient to the word of God you will. Remember these Vs? "*And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.*" Heb 10:24-25 Well, I can't consider you so as to stir you and exhort you to love and good works if I'm never *around* you, not spending time in the assembly *with* you. In the book of Acts you see the disciples coming together on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the week to continue steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine, the breaking of bread, and fellowship. Paul spoke over and over again in the book of Corinthians about them coming

together as a church, all assembling together in one place. Jesus regularly attended worship services at the synagogue.

and There are multiple and manifold reasons why it's healthy to gather together corporately. It's edifying, encouraging, keeps us mindful of the eternal perspective, and places our priorities in check. There's a dynamic that takes place in the assembly that doesn't exist in isolation. The bible teaches us that there is an anointing upon a collective gathering of believers who are in unity, one heart, and one mind.

"He entered the synagogue, *and taught.*" 2 things, the synagogue wasn't the temple, no sacrifice took place there, and they were all over the place. The temple was found in Jerusalem exclusively. If there were 10 Jewish males in a given region they could open a synagogue, and it's where they attended regularly for worship services and the reading and expositing of God's word, but not for sacrifice.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> thing I want you to see is that Jesus *taught.* We've already noted that He was a *preacher* back in Vs 14. Here we're seeing that He was a *teacher* as well. Teaching and preaching are 2 different things. We *preach* to the non-believer, proclaim the goodness of God, the depravity of man, and the need for Jesus Christ We proclaim His sacrifice, the shedding of His blood for the forgiveness of sins. However we *teach* the believer, you've come to Christ, you've trusted *in* Christ, now you need to be taught how to walk and live your life *for* Christ, what it means to be set apart *to* Christ. and So you and I need to be taught God's word from beginning to end, line upon line, precept upon precept, within it's context and how it hits us real time, how it applies to us practically. In a gathering like this we get a little of both because often times there's a mixed assembly, both believers and non-believers in our midst. and So often times the Lord will lead me to both preach the gospel and to teach the word.

Now in that day synagogue was orderly but informal, if there was a rabbi or a qualified individual in town they'd often be asked to come and expound upon the scripture reading. Jesus was doing just that, and as He was teaching the people's jaws began to drop, they were thunderstruck, astonished at His teaching. Why? Because He taught them as one having authority, not as the scribes. The scribes never taught with authority, they only quoted other scribes and rabbis, "Well Rabbi so and so says this, the sage says that, and it could mean this according to this guy, and it might mean that if you take the view point of the other guy." Jesus wasn't like that. He said things like, "You've heard it said...but I say unto you." I mean, He spoke with *authority*, told people what God's word meant *specifically*, there was no ambiguity; and it blew people's minds.

and When it comes to teaching with authority there are a few tools that I think we need if we're to do so effectively. and I think right up there on the top of the list is a *knowledge* of what you're talking about. Jesus knew what He was talking about, I mean you've got the *living* Word right there expositing or explaining the *written* word; it must've been amazing. To see His countenance, hear His inflections and listen as He shed light on, and opened up the scriptures. He was familiar with the material, if you're going to speak with authority you've got to know what you're talking about. You ever heard someone try to speak with authority but it's pretty obvious they don't really know what they're talking about? It's pretty evident, and because of that their authority is lacking. You come in Sunday morning you haven't done anything to prepare for the C.M. material that's been in front of you for a month, you figure

you'll just try and wing it; after all they're only kids. and You grab the text and you're trying to teach it, but you're not studied up on it, you're stumbling around in it, trying to make sense of it for *them* when it doesn't even make sense to *you*. You've got to know your material.

2<sup>ndly</sup> (and These aren't necessarily in order of importance), you've got to know that the message you're bringing is *divine*. Jesus was bringing forth the word of God, and the word of God comes preloaded, pre-packed with authority! What I think is of little to no relevance, but when I'm sharing *with* you and showing *to/you* the word of God, there's authority there. When you're quoting from God and not from man you've got all the authority of the Sovereign God of the universe on your side.

and Because of that #3 you've got to believe it yourself. If *you* don't believe, don't think for a minute anyone else is going to believe it. I mean you've got to really believe that God's word can/will make an eternal difference in people's lives. and So you cling *to* it, stand *on* it, and live *by* it.

You have those things in your heart; you'll speak (not arrogantly) with authority.

Something else I think we should note regarding authority is that 1<sup>st</sup> we seen Jesus in submission to His Father at His baptism, afterward we seen Him submitted to the Spirit in the wilderness, *then* we see Him moving in authority personally. Authority always flows forth from submission, if we're not really submitted *to* God, then how can we accurately move in the authority *of* God?

Vs23-28

I bet it did! This would rock your world on a Sunday morning service wouldn't it? Here's Jesus shaking hands, greeting people after services and all the sudden this shrill, this shriek cuts through the air, this demon begins to cry out through the medium of this man in attendance. Do demons go to church? You bet they do, oh not to learn, but to distract, to divide, to destroy, to disrupt so that your focus is taken from Christ and what He wants to do in your life and placed on just about anything else.

Now this brings up the whole subject of demonology, demon possession, demon oppression, occultism and all the rest. The bible tells us that we're to be wise in what is good, and innocent concerning evil, there's no need to dabble in that stuff, stay away from Ouija boards and all of that. I'll just say that demon possession is a real thing, and people can knowingly or unknowingly invite such a situation through the things that they do, various things they engage in, occultism, drug use, séances, astrology and things of that nature. Can a Christian be demon possessed? No, you are in Christ, Christ is in you, and the Holy Spirit isn't going to move over and make room for the demonic. Can you be *oppressed* as a believer via demonic entities? I believe you can, but what we're seeing here is that Christ has authority over your spiritual enemies, the demonic.

and When we read that there was a man with an unclean spirit, the word "with" is literally "en" which means "in" it was *in* him, inhabiting him, in control of him. It's the same word used to describe Christ coming into you via the Holy Spirit. Obviously the difference being that Christ doesn't force His control upon you, He's holy and pure and all things good, the demonic is evil, unclean, and wants to destroy your life. Satan's agenda for you couldn't be more the opposite of God's.

But Vs 24 is interesting isn't it? I mean what's the bible tell us of Satan? Jesus said, "*The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy.*" John 10:10 He wants to take from you, demoralize you and destroy you, it's his desire to torment and plague the person he's victimizing. Yet here when the enemy is confronted by Christ *he's* terrorized that the same end might be his own prior to the *appointed time*. He wants to dish it out, but doesn't want to take it. and When he says, "What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth?" He's saying, "We have nothing in common, we couldn't be any further polarized from you, our agenda is completely the opposite, You're here to help, I'm here to hurt, You want to save, I want to destroy." and So he surmises Christ must be there to engage him, "Did you come to destroy us?" "Us" speaking of the demonic forces. and Note the demon immediately recognizes his proper place in Christ's presence, powerless to do anything and completely at the Lord's disposal. He says, "I know who You are—the Holy One of God!" Obviously Satan didn't cause Him to stumble or sin in the wilderness or He wouldn't acknowledge Him as the "Holy One of God!" So the demon clearly recognizes Jesus, points out His humanity (Jesus of Nazareth) and His deity, "The Holy One of God!"

Now that brings up another point here real quick, this demon recognized Jesus, believed that Jesus was who He was, even went so far as to acknowledge Him as the Holy One of God, yet for all that he's not saved.

James told us that to say we believe means nothing. He said even the demons believe, *and tremble*. But acknowledging Jesus for who He is and trusting Him for the salvation of your soul are 2 different things. It goes beyond a simple stating of the facts, it's a move of faith from the heart, believing *into* Jesus, placing my weight upon Him, casting myself without reservation into Him, and trusting Him for my acceptance before God.

Vs25-26

Couple of things here. #1 Notice Jesus didn't entertain the demon, didn't try to speak to him, get information out of him or anything like that. He didn't say, "Oh yeah, what else have you heard about Me?" Today you see these guys with these "deliverance" ministries and they put on this big show, Jesus wasn't like that. No theatrics, no incantations or elaborate ceremonies, He didn't burn incense or engage in any weird superstitious shenanigans, He just took authority over it and got rid of it. He didn't mess around, the way we'd translate Vs 25 in our modern vernacular would be like this, "Shut up, and get out!" He didn't need the witness of the demonic for people to believe in Him, if they wouldn't receive the witness of the *Holy Spirit*, He sure wasn't going to allow the testimony of a *demonic* spirit.

But here's what I want you to gather and glean out of this scene. 2 things, the 1<sup>st</sup> is this; it does not matter where you've been, what you've done, the things you've been apart *of*, or the things you're involved *in*. Christ can set you free; you don't get any deeper into the slums (spiritually speaking) than what this guy was right here. He was completely entrenched and enveloped by this foul, loathsome, unclean spirit. Maybe you're thinking, "I don't know, I've been apart of some wicked things," or "you don't know the depths of my depravity and immorality." You're right I don't, but Christ does and He's willing and able to set you free. Jesus said, "*...if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.*" John 8:36 There is no sin, no bondage but that Christ can't break those chains and free you from the power of darkness.

When the light comes on the darkness flees. Jesus said, *“I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.”* John 8:12

The 2<sup>nd</sup> thing kinda goes in tandem with that and that is that when you have an up close and personal encounter with Jesus Christ He *will* change your life. This guy was changed, he went into that synagogue as one thing and came out that day as something completely different. He entered that place in bondage, came out a free man, the demon had made a slave out of him, but the bible says, *“...where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.”* 2 Cor 3:17 So #1 if you’re a sinner (no matter how foul) you qualify for an encounter with Jesus Christ and He’s willing to meet you right where you’re at and do a radical work *in* you. and #2 When you have the encounter Jesus will make a marked change in your life, you will never be the same, you were dead in sin, now you’re alive to God in Christ, you were walking in darkness, now you’re in the light, you were unclean and defiled, now you’ve been washed by the blood of Jesus Christ and you’re the salt of the earth, you’re different, your priorities are different, your desires are different, it’s Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Vs 27-28

What can I say? When Jesus changes your life people know it, it’s evident, there’s no such thing as a closet Christian. Oh I’ve known people who’ve tried to hide, but sooner or later you gotta come out, you can’t continue to do what you’ve always done, or think the way you’ve always thought, things about you change and people see it. Word gets out, you’re one of *“them”* now, you got *“religion!”* Man I can’t stand that phrase, doesn’t that phrase get on your nerves? *“Did you find religion?”* *“Oh, you got religious?”* No! I entered into a personal *relationship* with the One True Living God, I couldn’t care less about *religion*.

It’s not about do’s and don’ts self made righteousness and legalism, it’s about relying upon Him for what He’s *done* in Christ, and just loving *on* Him, being loved *by* Him and walking intimately *with* Him, abiding in Him and in His word.

Jesus changes you, I remember when I 1<sup>st</sup> came to Christ how much different my family thought I’d become. I remember one time my granddad telling me that grandma was considering coming to church with me because they were worried about me, thought maybe I’d joined a cult. Now they’re all here with me and my granddad has gone on to be with the Lord having come to Christ himself just a few months before he passed away. and I’m not saying all or any of that has to do with me but I am saying that Jesus will make a notable difference in your life. I wasn’t the same (Praise the Lord) I thought different, had been transformed by the renewing of my mind, had different perspectives, different priorities, took the word of God seriously, you can’t hide those things, people find out. What Jesus has done in you gets around. One of my friends (Mike) thought I had literally lost my mind, he said, *“Jeff, I think you’ve lost your mind.”* He’s in Christ now to, God blew his mind one day and he’s never been the same.

But there’s something else I want you to see here and then we’re finished (wrap up, wind down). What was the net affect of this miracle here? and Of His day in the synagogue? People were *astonished* with His words, and they were *amazed* at His works (that word could even be translated *terrified*) that demonic encounter freaked people out. But we’re not reading that they were *assured* of who He was, they weren’t repenting *before* Him, committing themselves *to* Him, they didn’t believe *in* Him, oh they were impressed *with* Him, but they didn’t submit their lives *to* Him.

They heard all *about* Him, but weren't giving their lives *to* Him. Listen, you might know all *about* Jesus, you might even be impressed *with* Jesus, but that doesn't mean you're saved *by* Jesus. It's so important that the transaction be made, your sin for His righteousness, my perversity for His purity, until the cleansing flow of the blood of Christ has washed over you, you are not saved, you have not been born again. That transaction takes place through faith, turning *toward* Him and trusting *in* Him. So let me ask you; are you *astonished* at His *words*, *amazed* with His *works*, or *assured* of His *witness*? That He is the sinless Son of God who came and laid down His life for the sin of the world that by believing we might have life in His name. Think it through carefully, because upon your answer hinges all of eternity...

#### Prayer Points:

Lord Your word tells us to make our calling and election sure, to know that we're not just going through the motions, deceiving ourselves thinking we're OK with You because of what we do rather than looking to what You've done. Lord firm up our faith, root us and ground us in Your word, change our lives. Thank You that You're not looking for the elite, but You're willing to look upon the likes of us, and You're willing to take us, and train us, and use us for Your glory. Help us to lead our lives in submission to You.

If you've not come to that place whereby you're assured of who Christ is, and you know that you're not where you need to be with regard to your eternity. You're not sure that if today was your final day you'd go to heaven, all that can change right here, right now. If you're ready Jesus is willing, to set you free and change your life, to give you everlasting life, turn *toward* Him and trust *in* Him.