

Sunday 31st January 2021 – Bulwell United Reformed Church

In this Sunday's reading, Mark 1: 21-28, Jesus' healing of a man with an 'unclean spirit' is the first act he does in Mark's Gospel and it is dramatic. He is presenting himself from the start as someone who will be different and will make a difference. Both Jesus' teaching and his actions reveal that he is the 'Holy One of God', and the word begins to spread about him. *A short service for personal communion focusing on confessing Jesus is Lord is included. Please have your bread & wine/juice ready.*

A gathering prayer

Almighty God,
we recognise that all authority
in heaven and on earth belongs to you.
We pray that you draw near to us today,
to impart your truth and show us your way.
Amen.



A prayer of confession

O God, holy and majestic
we confess that so often we have been fearful in our witness for Christ.
By our silence we have denied that we are his friends and followers.
We have been afraid to make new friendships or to offer a helping hand.
Forgive us for our cowardice
and fill us again with the power of your Spirit;
for Christ's sake. **Amen**

**Jesus Christ came to heal and to save.
In him we have forgiveness of our sins. Amen**

Our Father who art in heaven...

Song Before the throne of God above – Kristyn Getty

[\(344\) Before the Throne of God Above \(feat. Kristyn Getty\) - Official Lyric Video - YouTube](#)

Mark 1:21-28 - Jesus drives out an impure spirit

²¹ They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. ²² The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law. ²³ Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an impure spirit cried out, ²⁴ 'What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are – the Holy One of God!'

²⁵ 'Be quiet!' said Jesus sternly. 'Come out of him!' ²⁶ The impure spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek.

²⁷ The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, 'What is this? A new teaching – and with authority! He even gives orders to impure spirits and they obey him.' ²⁸ News about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee. (NIVUK)

Authority and Power – Mark 1: 21-28

In today's reading from Mark's gospel, we hear of one of the opening incidents in Jesus' public life. We are still in the first chapter of the gospel, and all that has happened so far is that Jesus has been baptised by John, gone to be tested in the wilderness for forty days, and then called some disciples. This story is the first scene of his active public ministry. He turns up in Capernaum, and on the Sabbath day he goes to the synagogue and begins teaching. And the people are blown away by what he has to say. They too begin to make comparisons. "This man is different," they say. "He's not like the teachers we are used to, the scribes. This man seems to have some real authority." They were impressed. When Jesus spoke, they wanted to listen. They were looking for a leader who gave them some hope, and Jesus looked pretty promising. If it had been an electoral campaign, he was off to an excellent start.

But almost immediately, opposition forces rise up. If you speak inspiring words and promise hope of real and lasting change, the forces that benefit from keeping things as they are will not long remain silent. "Have you come to destroy us?! Who do you think you are? We know who you are!" 'Let sleeping dogs lie,' we say but real and lasting change often demands that the sleeping dogs be disturbed, and the sleeping dogs will not be roused without seeking to bite your head off.

When Jesus starts talking in ways that stir up hope of a new day, the demonic forces that ruled the old day are roused in opposition. And it is then that the measure of a true leader can be taken. Will he back down? Will he maintain the rhetoric but negotiate a compromise that appeases the demonic status quo? Will he point the finger and blame someone else and refer everything to a committee? Or will he stand true and back up his words with actions?

Jesus confronts the demonic spirit head on, silencing it and breaking its power over the one it had spoken through. And the people marvelled all the more. "What is this?" they asked one another. "A new teaching, and with authority! Jesus stands firm against even the most devilish powers, and they back down before him." And "at once", Mark tells us, "his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee." When the people see that a leader is not just words, but integrity and action, that will happen. We are so not used to it, that it causes us to sit up and take notice.

If Jesus had simply followed the traditional line and preached perfection according to the Law, so that the people were ready for judgement, then he would not have caused a stir. However, he preached the Good News of the Kingdom, that challenged people to change the emphasis in their lives and walk the way of selfless love. Jesus matched his words with deeds, as we see in the Gospels: healing on the Sabbath and drawing the excluded into the kingdom of love. No wonder he raised a few hackles!

So for us, we gather here around this table this morning, because we have put our hope in Jesus, in the leader whose actions have consistently backed up his words and whose

integrity and courage have continued to cause us to marvel for two thousand years. We gather here because we have found in him the leader who can enable us to see how we too can be enmeshed in the demonic ways of darkness and give us the hope and the courage to follow him in breaking free and finding new life and hope.

And we gather here, because here at this table, Jesus is present, and here his words and actions become one. Words are prayed and a lives are offered, and evil is confronted and brokenness is embraced that wholeness might be known, and he and we give ourselves to one another that salvation might be tasted and the tormented might be set free. And we gather here because it is here that we are fed and nourished for what lies ahead, for the journey of turning our words into actions, that our covenant might be lived out and that we might be the people Jesus has called us to be as we go into the world as his ambassadors, representing and promoting Christ's values of life, love, forgiveness, reconciliation, peace, and sustainable stewardship in the places where we live, work and play.

Prayers of intercession

Let us pray for the world:
for places of conflict, and times of war:
hear us as we open ourselves to the world's needs.

Pause ...

Let us pray for the world:
for places of hunger and poverty,
where homes are lost and families divided:
Christ, hear us as we open ourselves to the world's needs.

Pause ...

Let us pray for our world:
for places in our community, and for our neighbourhoods:
Christ, hear us as we open ourselves to the world's needs.

Pause ...

Let us pray for our world:
for our families and friends, those ill and recovering,
those anxious and afraid:
Christ, hear us as we open ourselves to the world's needs.

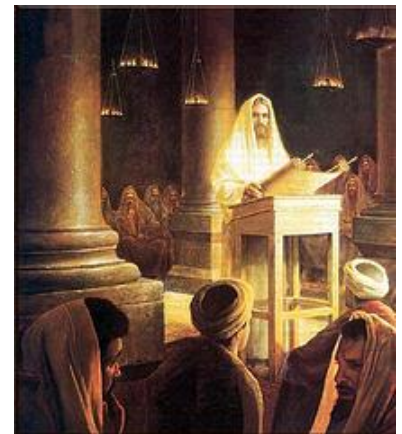
Pause ...

Please add your prayers for others you wish to pray for today . . .

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer, Amen.

Song Be thou my vision (Celtic version)

[\(344\) Be Thou My Vision by 4Him -Lyrics \(Celtic Version\) - YouTube](#)

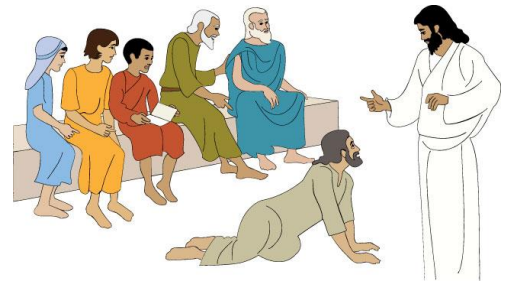


HOLY COMMUNION Prayer of Thanksgiving - Mark 1: 21-28

We give you all thanks and praise, O God,
for your justice stands in splendour and majesty,
and you nourish the faithful
with mercy and kindness.

You raised up among your people
a prophet greater even than Moses,
your Son and our teacher, Jesus of Nazareth.
With words and deeds of authority he has taught us,
not the knowledge that puffs up,
but the love that builds up.

You put your holy words in his mouth,
and at his word even the demons fall silent.
When he was killed, you raised him to life,
and now it is through him that we exist,
and in him, that the crippling grip of death is broken forever.



***Therefore, with our hearts lifted high,
we offer you thanks and praise at all times
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.***

Sharing of the Bread and Wine

Prayer after communion

Let us pray. Most gracious God, we praise you for what you have given and for what you have promised us here. You have made us one with all your people in heaven and on earth. You have fed us with the bread of life and renewed us for your service.

Now we give ourselves to you; and we ask that our daily living may be part of the life of your kingdom, and that our love may be your love reaching out into the life of the world; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Blessing

Go out in the power of the Holy Spirit
to proclaim the good news with boldness
that we may be faithful and true
in following the example and pattern
given to us by Jesus Christ.
And the blessing of God Almighty
Father, Son and Holy Spirit
Be amongst us and remain with us
This day and for evermore. **Amen.**



