

## **“EYES WIDE OPEN”**

**Mark 1:21-34**

EYES. WIDE. OPEN. Last week: DROP. THE. NETS. I hope you wrestled and continue to deeply consider Jesus' call to follow him and live in the multiplication middle! In fact, if you hear a message and simply tuck it away after it's over, my prediction is MINIMAL IMPACT in your life.

That's why CGs are so important... And let me brag on you RHC! I get the question a lot: How are you? How's RHC? Stable, Solid. All things considered. Strong. CGs & Giving. We outperformed our budget last year in the middle of a pandemic, when we projected it being a deficit year.

All evidence of a Group of people who have DROPPED THE NETS. Let's go deeper, as we follow Jesus.

And one of the ways Mark is going to invite us into that is to live with our...

EYES WIDE OPEN.

Sometimes we use the phrase “eyes wide open” as an idiom which means knowing the challenges and obstacles in front of us in any given situation. That's NOT how I'm using the phrase.

I'm calling us to BE ALERT, to SEE CLEARLY, to be LOOKING FOR the work of God in our midst, and listen, when we see it, it will cause us to be WIDE EYED.

**THE POINT: Expect to be astonished by the authority of Jesus.**

Keep your eyes wide open to be wide eyed at the work of Christ.

**Mark 1:21-34 (text displayed)**

### **1. Expect to be astonished by the authoritative words of Christ. (21-22)**

Don't miss the first two words. “AND THEY...”

- Throughout Mark's gospel, there's rarely a time we will not see the disciples with Jesus. Where he went, they went. That's discipleship. That's why this series and ALL OF LIFE is about “Journeying with Jesus.” This time they traveled to Capernaum, the home of Jesus, Andrew, and Peter.
- Capernaum was a major city in the region, boasting about 10,000 people, smaller than most of our neighborhoods, but sizable in the 1<sup>st</sup> century. It sat along a trade route on the northwest side of the Sea of Galilee.

On the Sabbath, they went to the synagogue for worship, Jesus' weekly practice (cf. Luke 4). The service was a lot like ours, consisting of prayer, Scripture, a sermon and closing benediction.

Though the gospel of Matthew presents much more teaching content, Mark actually highlights Jesus as a teacher more frequently, here focusing on *how* he teaches.

#### Verse 22

Mark says Jesus taught “as one who had authority.” Every word Jesus spoke carried authority.

- What does that mean? Does it refer to a commanding presentation? Captivating oratory? Did he speak with elevated volume? Some people think that's what authority looks like. :)
- The text gives us a few clues.

- #1) First and foremost, Mark contrasts Jesus authoritative teaching with the lack of authority from the scribes.
  - Scribes were experts in the law, professional teachers, “Bible” scholars, but they taught by passing down the teaching of those who had gone before them. They loved to quote various Rabbis and comment on their commentary. If they lectured today, their sermons would be filled with dozens of footnotes.
  - The authority of the scribes was a “derived” authority from the “tradition of men” (as Jesus says in 7:8-13). It was borrowed. They were copy-cats, which points us to our second clue...
- #2) The word “authority” literally means “out of the original stuff,” coming from the same root as the word “author” and “authentic.”
  - As Christopher Ash said: “When he started, he had a sort of quiet authority that was riveting. He didn’t talk about silly little things, but the really important questions. He didn’t seem to need to quote boring old rabbis to support him. He talked about heaven as though he had been there. He talked about God as though he were a friend of his.” !!!!
  - Oh God, may we walk and talk with you so much that we begin talking like you!
- #3) Jesus authoritative teaching is clearly connected to Mark’s highlight of his first public preaching in 1:14-15. Not only does it immediately follow that summary statement, but the language of “kingdom” (15) & “authority” (22), “proclamation (15) & “teaching” (22).

Jesus’ taught with conviction and passion. There was no doubt that he believed and experienced every word he spoke.

- That’s what they found captivating. That is what caused them to be astonished!

Listen, when we come to God in focused, face to face time, we are sitting at the feet of the greatest teacher with the greatest authority, and we should expect astonishment. Moments of wide eyed wonder. Moments when you can’t help but pause in awe of God and his ways. EXCLAMATION POINTS (!!!) filling the margins!!! The word WOW on repeat in my journal. Truth that hits your heart so deeply that you can’t help sharing it with others!

“They were astonished, amazed!” (22, 27) This is why I’m pleading with you... Jump into our vision focus. Now is a great time to start. Last week in one of our CGs, 3 people said, “I haven’t started, but I am now.” No shame. Luke 16 tomorrow. Jump in!

### **Vision: 1,000,000 Minutes with God**

**Invest at least 1% of your day (15 minutes) in focused, face to face time with God.**

Not only because...

1. God really, really LOVES YOU!
2. Strength for life.
3. Impact for Jesus everywhere.
4. Legacy of faith influencing generations!
5. so Jesus multiplying himself into me!
6. so Jesus can astonish me!

“Blessed is the man, who . . . DELIGHTS in the law of the Lord, and his his law he MEDITATES day and night.... He is like...”

We can’t get enough. WOW Moments. Moments of astonishment.

T: But it’s not just Jesus’ words, it’s also his works.

## 2. Expect to be astonished by the power of Christ over spiritual forces. (23-28)

During their time of worship, perhaps while Jesus was teaching, a man with an unclean spirit stands up and starts shouting at Jesus. There's been the rare occasion where I've had people walk out of my sermons (usually that's a compliment by the way), but I've never experienced this!

- The words "unclean spirit" refer to a demon, "an evil spiritual [being] in opposition to God and in alliance with Satan." Mark uses "demon" (δαμόνιον; 14x) and "[unclean] spirit" (πνεύματι ἀκαθάρτω; 11x) synonymously. (Strauss)
- "Unclean" points us back to OT practices of temple worship where there could no hint of anything impure or defiled. The presence of the demon caused this man to be defiled.
- Verse 24 tells us the demon spoke to Jesus through the man. "What do you want with us?" comes from a Hebrew idiom that basically means: "Mind your own business." Notice he says "us," showing the larger realm of spiritual forces to which he belongs (see Ephesians 6:12).
- The demon confronts Jesus out of fear knowing he's in danger, knowing he's in the presence of "the Holy One of God."
- Then in verse 25, Jesus speaks to the spirit with a simple, commanding rebuke: "Be silent, and come out of him!" causing the man to convulse and cry out with a loud voice as he the demon left his body.

What's going on here?

- Jesus is came to bring the kingdom of light. That meant the end of the reign of the kingdom of darkness.
  - This story reminds us of Jesus' battle with Satan in the wilderness in 1:12-13.
  - Satan and his demonic forces war against Christ all throughout Mark's gospel.
- The demon confirms Jesus' identity as Messiah, sent from God.
  - "If supernatural forces know (and fear) Jesus, he must be who they say he is (cf. 1:34; 3:11-12; 5:6-7)." Strauss
  - Warning: we can know a lot about Jesus but not truly follow him (cf. James 2:19).

How should we respond to the presence of demons?

- We must first acknowledge that demons are real. They still exist!
  - Demons can oppress but not possess believers.
  - They seek to keep the unbelieving in their unbelief, and the believing hindered from living a powerful life for God.
  - An unseen battle rages every day! That doesn't mean we should blame our sin on the presence of demons or attribute every bad thing that happens to the demonic realm, but we should also not be ignorant of the devil's schemes.
  - If I'm going to err on one side or the other, I'm putting my armor on (Ephesians 6:12) with the full knowledge: JESUS. IS. GREATER.
    - 1 John 4:4 said it: "...for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world."
  - I love that we see no power struggle here. No special techniques or incantations... Jesus simply speaks the word on the basis of his own authority and the demon runs!
- What does **1 John 3:8** say? **"The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil."** The guy who wrote that was in the room!! Ha.

Jesus, thank you for giving us your "authority to tread over all the power of the enemy!" (Luke 10:19)

But the more important question is: How should we respond to Jesus?

- They were amazed!, astonished!, so much so they ask in verse 27: "What is this?" which is really asking: "Who is this?"

- But notice, to our surprise, their astonishment is not primarily focused on the exorcism but his teaching. “What is this? A NEW TEACHING with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits and they obey him.”
- They connected the two. Strauss says: “Mark’s point is that the exorcisms reveal Jesus’ authority to accomplish his central mission and message: the proclamation and inauguration of the kingdom of God. Satan’s realm is being beaten back at the advance of God’s kingdom.”

T: Expect to be astonished by the power of Christ over spiritual forces, and finally...

### 3. Expect to be astonished by the power of Christ over physical suffering. (29-34)

Read 29-34?

Mark provides snapshots of a day in the life of Jesus. Synagogue. (Snap) Teaching. (Snap) Confrontation with a demon. (Snap) Demon loses. Jesus wins. (Snap. Snap.) Now, he’s leaving the synagogue (snap) and going to Simon and Andrew’s house, along with James and John. (Discipleship - snap, snap.)

Upon arrival, they discover Peter’s mother-in-law is bedridden with a fever.

- Don’t miss the end of verse 30: “and immediately they told him about her.”
- When trouble comes (and it will come), when you don’t know what to do, where to go, or what decision to make, where will you turn? What will be your reflexive response?
  - Worry? Discouragement? Panic? Despair?
  - Will you turn to family, friends, wisdom from mentors? (all *may* be great options by the way), but let’s learn something here: Go to God, FIRST, the only one who truly has the power to heal and restore!
- Jesus has the authority to change any situation.
- Rather than commanding the illness to flee, as he did with the demon, he brings his healing touch (as we will see so many times in this gospel; 1:41; 5:41; 6:5; 7:32–33; 8:23–25).
- Verse 31 says: “And he came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and the fever left her...”
  - In Jesus Christ, we have a God who comes near and will touch you at your point of pain!
  - With his touch, he communicates: Care. Concern. Compassion. Love. Friendship.
- Peter’s mother-in-law (who was hopefully as amazing as my mother-in-law) experiences complete and immediate healing. She’s up serving again!

We’ll talk about healing more about God’s power to heal as we move through Mark’s gospel, but let me encourage you to not fall into one of two errors. Error #1) God *no longer* heals today by his Spirit working through his people (1 Corinthians 12:1-11; James 5:15). Error #2) God *will always* heal if we simply have enough faith (2 Corinthians 12:7-10). Neither are true. God still heals, but not always. We trust and pray in every situation.

Mark summarizes the rest of Jesus day in vv. 32-34.

- Word must have gotten out about the demon possessed man, and Jesus’ ability to heal.
- Verse 32 says they “brought to him *all* who were sick or oppressed by demons.”
- Verse 33 says “the whole city was gathered together at the door,” a hyperbolic way of saying a massive crowd huddled around Jesus to experience his authority and healing touch firsthand!

Don’t miss two more interesting facts about Jesus’ authority in verse 34.

- In the physical, he healed “various diseases.” As Mark Strauss says, “Jesus was not an itinerant Hellenistic magician with a few tricks up his sleeve, but the messianic Son of God inaugurating the kingdom of God—the restoration and renewal of a fallen creation (cf. Isa 35:5–6; Matt 11:4–6; 12:28; Luke 7:22–23; 11:20).”

- In the spiritual, I love this, he would not let the demons speak. Demons: “Raise your hand if you want to speak. Ummm, No you can’t speak.”
- Why? This takes us back to the same thing we saw in verse 25 where Jesus rebuked the demon and told him to “Be silent!”
- Scholars refer to this as the Messianic Secret. The short explanation on why Jesus silences demons, and many times tells those he heals to keep it to themselves, is not a matter of spreading news, but the timing of spreading that news, and because of what people would do with that news.
- Jesus IS THE MESSIAH, but if everyone had immediate knowledge of that, they would mistake him for an earthly king and his kingdom for an earthly kingdom.

T: Verse 28 tells us, “His fame spread everywhere throughout all the surrounding region.” The people were amazed and astonished.

*Conclusion:*

What about us? What about you?

Everything Jesus does reveals the kingdom of God. “The kingdom is at hand...”

We get so caught up in the exorcisms and the healings that we miss the main point. Jesus came to change lives, save people, and restore us back to God, to the *shalom* he intends for all creation.

When we hear his words clearly, when we see his power before our eyes, we will be astonished!

As you follow Jesus this week, this year, expect astonishment!

I dare you to pray this prayer:

**A Prayer for this Week**

**“ASTONISH ME!”**

I dare you!

God, astonish me with your words. Astonish me with your works. Help me see how you are changing people before my eyes.

Just like I heard the story of someone giving their life to Christ on Friday. Astonish us again.

Just like I heard the story of a sister praying for a brother who is experiencing major spiritual renewal and transformation.

Just like I heard from a married couple experiencing new levels of love and intimacy with God and one another through reading the Bible Reading plan together. Astonish us again.

Astonish us, again!

COVID can’t stop you. Winter weather and blues, can’t stop you. The demonic forces of evil, can’t stop you Jesus.

We recognize your authority. We salute you as the King of heaven and the King of our lives today. INJ.