

Mark 1:21-39

Date: Sunday, 10 January 2021

Scripture: Mark 1:21-39

Sermon: The Power and Prayer Life of Jesus

Preacher: Justin Ang

Passage

Mark 1:21 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.

Mark 1:29 And immediately he left the synagogue and entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. 30 Now Simon's mother-in-law lay ill with a fever, and immediately they told him about her. 31 And he came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

Mark 1:32 That evening at sundown they brought to him all who were sick or oppressed by demons. 33 And the whole city was gathered together at the door. 34 And he healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons. And he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

Mark 1:35 And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed. 36 And Simon and those who were with him searched for him, 37 and they found him and said to him, "Everyone is looking for you." 38 And he said to them, "Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out." 39 And he went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons.

Transcript

A Day in the Life Of...

Growing up, sometimes I would be sick, and would stay home from school. They were the best days. But this was before cable television, and streaming Netflix at home. So I'd be stuck watching television like "Days of Our Lives", and the "Bold and the Beautiful," and as well as the "Golden Girls." Maybe you still watch them. But there was one particular television show which was, "This is your life" where in each of the episodes they would interview a person, I think it was a surprise, and they would show what that person did. From when they were young until they grew up. Even when I was young, I found it really fascinating because it was a story, a narrative about how a person grew up to be successful. What would my episode look like, I'd wonder? What would be the major turning points?

Sometimes, though, often, life isn't like that, is it? I mean, yes, there are some days which are life changing. But I think the ordinary days are far more common than the life changing days. What would a day look like in your life? A 24 hour period? Today's passage is like seeing a 24 hour period of Jesus Christ's life. It's like the camera is watching Jesus Christ and we see what he does for twenty four hours. I find it fascinating because we get an insight into Jesus' power and prayer life. We get a picture into the day to day life of Jesus Christ. And it's so important for us to understand who Jesus Christ is, he's the God of the universe and we encounter him in the account that Mark gives to us here. So I want to draw your attention to these two things, the power and the prayer life of Jesus Christ this morning.

The Power

Let's look at the power of Jesus. Because one of the things that we should notice as we read through Jesus' day here is that Jesus has authority. We're told for example in verse 22, this

And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes. (Mark 1:22 ESV)

And again later on, Mark tells us what happens when demons encounter him. Jesus with a word, speaks to the demons, and casts them out.

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." (Mark 1:23-27 ESV)

We may be quick to let this pass us by, but they're such important words here. Here is Jesus, someone who is not like anyone before him. Greater than John the Baptist who has power even over the spiritual realm. So great, that he doesn't even need to recite a saying, or chant, he just commands the demon to come out of him and he does so. Here is true and living power.

And we're given a further glimpse into Jesus' power here, don't we? He can provide healing to the sick when he heals Peter's mother in law. In verse 31, we're told the following,

And he came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and the fever left her, and she began to serve them. (Mark 1:31 ESV)

Some people think that I have authority. Maybe, here, at the pulpit. I tell us to sing and then we sing. I tell you to sit, and then you sit. But say you were sick, you wouldn't ask me to command the illness to leave you. I don't have that authority over sickness and illnesses. Sure, I could pray for you, but we're praying that God would heal you.

Let me pause here, because this is really important, how do you respond to Jesus' power and his authority? Maybe, you respond by saying, "Well, that's nice and good, but today we have technology, we have modern medicine. The people back then didn't know any better." Can modern medicine cast out demons and evil spirits?

But how do you respond to Jesus' power? Maybe you're one that responds to his power like the evil spirits. The evil spirits believe and know that Jesus is the Christ, and believe that he will one day judge the world. You know, Satan has more knowledge than us about God, and yet, Satan doesn't repent and believe. Are you like Satan? Knowing about Jesus and yet not submitting yourself to him? I like what James the apostle writes, "You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!" (James 2:19 ESV) "But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works." (James 2:18 ESV)

If we are to respond rightly to Jesus' power, the proper response is humble submission. Let me ask, when you face troubled times, who do you wanna call? Who is it that you first talk to? When you're sick, you call a doctor. When you're in trouble, you call the police. Sure, there's a fire, you call the fire department. But who is it that you first turn to in your heart? Who is it that is able to with the power of the whole world able to help you out? We're told in verse 30, that when Peter's mother in law is sick, they immediately tell Jesus about her. Where is Jesus on your list? We may pay lip service to Jesus, we say, "Yes, Jesus is number one." But where is he on our list when trouble strikes?

Do we first tell Jesus? My encouragement to you is to first tell Jesus. Before anyone else. He has your back. He is gentle and lowly and always listening to you. Willing to help you. I'm reminded of how Jesus is willing to help us as I read Psalm 62,

For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence, for my hope is from him. He only is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be shaken. On God rests my salvation and my glory; my mighty rock, my refuge is God. Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us. Selah (Psalm 62:5-8 ESV)

How do you respond to Jesus' power? Is he your refuge? Do you pour out all of your concerns before him? Are we on our knees telling him how we might feel about a situation? In *The Cry of the Soul*, authors Dan Allender and Tremper Long-

man talk about the importance of bearing our emotions in our relationship with God. They write,

In neglecting our intense emotions, we are false to ourselves and lose a wonderful opportunity to know God. We forget that change comes through brutal honesty and vulnerability before God.

Many years ago, I was in a rough situation at work. It felt like there was no place to go, like I was hemmed in. I tried to move workplaces, every job application was rejected, there wasn't even a "thank you" for your request. Every move that I tried to make didn't work. And in order for me to try get myself out of that situation, I went to all sorts of places. First my workmates, then my friends, my family. I had forgotten that the first place to go was to go to Jesus, and his power. If he's so powerful to release me from my sins through his death on the cross, then isn't he able to do anything for me? Go to our powerful Lord Jesus Christ, his love never ends for you and me.

The Prayer Life

But let's look at Jesus' private prayer life. Because it's something that we should really see and learn from. So let's look at what Jesus does before he prays. Have a look with me.

That evening at sundown they brought to him all who were sick or oppressed by demons. And the whole city was gathered together at the door. And he healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons. And he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him. (Mark 1:32-34 ESV)

People bring their sick to Jesus after sundown because it's just been the Sabbath. So the Sabbath is sundown Friday to sundown Saturday. And now everyone comes to the door. It's really easy for us to skim through these words about Jesus healing. Last year, I had to get a COVID test and Rachel decided that she would drive me to Sutherland Hospital. Except that there was a line, so we went down to Caringbah, next to the Coles where there's also a testing spot. On that particular day, there was also a line there. So Rachel drove me back to Sutherland because we thought at least I could walk home if there was a problem. I go and ask the security guard how long it would take. 2 hours. Recently, I saw online a video of drive through COVID testing. The line was 4 hours. Just to get a test. Imagine, you could line up to see

someone who could not only tell you if you had COVID but, with a word, heal you of COVID. Could you imagine how long the line would be. You'd have people at the door, at the windows, through the roof.

Because Jesus is powerful, everyone demands his time. It would have gone through the whole entire night. And that's why we should find the next few sentences incredible. What happens?

And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed.(Mark 1:35 ESV)

If Jesus were around on earth today, his mobile phone would be going off. Notification after notification. He's busy and yet, he goes off to a desolate place in the morning, to pray. I can imagine that the crowd would have gone through the entire night, they may have continued to camp outside the house waiting for Jesus. And despite the busyness of his life, Jesus finds it necessary to spend time with his Heavenly Father.

Being powerful didn't mean that prayer wasn't important for Jesus. So if Jesus, the God-human, had to pray, shouldn't we pray more? J.C. Ryle writes these words,

If He who was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners," thus prayed continually, how much more ought we who are compassed with infirmity? If he found it needful to offer up supplications with strong crying and tears, how much more needful is it for us, who in many things offend daily?

Let me lay this challenge down. How's your prayer life? I personally struggle with this, but these words in Mark's gospel should really speak to us. At college, I had the privilege of hearing Paul Washer preach on prayer. He's an American pastor who was also a missionary. And he asked this, I find really challenge. He said,

Now let me ask you a question. When people hear you pray do they hear someone who knows God? Do they hear the rhythm of the religion? Do they hear words that have been taught to you by other men? Do they hear form? Do they hear intellect? Or do they hear a man or a woman or a child who spends much time in the presence of God?

If Christ, fully God, and yet fully human, had to pray to be in communion with God the Father, then we too must spend much time in prayer. Paul E. Miller, the author of *A Praying Life* which I recommended a while ago, he writes this,

If you are not praying, then you are quietly confident that time, money, and talent are all you need in life. You'll always be a little too tired, a little too busy. But, if like Jesus you realize you can't do life on your own, then no matter how busy, no matter how tired you are, you will find the time to pray.

Let me ask you a related question, "How noisy is your world?" You know, it's interesting that Mark tells us that Jesus goes to a desolate place. It's actually the same word that's used when Jesus goes into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan (Mark 1:12-13). But the wilderness is a place of power. The wilderness is a place where Jesus could be with his Heavenly Father. Away from the distractions and the noise of the world. "How noisy is your world?" Our world hates silence. It's actually really difficult to find a moment of silence now.

Recently, Rachel asked me to send a package. She sells these dog and cat collars online. And she asked me to send something at Australia Post at Miranda. So I said I'd do it for her. I thought, it should be quiet at lunch time, but bad mistake, it was packed. The line was going out the door. So I waited. What did you do in the old days when you were in a line? You'd just start to day dream right? Now, what do people do? They get their phone out, watch Youtube, watch Netflix, Facebook, instagram. We find it difficult to be silent, we find it difficult to find solitude in our world now. French philosopher Blaise Pascal said this, "All of humanity's problems stem from man's inability to sit quietly in a room alone." And that was in the 17th century.

If your world is noisy, and if you fill it with as many things, then you're going to struggle to pray. You're going to struggle finding space for Jesus in your life.

Let me lay down this challenge. This week, how can you spend more time in prayer? Maybe you can give something up that is just noise.

Closing

I want to finish today by reflecting on a conversation I had with Rachel recently. She told me that she loves Sudoku. I didn't realise that. But it was nice to find that out because I got her a paper Sudoku puzzle book from Coles so she didn't have to squint her eyes playing it on her phone. But the only reason why I knew about that was because we had spent time together at dinner talking about things we like do-

ing. We were able to create space for ourselves in order to get to know one another.

Have you had an encounter like that with family, or friends?

Our relationship with Jesus is a little bit like that. If we don't create space to spend time with Jesus then we won't realise that he is the one who is powerful. The one whom we can put our trust in. So create space for Jesus. Encounter him each day. Your life will change for the better.

Let's pray.