**Mark 1:21-28 (ESV)**

**21**  And they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath he entered the synagogue and was teaching. **22** And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes. **23** And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, **24**  “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 out with a loud voice, came out of him. **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.” **28** And at once his fame spread everywhere throughout all the surrounding region of Galilee.

**“Dealing With The Demons”**

Grace, mercy and peace be unto you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen. There is an evident wedge driven today between organized religion and the personal belief of an individual. The roots go back to the old motto tossed out time again, “I can be a Christian and not go to church.” Now there may be plenty of good reasons for such a statement, but it still does not hold up to Scripture. After Jesus called His first disciples promising to make them into fishers of men. He took them directly to church, the place where Jews gathered to hear God’s Word. St. Mark notes, “And they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath he entered the synagogue and was teaching.” There was no wedge driven between faith in Jesus as Savior and the established house of God.

The synagogue came into existence when Israel went into exile. With the temple destroyed by the Babylonians. There was at least to be a place for worship and instruction. At the time of Jesus, the temple was present again in Jerusalem, but Jews scattered so far away saw the synagogue as central to the community. Even early Christian congregations were synagogues of Jewish believers gathered around Word and Sacrament. Later when the gentile name “church” became norm for the baptized it still meant, “those called out” or “assembly.” It should not be surprising to find the first miracle recorded by St. Mark is what the Savior does at a synagogue. The farther Christianity spread, the more certain the local church had to be, especially in a place like Rome. The demons are always up to no good against the church, but Jesus deals with them as the Holy one of God our Savior.

Where the Sabbath Day was a rest for men before God. Jesus was hard at work as the Word become flesh. There was nothing strange about the act of teaching per say. Instead, “they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes.” The title “scribe” was for those teachers of the law since the time of Ezra. They had the responsibility to interpret the Torah or the five books of Moses. Overtime, this came to mean applying it towards the livelihood of the people along with guidance for judicial governance. It would be the equivalent to present day bible scholars as seen on the Discovery Channel. Unfortunately, their knowledge had become empty of God’s love for saving sinners. Jesus shocked the people at the synagogue because He was more than a teacher of the Law or even a prophet like Moses. His Word held the authority to proclaim repentance and faith in Him as the Savior.

The Devil need not do anything if we already trust so much in the works of men. He is happy to let people show off their talents that never teach salvation for sinners. He is content to let anyone mull around in how to live a good life so long as the message is devoid of Jesus as Savior. St. Paul warned preachers of the Church telling young Timothy, “For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myth” (2 Tim 4:3-4). Many forms of idolatry attempt to get our attention in the church. It can be human authority, logic, legal niceness, humorous remarks, and clever sayings. None it has the authority to save sinners. Only God’s Word teaches truth and life for all to repent and believe in Jesus. His authority rests in Scripture to saving the church, the baptized, from a world enslaved to the Devil.

Only when Jesus broke through the empty ways of men, did the demon finally have to react. As with the deceiving words in the Garden of Eden, so in this house of God a servant of Satan blared 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.” He was trying to turn the tables. Where God was building a church, the devil went to work to build a chapel. Worse than mocking His birthplace as man, the Son of God was no longer savior, but labeled “the destroyer” of humanity. Just like the selfish character of the devil, this demon hid behind the very people Jesus came to save. Sadly, the demon-possessed man could do nothing as the poisonous proclamation leaked out from his lips. Except, Jesus stopped what the demon started. Unlike with sinners, He has no patience with fallen angels. He said, “Be silent, and come out of him!” The Holy One of God put the demon to shame, but also proved to be the saving Word for this man.

As products of a pagan culture, so often we consider demonic-possession like the movie Exorcist. It is what sends shivers down the spine, but the devil is far more deceiving. No one noticed the man in the synagogue until Jesus taught in truth and purity. Be ready fellow baptized, God’s love is to put to shame the Devil and his demons. This age-old battle is an enemy humanity cannot defeat and at best can only deny the darkness. Our Lutheran Fathers teach,

“For human nature is far too weak to be able by its own strength resist the devil, who holds enthralled all who have not been freed by faith. Nothing less than Christ’s power is needed for our conflict with the devil” (Tappert 126:138).

Not all conflict is bad. We know the Father sent His Son into a sinful world. It was not for condemnation, but salvation. Yet, the Devil used sinful humanity to Crucify God’s Son, but this place of war is where Christ cried out louder than the demons for us. The greatest battle now hides in the church because Word and Sacrament make the greatest miracle of God’s Son known. Jesus commands silence by His speaking and the sacrifice He gives. He puts to shame sin, death, and the Devil only to bestow His love of forgiveness, life, and salvation for us all.

Having ordered this house of God upon His Word and presence, Jesus knew the Holy Spirit was at work. God’s light goes out to scatter the darkness. St. Mark notes, “And at once his fame spread everywhere throughout all the surrounding region of Galilee.” Jesus did not silence the synagogue. News of Him broke forth into the lives of others with His reign as Savior. Missions is never apart from the message authorized by Jesus. Later He told His disciples to go to the ends of the earth baptizing and teaching all that He commanded. Luther states,

“After we have learned to know God in His Son and have received the forgiveness of sins and the Holy Spirit, who endues hearts with joy and with peace of soul by which we look with contempt on sin and death, what remains to be done? Go, and do not be silent. You are not the only one to be saved; the remaining multitude of men should also be preserved” (Plass 960:3019).

The baptized speak the reign of Jesus by repentance and faith in Him. Nothing else will bring good news to those trapped in a culture of chaos. No one else will lead those to governance undivided by His way of the cross. The demons are always up to no good against the church, but Jesus deals with them as the Holy one of God our Savior. Amen. Now may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, be with your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus to life everlasting. Amen.