

2. Touch of the Master's hand

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Well, it was battered and scarred and the auctioneer felt it was hardly worth his while to waste much time on the old violin. But he held it up with a smile, "It sure ain't much. But it's all we got left, I guess we ought to sell it too. Now who'll start the bid on this old violin, just one more and we'll be through." And he cried, "One, give me one dollar. Who'll make it two... Only two dollars! Who'll make it three?... Three dollars twice. Now that's a good price! But who's got a bid for me? Raise up your hand. And don't wait any longer, the auction's about to end. Who's got four, just one dollar more to bid on this old violin."

Well, the air was hot and the people stood around as the sun was setting low.

From the back of the crowd a gray-haired man came forward, picked up the bow. He wiped the dust from the old violin and tightened up the strings. Then he played out a melody pure and sweet. Sweeter than the angel's sing. And then the music stopped.

And the auctioneer with a voice that was quiet and low, he said, "What am I bid for this old violin?" Then he held it up with a bow. Then he cried out, "One, give me one thousand. Who'll make it two... Only two thousand! Who'll make it three?... Three thousand twice. Well, that's a good price! But who's got a bid for me?" People cried out, "What made the change? We don't understand." Then the auctioneer stopped, and he said with a smile, "It was the touch of the Master's hand!"

Now you know, a man with a life out of tune is battered and scarred with sin, and he's auctioned cheap to a thankless world much like that old violin. Then the Master comes. The foolish crowd, they never understand the worth of a soul and the change that is done just by one touch of the Master's hand.

We will witness six incidents that will happen in the remainder of chapter 1 in a rapid successive mode. Author Mark didn't bother to go into detail about the teachings of Jesus, but he didn't miss out what the Lord Jesus has done to the people around the Sea of Galilee with His compassion and love for them.

A. A TEACHING AT THE CAPERNAUM SYNAGOGUE

Mark 1:21-22 Then they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and taught. 22 And they were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

Jesus left Nazareth because His own people would not receive Him and He went down to Capernaum, which He made His headquarters all during His earthly ministry.

You can go to Capernaum today and see the remains of an ancient Jewish synagogue, which still has the foundation of this same building Jesus taught in. In the beginning, while the Jewish people were in Babylon exile, whenever there were ten Jewish men above the age of twelve, a synagogue could be organized. In that place, they read the Scriptures, praying and worshiping God led by laymen. When they built a synagogue, the end wall that used to contain the Scripture boxes faced the Jerusalem temple.

After they returned to Jerusalem from the Babylon exile, they changed the entrance door to face the Jerusalem temple.

Wouldn't you love to hear the voice of Jesus while He was teaching in that synagogue? We may not be able to hear the audible voice of Jesus right now, but we have His written Word on our laps with the explanation of the Holy Spirit to us. So we are more blessed than the people in that Capernaum synagogue.

The scribes of Jesus' day rarely taught with authority. They would often simply quote a variety of Rabbis' teachings. But Jesus taught with authority, because He Himself is the Word of God according to John 1.

John 1:1-2 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God.

B. CASTING A DEMON OUT AT THE CAPERNAUM SYNAGOGUE

Mark 1:23-28 Now there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, 24 saying, "Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are-- the Holy One of God!" 25 But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be quiet, and come out of him!" 26 And when the unclean spirit had convulsed him and cried out with a loud voice, he came out of him. 27 Then they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, "What is this? What new doctrine is this? For with authority He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him." 28 And immediately His fame spread throughout all the region around Galilee.

Some of you may think that demon possession is something happened during the time of the first century, but no more in this modern days. Think again. If you believe that there is a God and you'd better know that demonic activities are real and they are very much around in this decaying world.

To be precise, those who are born-again in the Lord Jesus are "the Holy Spirit possessed." Even as the Holy Spirit can live in us, so the people who deny God's Word and take a stand against can be demon possessed, either consciously or unconsciously. Exposure to things such as spiritism, astrology, ungodly heavy metal music, palm reading, New Age movement, occult practices and illegal drugs are great opportunities for demons to have their invitations to human containers.

It took the presence of the Son of God to expose the demon in that synagogue. Jesus not only exposed him, but He also commanded him to keep quiet about His identity and to depart from the man. The Savior did not want, nor did He need, the assistance of Satan and his cohorts to tell people who He is.

The demon clearly identified Christ's humanity – "Jesus of Nazareth" as well as His deity – "the Holy One of God". He also confessed great fear that Jesus might judge him and send him to the pit. There are people today just like this demon possessed man: in a religious meeting, able to tell who Jesus is – yet completely lost!

James 2:19 19 You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe--and tremble!

C. THE ONLY MISTAKE BY JESUS?

Mark 1:29-31 Now as soon as they had come out of the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. 30 But

Simon's wife's mother lay sick with a fever, and they told Him about her at once. 31 So He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and immediately the fever left her. And she served them.

Some believe that Peter was a single until he died and they put them as the first Pope. As far as the Bible is concerned, Peter was very married and had a mother-in-law.

Somebody told me that healing Peter's mother-in-law was the only mistake Jesus had ever made. That is a terrible thing to say.

What a privilege it was for Peter and his family to have the very Son of God as guest in their humble home! We do, too, have the very person of God in our homes, if we are born-again Christians. As a matter of fact, we have Him wherever we go. The believers of Jesus Christ have the Holy Spirit within each one's heart, not just visiting once in a lifetime.

Peter's mother-in-law responds the way we should when Jesus blesses us. She immediately served Jesus out of gratitude.

D. MORE HEALINGS AFTER SABBATH SUNSET

Mark 1:32-34 At evening, when the sun had set, they brought to Him all who were sick and those who were demon-possessed. 33 And the whole city was gathered together at the door. 34 Then He healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and He did not allow the demons to speak, because they knew Him.

Freed from the Sabbath restrictions on travel and activity, the people come to Him freely to be healed. They brought their sick and afflicted, and the Lord healed them all. The Greek verb 'brought' indicates that they "kept on bringing" people to Him, so that He must have gone to sleep at a very late hour.

Note that Jesus didn't pass Kentucky Fried Chicken buckets for donation while He was healing people or beg for faith pledge for healing? For those so-called healing ministers on Christian TV, if there are truly divine healers, they should have received the gifts of healing from the Holy Spirit without any payment to God. Then why do they ask for money when they do so-called healing services? Better yet, shouldn't they go to hospitals and heal people for free? I don't see them doing that.

1 Tim 6:5 useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself.

E. SPIRITUAL MORE THAN PHYSICAL

Mark 1:35-39 Now in the morning, having risen a long while before day-light, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed. 36 And Simon and those who were with Him searched for Him. 37 When they found Him, they said to Him, "Everyone is looking for You." 38 But He said to them, "Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth." 39 And He was preaching in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and casting out demons.

We would think that after such an exhausting Sabbath day, He would sleep late the next morning. But late hours did not keep Jesus from His appointed meeting with His Father early the next morning. Isaiah 50:4 gives us a prophetic description of God's righteous Servant as He meets the Father morning by morning. What an

example for us to follow! It is no surprise that Jesus had such authority and power when His prayer life was so disciplined.

Isaiah 50:4 The Lord God has given Me The tongue of the learned, That I should know how to speak A word in season to him who is weary. He awakens Me morning by morning, He awakens My ear To hear as the learned.

Jesus did not need to pray because He was weak, but because He was strong. The source of His strength was His relationship with God His Father. Jesus knew that pressure and busyness should drive us towards prayer, not from prayer.

What did Jesus pray for? As much as anything, Jesus used this time of prayer for that close, intimate communion with God the Father that He longed for, which nourished and strengthened His soul.

Jesus knew the importance of solitary time with God. While it is good and important for us to join with others in the presence of God, there is much in our Christian life that can only be learned and experienced in a solitary place with God.

F. REACHING OUT TO THE FORBIDDEN

Mark 1:40-45 Now a leper came to Him, imploring Him, kneeling down to Him and saying to Him, "If You are willing, You can make me clean." 41 Then Jesus, moved with compassion, stretched out His hand and touched him, and said to him, "I am willing; be cleansed." 42 As soon as He had spoken, immediately the leprosy left him, and he was cleansed. 43 And He strictly warned him and sent him away at once, 44 and said to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone; but go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing those things which Moses commanded, as a testimony to them." 45 However, he went out and began to proclaim it freely, and to spread the matter, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter the city, but was outside in deserted places; and they came to Him from every direction.

Leprosy was one of the most terrible diseases of the ancient world. Today, leprosy afflicts 15 million across the world, mostly in third world nations. It begins as small, red spots on the skin. Before too long the spots get bigger, and start to turn white, with sort of a shiny, or scaly appearance. Pretty soon the spots spread over your whole body and your hair begins to fall out - first from your head, then even from your eyebrows. As things get worse, your finger nails and toenails get sort of loose. They start to rot and eventually fall off. Then the joints of your fingers and toes begin to rot, and they start to fall off, piece by piece. Your gums start shrinking, and they can't hold your teeth anymore, so you lose each of them. It keeps eating away at your face until literally your nose and even your eyes rot - and you waste away until you die.

As horrible as the physical suffering was, the worst part of having leprosy might have been the way people treated you. In the Old Testament, God said that when there were lepers among the people of Israel, they should be carefully quarantined and examined. Lepers had to dress like people who were in mourning for the dead, because they were considered to be the living dead. They had to warn the people around them by crying out, "Unclean! Unclean!" whenever people were near them. This really wasn't because leprosy is highly contagious. It is because God used this disease as a striking example of sin and its effects on us.

They have to live in an isolated place where their family members bring their foods and necessary items for survival. Then they would leave them at the entrance of leprosy colony and stand far away while the lepers come and get them. Then they would wave hands at each other from the distance. In other words, there are no normal physical contacts for these lepers from anyone until they get healed by God or their death.

This leper knew that Jesus was able to heal him, but he was not sure the Master was willing to heal him.

Lost sinners today have the same unnecessary concern, because God has made it abundantly clear that He is not willing that any sinners perish and that He is willing that all men be saved.

Jesus had compassion on the leper and healed him. He did it with His touch and with His Word. No doubt this was the first loving touch this leper had felt in a long time. The leprosy was gone instantly!

A person who is riddled with awful sins can be cleansed by the touch of the Master's hand like this leper.

2Co 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

Jesus commanded the man not to tell everybody. He was to go to the priests and follow the instructions given in Leviticus 14, so that he might be declared clean and received back into the social and religious life of the community. However, the man disobeyed orders. Jesus told this man to keep quiet, and yet he told everybody. Jesus commands us to tell everybody about Him and we keep it quiet!

The ceremony described in Leviticus 14 presents a beautiful picture in type of the work of redemption through Jesus Christ. The two birds represent two different aspects of our Lord's ministry: The first bird being put into an earthen vessel and then getting killed represents Jesus' incarnation and death, and the other bird getting stained with the blood and then being set free represents His resurrection and ascension. Then the blood was applied to the man's right ear to listen to God's Word, right thumb to do God's work, and right big toe to walk with God. Then the oil was put on the blood, symbolizing the Holy Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit cannot come on human flesh until first the blood of Jesus has been applied to that person's life.

G. APPLICATIONS

1) When was the last time you spent time alone with God without any interruptions? Never? A long time ago? Then, it is a good time to be with the Lord alone.

Pour your heart out to Him, He will listen to you and He will embrace you as long as you want. It will be a sweet time with the Creator of the universe and the Author and Finisher of your life and faith.

2) As Jesus knew that pressure and busyness should drive us towards prayer, not from prayer, we need to keep our prayer to the Lord more than "give-me-this and let-me-have-that, Amen." After all it is one of our life lines between us and Him.

3) When was the last time you reached out and touched someone who is down and out and pray with that person? Go home and do that today. What a way to start the new year!