

Mark 1: 21-34

21 They went to Capernaum; and when the sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught. <sup>22</sup>They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. <sup>23</sup>Just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, <sup>24</sup>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.' <sup>25</sup>But Jesus rebuked him, saying, 'Be silent, and come out of him!' <sup>26</sup>And the unclean spirit, throwing him into convulsions and crying with a loud voice, came out of him. <sup>27</sup>They were all amazed, and they kept on asking one another, 'What is this? A new teaching—with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.' <sup>28</sup>At once his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee.

29 As soon as they left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. <sup>30</sup>Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. <sup>31</sup>He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

32 That evening, at sunset, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. <sup>33</sup>And the whole city was gathered around the door. <sup>34</sup>And he cured 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.

Commentary: Jesus' authority is being confirmed and acknowledged by, above all things, the 'unclean spirits.' Now whether we are believers in demonic possession or not, we can identify these spirits as those disturbing, destructive, and discouraging feelings and thoughts within us that keep us from living fuller lives or push us to say and do things we regret later. Sometimes we are so caught by them (the biblical word is possessed) that we cannot find freedom. These spirits recognize that Jesus is greater than them. He has the power to destroy them and heal human spirits.

Questions: Have you called on God to send God's Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus, into the trouble spots of your life? Have you asked God to exorcize those destructive feelings and thoughts in you? Such feelings may arise altogether new in this season of covid-19.

Commentary: Jesus commands the spirits not to spread the word about him. Throughout the gospel he does this. Jesus doesn't want to draw us to him and to God on the basis of his power - what he can do for us. Rather he wants us to come to him because he is life, and only then will he show us his power. Do we recognize our need for Jesus' kind of love in this season when love can easily become the greatest casualty in the face of racism, hoarding, selfishness and a restless boredom that turns on those closest to us?

Prayer: Lord God, I need your life in me and especially in the face of the demons and unclean spirits I have roaming within and rising up in me. Sometimes and with some people they especially flare up and mark my thoughts, speech, and actions. Exorcize them from my spirit beginning today. Walk with me through these next weeks and possibly months; Amen.