

## 012824 English Sermon "What have you to do with us?" Mark 1:21-28

In our postmodern world, today's Bible verses may seem old fashioned or irrelevant to our lives. There are many people today who think that evil spirits, unclean spirits, Jesus rebuking them, and casting out demons are something that only appears in movies.

Overall belief in God, angels, heaven, hell and the devil, which Gallup termed the five "spiritual entities," has reached its lowest point in 22 years, according to survey results released in July 2023. Seventy-four percent of Americans said they believe in God, while 69 percent said they believe in angels and 67 percent said they believe in heaven, the poll found. Slightly smaller shares — 59 percent and 58 percent — said they believe in hell and the devil. Americans who regularly attend religious services were more likely to believe in such spiritual entities.

Since the earliest times, the vows of Christian baptism have consisted first of the renunciation of all that is evil and then the profession of faith and loyalty to Christ. Think back to when you were baptized. These questions are answered at baptism. Do you renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness, reject the evil powers of this world, and repent of your sins? Do you accept the freedom and power God gives you to resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves? Do you confess Jesus Christ as your Savior, put your whole trust in his grace, and promise to serve him as your Lord? In fact, it is difficult to talk about the ministry of Jesus without thinking about spiritual entities, whether holy or evil in whatever forms they present themselves.

According to the Gospel of Mark chapter one, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news. He called his disciples to follow him. And now, on the sabbath day, Jesus entered the synagogue to teach. Regarding the teachings of Jesus, they were all amazed and said "a new teaching with authority." Not as the scribes.

The scribes were people who had a wealth of knowledge about God and the law of Moses. Ironically, however, they could not recognize Jesus and the

Messiah, the Son of God prophesied in the Old Testament.

Then 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." The unclean spirit knows who Jesus is! Even when Satan was tempting Jesus in the wilderness, he clearly had knowledge about God. Interestingly, in all three of his temptations he quoted the Word of God. Having knowledge of God and believing in God are different. This is why we should be humble as we have more years of living in faith. If you attend church for a long time, you will naturally gain knowledge about God. You will gradually start to discern what's right from what's wrong. But you should not take your knowledge as your faith.

The apostle Paul said in Ephesians 4:12-13 "to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ." People come to know right and wrong, but without faith and love, they could be so judgmental, so cruel, and evil. Just like the Pharisees at the time of Jesus.

It is not enough just to have knowledge of God. The unclean spirit knew the best about Jesus here, but he did not believe in Jesus. In order to live as a Christian, what you believe and know must go together! This is the part where we realize that harmony between faith and knowledge is very important in our life of faith. Some believers always shout "I believe!", but they don't have knowledge of God. On the other hand, there are people who know so much intellectually but do not believe in Jesus as their Lord and their Savior. We must remember that what we believe and what we know must become one and grow. That is a life moving towards perfection. That is the life of sanctification that Jesus desires for Christians.

In the Bible, nature, including the sea and wind, obeys the Lord. He said, "Be calm, the sea," and the sea became calm. Even in today's passage, when Jesus commands the unclean spirit to be quiet and come out of that person, the unclean spirit comes out immediately. It does not want to obey but is

compelled to obey. It is because the spiritual authority of Jesus is that great. The wind, the storm, and the sea obey the words of Jesus, and even the unclean spirit! Pay attention to what the unclean spirit said in this story today. "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us?" In another story recorded in the Gospel, that is, the story of Jesus driving out an evil spirit from the Gerasene, the evil spirit asks this question again. Luke 8:28, "When he saw Jesus, he fell down before him and shouted at the top of his voice, 'What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me.'" He says he has nothing to do with the Lord.

Consider what Jesus said to Peter when Peter refused to let Jesus wash his feet. John 13:8, "Peter said to him, 'You will never wash my feet.' Jesus answered, 'Unless I wash you, you have no share with me.'" The New Living Translation translated like this, "Unless I wash you, you won't belong to me." Living as a Christian means that you have share with Jesus. You talk to Jesus. You walk with Jesus. You belong to Jesus!

Coming back to today's Bible passage, while reading today's passage carefully, I found an interesting part. Didn't it say that the unclean spirit was forced to obey Jesus' words? Even he could not help but obey Jesus' words. However, it was not complete obedience! There are two things Jesus commanded the unclean spirit. First, "Be silent" and the second "Come out of him." Although the unclean spirit reluctantly obeyed the second part, he didn't obey the first. Rather, in verse 26, it says that the unclean spirit came out with a loud voice. It looks like they are rebelling. Because there are differences in authority, he has to listen to Jesus, but do so reluctantly and rebelliously. As I read this portion of the Bible, I thought to myself, is my obedience to Jesus complete obedience or is it a selective obedience that suits my convenience?

Bill and George went on a trip to Egypt together. One day, George went shopping and saw an old woman selling a black cat statue. The heavy stuff looked like metal, but it cost 500 dollars. But he looked closely, he realized that the cat's eyeballs were real pearls. George bargained for \$300 for only two eyeballs, and eventually got the pearls. George walked into the hotel and

showed off to Bill. After hearing about the whole situation, Bill asked for the old woman's location and ran out in haste. And he bought the iron cat for \$200. Bill looked around the cat and scratched the soles of the cat's feet with a knife. Then the black paint peeled off and the golden color shimmered. The owner who first made the cat was concerned about loss and painted it black and disguised it as an iron cat. Bill said to George who was speechless. "George, think carefully. Would a cat statue whose eyes are made of real pearls be made of cheap iron?" Sometimes we lose big things while trying to obtain small things.

God, who created heaven and earth with just the Word, sent his only begotten son, Jesus Christ, to save humankind, then there is a corresponding value and purpose.

Dear beloved sisters and brothers in Christ, once again the apostle Paul said, "equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ." I hope you live a life that has something to do with Jesus in your daily life. I pray that the words of Jesus become increasingly relevant in your life. Fairfield Grace, may God's grace, peace, goodness, and mercy be with you, your family, your business, your studies, and with the lives of your children. To Christ be thanks and praise. Amen.