

The Cleansing Authority of Jesus

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[0 : 01] All right, thank you very much, Bear. And if you have a Bible, go ahead and open it to Mark 1 and verse 21. That's where we're gonna be working from today. Again, my name is Jesse, one of the pastors here.

If you're new, so glad you are with us. And you're kind of getting at the beginning of this series, and so don't feel like you're missing out too much. I think we're a few installments in, but it'll be easy to go play catch-up.

We keep the sermons online and on the app. Those who are listening online, thank you for doing that. And there's a lot of ground to cover, so let's jump right into it. We're gonna start reading, all right? So it says this.

And they went into Capernaum, talking about Jesus and his disciples here. They went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath, he entered the synagogue and was teaching. And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority and not as the scribes.

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?

[1 : 01] 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? And at once his fame spread everywhere throughout all the surrounding region of Galilee.

And immediately he left the synagogue and entered the house of Simon and Andrew with James and John. Now Simon's mother-in-law lay ill with a fever, and immediately they told him about her. And he came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and the fever left her.

And she began to serve them. 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. 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.

[2 : 07] And Simon and those who were with him searched for him. And they found him and said to him, Everyone is looking for you. And he said to them, Let us go on to the next towns, that I might preach there also.

For that is why I came out. And he went through all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons. And a leper came to him, imploring him and kneeling, said to him, If you will, can you make me clean?

Moved with pity, he, Jesus, stretched out his hand and touched him and said to him, I will be clean. And immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean.

And Jesus sternly charged him and sent him away at once. And he said to him, See that you say nothing to anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded for a proof to them.

But he went out and began to talk freely about it and to spread the news, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter a town, but was out in desolate places. And people were coming to him from every quarter.

[3 : 08] This is God's word. So we covered a lot of ground there. And all this happens in two days.

You think about all that Jesus did in that short amount of time. That is pretty impressive. But the reason those stories are put together and grouped together is to show us something about Jesus. In this first story of those two days, we see Jesus in Capernaum. He's with his disciples. They enter in there, and they go on the Sabbath into the synagogue, which would have been a normal custom for any Jew to do.

And he began to teach in the synagogue. And so people, they hear what he is teaching, and they are amazed because he is teaching as one who has authority, right?

And they say, like, not like the scribes, which I can't help but wonder, were the scribes, like, sitting there? And they're just like, man, this guy's amazing compared to these guys over here, you know? It's just like, how awkward would that have been, right?

[4 : 09] But already what we see, just in Jesus opening the scrolls, and this is the first time, this is his launching into his public ministry. He opens the scrolls and begins to teach, and he teaches with authority.

And his teaching is something that really sets him apart. But then in the process of that, something unusual happens. We see this man with what is called an unclean spirit, a.k.a. a demon, yells out some stuff about Jesus during, like, the quiet part of the service.

Like, right now, if somebody was to, like, stand up and start yelling stuff at me, we would all think, like, hmm, this is not the moment for that, buddy. So that's what's going on here.

And then Jesus responds, he shows a new kind of authority, right? His teaching already has this authority, and there's this new kind of authority. Jesus flexes, and once again, he's showing he is separated, he's different.

He has this authority that apparently, again, the scribes don't have either. If I was a scribe, I would probably not be feeling too confident in myself at this moment. Look what it says in verse 25.

[5 : 11] 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? They are amazed, right? And I want to say, so should we, because this shows us something about Jesus, and Jesus has authority over things we can't see.

See, in this moment, he shows his authority over demons. And with a word, he rebukes this demon into being silent and casts him out of this man. And this possession by a demon teaches us an important truth that I think is worth considering.

Now, I want to say, if you are in here checking out Christianity, this may be news to you. Like, wait, demons and all this stuff? What's going on here? It's like, you're talking about, like, ghosts being real.

And I would say, this may be hard to believe, but I hope that I can, I hope to show that, even though it may be hard to believe, it is true nevertheless. See, this man could be seen and was controlled by, this man that could be seen was controlled by a spiritual entity that could not be seen.

[6 : 26] That is what's going on here, right? So, what's going on with this man, like, there was no medicinal cures for him in that day. And I would venture to say that Visor couldn't come up with a vaccine to, like, cure this man today either, right?

Like, that is not going to happen. So, we have to reckon that we live in a natural, physical world of things that we can feel and that we can see and that we can hear and smell and taste with our senses.

It's how we experience it. But behind all that, according to the Bible, is a spiritual dimension, right? In technical, theological terms, it's the thing behind the thing, right?

The book of Job is a story of showing, that shows us how much the spiritual world can impact and break into this natural, physical world. Look how much calamity Satan was able to bring about in Job's life.

Job's life. Verse 13 of Job chapter one says this, Now there was a day when his, Job's, sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house. And there came a messenger to Job and said, The oxen were plowing and the donkeys feeding beside them.

[7 : 32] And the Sabians fell upon them and took them and struck down the servants with the edge of the sword. And I alone have escaped to tell you. And while he was yet speaking, there came another and said, The fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants and consumed them.

And I alone have escaped to tell you. This guy's having a bad day, right? It's not done. While he was yet speaking, there came yet another guy and said, The Chaldeans formed three groups and made a raid on the camels and took them and struck down the servants with the edge of the sword. And I alone have escaped to tell you. Okay. While he was yet speaking, there came another and said, Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house. And behold, a great wind came across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house. And it fell upon the young people and they are dead. And I alone have escaped to tell you. And this all happened because we see prior to that, God and Satan having this conversation. And Satan is saying, Hey, he trusts you and he believes in you because you put a hedge of protection around him that I can't get at.

[8 : 34] I bet you if I make his life tough and difficult and he suffers greatly that he will recant his trust in you and his faith in you. And so this is Satan having a go at Job and what he owns.

And so we see here that the supernatural, the spiritual, the things that we can't see, has some power to break into and cause events to take place in this natural world.

Now, it's easy to write all this stuff off as hocus pocus, right? Like people that you can talk to somebody who is an atheist or agnostic. Maybe that's you. And you're just like, Man, this is really, really tough stuff.

This seems like just an easy way to figure out complex problems or have an answer for complex problems in this life. And I get that perspective because, man, in one way, it just gives us more of a sense that we as humans have control over what happens in this world, that there's nothing behind the things really pulling the strings.

And it also gives us a hope that we can maybe solve all the problems that occur in this world by natural means, right? But I would say that is a false hope.

[9 : 42] And I say that because if we are to take an honest, hard look at history, we see the problem of an abiding evil that manifests itself in multitudinal ways in our physical world.

Evil has been a metaphysical reality manifesting itself in the forms of murder and rape and abuse and oppression and slavery and unjust wars and stealing and lying.

And the list can go on and on. And these are evil actions done through human actors that are animated by what lies beneath the surface that we cannot see. And in the days of Noah, God looked at mankind and actually mourned when he looked at their hearts because God can look into our hearts.

And he says, Oh, my goodness, the hearts of mankind are evil and intent on evil all the time. And that was not an isolated moment.

I would argue from history, again, that we, if it proves anything, it's that we are incapable of solving the evils that ail us. We've tried our best.

[10 : 48] We've tried philosophy. We've tried religion. We've tried government. We've tried policies. And while these things can be helpful and government and laws can help bring order and constrain evil, they can't destroy it.

They can't get to the real powers in the spiritual realm. We keep trying to make better plans, better structures of government and society, yet our problems still remain.

Why is that? Well, Ephesians 6, verse 12, the apostle Paul writes this to the church. He says, For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood. Like our battle, our real battle isn't by what we can see, but it's against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

That's where the battle lies. That's where the war lies. And that isn't crazy news. That is actually good news. And if you're a Christian, we need to press into what Paul says right after what he said in those verses.

And he goes on to say, Because of that, we need to put on the full armor of God every single day. And we need to pray. And our hope, as Christians, we need to reckon with this, right?

[12 : 07] We need to step back because we are in a day that I think we rush too fast to putting our hope in politicians and in politics. Although I would say that there is something to be said about a nation having just laws.

That is a good thing. We should care about that and labor in a peaceful way to bring those things about. But there is a hidden systemic root, the thing behind the thing here.

As Christians, we need to be more prayer-mobilized and motivated than politically mobilized and motivated. Why? Because Jesus, if he is who he says he is, has authority over the spiritual realm. He can silence a demon with one word. He can tell a demon where to go with one command. The principalities and powers in heavenly places are shaking in their boots because they know he has the power to destroy them.

That's what that demon confesses in that moment. So the question for us, do you want peace throughout the world? Do you want equity amongst every person?

[13:18] Do you want justice for all? Yes. Do we want the elimination of racism? Murder? No poverty?

No hunger? Absolutely. Now we can make a dent in that in this life with some effort, but we have to reckon with that we will never eliminate them.

And that's only Jesus that can do that. Because he has the authority over the evil cosmic powers that are always at work. And because he has the authority of the spiritual realm, it means he has the authority in the physical realm too.

Verse 29. And immediately he left the synagogue and entered the house of Simon and Andrew with James and John. Now Simon's mother-in-law lay ill with a fever and immediately they told him about her.

And he came and took her by the hand and lifted her up and the fever left her. And she began to serve them. And 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.

[14:27] And cast out many demons. And he would not permit the demons to speak because they knew him. And so we see, man, Jesus' authority over this demon that none could see.

But then we see his authority to heal diseases. To heal the lame and the blind and the deaf. The things that can be seen. He's able to do that.

Jesus has authority over the things we can see. And in our scientific age it is easy to write off Christianity or anybody who claims to control the invisible boogeyman.

Right? Like, hey, I got the power to do that. It's quite another thing though to see someone heal a visible ailment. But that does happen because the spiritual affects the natural.

And so it would be impossible for Jesus then to claim authority over the spiritual. We'll then have no authority over what can be seen. But if he's able to heal the lame, the blind, the deaf, and the sick, then it's proof to his authority over both of the spiritual and the natural.

[15:34] And it's important that we recognize here that God cares about both. Right? God cares as much about what's happening in the spiritual world as much as he does the natural world.

And one of the most dangerous heresies that has infected the church in history, at different moments in history, is elevating the spiritual above the physical.

Right? And two errors have come out of this. The first one is that if you elevate the spiritual above the physical, what you can fall into error-wise is that it doesn't matter what you do in the body because God only cares about the spirit.

And so what that has done, it has given people license to say like, I can do whatever I want with my body because God doesn't care about that. I can sleep with whoever I want. I can treat it however I want. God only cares what's going on in the spirit.

And that's just not true. The second error that comes out of that is you can fall to the other side of that where you are disgusted by the body and its desires.

[16:35] And so you punish it. So you see things stepping into self-flagellation that happen. Oh, I sinned or I did this, so I'm just going to beat my body physically into submission and mistreat it.

Oh, I shouldn't be having any lustful thoughts. Sex, even in marriage, is a bad thing. I shouldn't have that appetite. And literally there's been times in history and little weird groups and sects, S-E-C-T-S, sex, okay, of Christianity where it was frowned upon to engage in marital intimacy because, oh, no, that's not a spiritual thing.

That's like you have to deny those things. And so people would starve themselves for many reasons, thinking that if they would do that, they would be more spiritual people.

But God made this physical world, right? And then every time he brought it into existence, he said it was good, right?

It was good. He made it. Everything that we see, all the physical realities, every part of us that we made, he looked and he said it was good.

[17 : 48] He made your body and he said it is good. And so he deeply cares about what you and I do in the body, deeply. For that reason, because he made us.

But I would say even more so because the way he relates to us and wants to relate to us is intimate union, not in a sexual way. He wants intimate non-sexual fellowship, intimacy, where we are described as being one with him, together with him, united with him.

And because God is holy and he is God, his terms for fellowship and union are with holy persons, body and spirit, which is what we are.

And this same body he highly values, he also breathed his spirit into. And so we are both flesh and spirit, not one or the other, and not one better than the other.

Jesus came to save and redeem both our flesh and our spirit that have been affected by sin.

Because to him, one is not more important than the other. Jesus heals both the body and the spirit.

[18 : 57] God loves this world because he made it. God loves your body because he made it. And God loves your spirit because he made it. His plan for redemption isn't to burn up the physical world so that all that's left is the supernatural.

When Jesus comes again, he is going to bring final renewal and healing to everything that we can and can't see. It will no longer be under the curse of sin and death.

Every bad thing that we now know will have no power one day. Not only will evil have no power, it will no longer exist.

Can you imagine a world where things can't decay or die and everything is ordered toward goodness, kindness, peace, harmony, and blessing?

That's pretty amazing, right? And that will be amazing when we come into that. But I want to say for all of us, man, yes, that's amazing, Jesse, but what about now?

[20 : 01] That is a good question. Until then, what do we do? Well, we live in the in-between. Now, don't think about the dimension from Stranger Things. That's not what I'm talking about here, right?

We live in between Jesus having already brought his kingdom and Jesus coming again one day to bring the fullness of the kingdom. That's the in-between that we live in.

We are living in the already, but not yet. That we already have the kingdom that Jesus brought, but the fullness of Jesus' kingdom is not yet fully realized.

So in this already, but not yet era, we experience Jesus' authority in the same way they were experiencing it in these stories captured in Mark's gospel.

He comes with healing power for our body and our spirit. Now, I would say that is true, but it's important to remember that until he returns, only the spiritual part of us will not ultimately succumb to disease and death.

[21 : 06] Even if we get the gift of bodily healing in this life, that's awesome. And we pray for those things, but you know what the reality is? Eventually, we are all going to die.

And you'll be happy to know I'm not ending my sermon there. But it's important we know that. It really is. Because it keeps us from drifting into a face that rises and falls based on the health of our bodies or whether or not God chooses to heal us. Another thing we need to watch out for is thinking that we can reach spiritual perfection in this life.

Now, we should strive toward that. It is our aim to be holy like Jesus. Not to earn God's love, but because he loves us. And because we enjoy union with him.

That is incomparable. And we have to realize that while we have the power to say no to sin now because Jesus broke the power of sin over us, we are not free from the presence of sin.

[22 : 12] It's still there. We will live in this life with physical and spiritual imperfection that we fight. Right? You think about like, man, what do we say when somebody gets cancer?

They are fighting cancer. Yeah. What do we say about our sin then? Man, we are fighting our sin as Christians. The good news, though, is that one day the fight will end.

We will be fully healed. He will come again. Amen. Amen. And when he comes, we're going to receive what the Bible calls the glorification of our bodies.

When he returns, our spirits and these new bodies of flesh will be reunited, glorified. And they will put on perfection. And they will put on immortality.

And we will live forever that way. But until then, we rest in Jesus's holiness for us. And surrender to the spirit sanctifying work in us.

[23 : 11] That is increasing us in holiness. And so we need to hold these two truths in tension in this life. Our bodies and spirits won't be perfected.

And we keep asking God to heal both of them. Because Jesus rewards the desperate. We should be more desperate than we are. We need to be like the leper in that last story that hunted Jesus down.

It says in verse 40, And a leper came to him, imploring him and kneeling, said to him, If you will, you can make me clean. And moved with pity, he stretched out his hand and touched him and said to him, I will be clean.

And immediately the leprosy left him. And he was made clean. The healthy don't need a doctor. It is the sick. When I got COVID, it increasingly got worse and worse.

And it turned into pneumonia. I got desperate for a doctor and for medicine. I needed it. And that's the thing. The more dire our need, the more desperate we are for intervention and for somebody to help.

[24 : 22] And being desperate for Jesus starts with you and I recognizing the severity of our sickness. You know, we live in a time where it's hard to do this because we can't see past our screens.

We can't see through the busyness of our lives to see how sick our souls are or to hear how sick our souls are. We live obsessively hurried lives, which is just making our souls more sick than they've ever been.

And a sick soul can't be seen. But it breaks into the physical nevertheless, right? It comes out of us. This guy, John Mark Comer, he's a pastor. He writes some books.

He wrote this book called The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry. He points out symptoms of the hurried and sick soul. He says this. It shows up in irritability, hypersensitivity, restlessness, isolation, workaholism, overeating, emotional numbness, out-of-order priorities, lack of care for the body, escapist behaviors, and slippage of spiritual disciplines, to name a few.

Now we look at those, and it's worth reckoning that those are the symptoms, right? Which means that those really aren't the problems. My mom got cancer, and one of the things that the symptoms was she couldn't keep food down.

[25 : 49] But that wasn't her real problem. Her real problem lay in her body somewhere where the cancer was growing. Because you can take care of the symptom or cut it off or eliminate it, but you'll just manage a different one.

That I haven't listed here. Because these, the symptoms aren't the thing behind the thing. But that's what Jesus came to heal. One of Jesus' favorite questions he asked people was, what do you want me to do for you?

He would go to people, and he would say that. He was genuinely interested, and he was sufficiently capable. And he still is today. And he comes, and he asks you and I the same question.

What do you want me to do for you? And the question I have for you is, are you desperate enough to ask him? Whatever you came in with, whatever you're wrestling with, whatever you're struggling with, Jesus is inviting you to bring it to him.

Look how he received this leper. It says he had pity on this man. He said, lepers were pariahs in that day. They had to live far away from everybody else.

[27 : 09] They couldn't be around people. They had to live in their own colonies. And if they were to walk anywhere, if somebody was coming up, they had to shout, unclean, unclean, as they walked toward them, so people could understand who was coming their way.

They were not allowed into synagogues or temples, because they were unclean. And Jesus, he allows this leper to approach him.

And he has pity and compassion on him. He doesn't see us, friends, as problems. He doesn't see us as projects. He sees us as people, made in his image, fashioned by him, body and spirit.

And he sees your need. He sees your sickness, physical or spiritual. He sees your sorrow. And he has compassion. As the band comes up, how can you and I respond?

I want to ask you this. How do you see Jesus? Is he someone to despise like the demons do? They recognize him as who he is, the Holy One, Son of God.

[28 : 27] But to them, he is an enemy that they can't beat. Yet, too proud to recognize how fallen they are. Are you here?

And do you see Jesus as he is? But you're too proud to recognize your condition and receive his compassion. Or, you can see Jesus as the powerful and compassionate Holy One of God, who you can come to humbly for healing.

If you're here and not yet a Christian, those demons had every right to fear that Jesus might destroy them, because he has the power to do that. And one day, Jesus will come again.

And in that day, he will judge the living and the dead. And all who have rejected him as Lord and Savior will join in the same eternal punishment that those demons were afraid of.

And it will be hopeless then. But I want to say for you, it is not hopeless now, because you have a Savior who is offering you salvation.

[29 : 33] You don't have to earn it. You receive it by faith. And that comes to you through grace. And when you repent and believe and surrender your life to Jesus Christ, man, you get his righteousness.

You get to be healed of all your uncleanness. You are made holy in him. And so there's going to be a prayer up in a moment with the scripture to pray.

And if that's you, God's pulling on your heart. Pray that prayer. It says, when we confess and believe, we are saved. If you're here and you're already a Christian, Jesus is asking you and me right now, what do you want me to do for you?

Friends, what do you need healing from? What sickness, what sin, what sorrows? You could bring them to him. In a moment, we're going to be taking communion.

But first, I want to just give us room to examine our hearts. There may be stuff we need to repent of. There may be people we need to repent to. Maybe it's just coming and laying your request before God and asking him to intervene.

[30 : 54] But I want to give us a chance to do that. And we need to examine our hearts. There's a scripture behind me that you can read. I won't read it, but it warns us that we cannot take communion as Christians in an unworthy manner.

So I want you to take this seriously. Let's go to him now. Whether you're a Christian or not yet a Christian, I'm inviting you all to come and do business with Jesus over the next 30 seconds.

Let's do that. Let's do this. Amen. Amen.

So Jesus, we confess. We are far from perfect, but you're a perfect savior. We confess that we are far from whole.

We are desperate for you, the great physician, who can come and heal us body and soul. You see every need.

[32 : 27] And you are capable and sufficient to meet every need. Thank you, Lord.

Amen.