

## MEDITATION 9

Mark 1: 21-28

<sup>21</sup> They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus 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 quiet and come out of him!" <sup>26</sup> And the unclean spirit, convulsing him 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.

**"They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority..."**

What is authority for you?... Is it speaking with confidence?... Is it giving you sound advice about your finances, maybe your health, maybe your vocational direction in life?... Is it telling you that everything is going to be ok?...

But can you believe it?... What's the source? Is it trustworthy, convincing, compelling?...

Jesus teaches with authority... What is he teaching?... We have yet to find out more... But he has been talking about the kingdom of God having come near, about good news, about the need to repent and to change so that you can not only hear him but be ready to follow him... But how do we know what he says is true and trustworthy?...

Have you ever questioned authority?... Have you ever struggled to believe something as authoritative?... What is authoritative for you in your heart and soul?... What do you believe, hope for and love?... Do you believe you are loved, that there is a special purpose for you in life, that your value is infinite no matter the limitations and imperfections that are also yours?... How solidly and with authority can you answer such questions?...

Jesus has called you to listen and follow with an open heart... He has begun to teach and with authority... Will he be an authority for you?...

**"a man with an unclean spirit..."**

Jesus encounters this man and he will encounter many persons with what are called "unclean spirits."

What does 'unclean' mean?... Is it mere dirt?... Is it some kind of toxicity or poison?... Is it some derangement or disfigurement that possesses and shapes the mind and soul of a person?... What is unclean for you in your life?... Is it some substance?... Is it a person?... Is it some family

or influence or toxic environment at work, school or in your community?... Is it about how you see yourself after being told repeatedly you are inadequate, flawed, doomed?...

**"Have you come to destroy us?"**

The unclean spirit addresses Jesus and asks this question in fear and resistance... It has attached to this man like a parasite, feeding on his soul and refusing to let go...

Have you ever imagined that the resistance or fear in you is an unclean spirit that has attached to your soul?... Is it helpful to think of those toxic thoughts, chemicals or bad patterns in our lives as external poisons that have attached themselves to us and need to be exorcized?...

What thoughts, habits, or loops of beliefs about yourself have kept you stuck from rising higher in faith, hope and love that can liberate you for more and better, and ground you in a deeper peace within yourself in relation to others?...

Jesus has come to destroy the unclean spirits... And he has the authority in him and through him to do it through the power of a different spirit, a Holy Spirit, a Spirit powered by an energy we may call: Love... Do you believe such Spirit authority exists to work in and through you?...

**"Jesus rebuked him, saying, 'Be quiet and come out of him!' And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him."**

This afflicted man experiences something astonishing... The unclean spirit in him is exorcised and he begins a journey of healing toward wholeness... So different is he already that people around him notice and they are astonished...

What authority do you need in your life to help liberate you from unclean spirits that have attached themselves to your heart and soul from time to time or over so long you don't even recognize they're there until some conflict or crisis forces them to the surface in some way revealing how much you are bound?...

What authority do any of us need to help us rise up in life when we are knocked down for any number of reasons?... Do we need to be confronted in trust that good will come out of such confrontation? Do we need to believe in the good to come beyond the doubts and self-doubts that can consume us? Can we discern and name the kinds of freedom we need in our hearts and lives, not just the surface freedom but inner freedom?...

**PRAYER:** We need your healing power, O God, wherever we are in our lives... We need to rise up or keep rising up in freedom from what keeps us down. We need empowerment to grow into all of who we can be and become...

We have ailments of body, of mind, of spirit, O God... We have worry... We have anxiety born of uncertainty... We have the affliction of resentment toward certain people that has attached to us and won't let us go... We have images of ourselves, from our bodies to our abilities, that distort the beauty of who we are as you see us and know us...

Others of us have not known what it's like to be down for long... We have felt relatively strong, healthy, comfortable, at peace and fulfilled in most of our relationships... Where does following Jesus have yet to take us?...

We open our hearts anew... to his authority... to take us where he will... to uncover and liberate us from unclean spirits that may have attached themselves to us... spirits that afflict us with bad thoughts or ailments or mental distress... but also spirits that afflict us more covertly promising us comfort and peace if we keep turning away or numbing ourselves to anything painful...

Help us locate where we are, O God, and grant us the faith and hope in what may yet come when Jesus leads the way... In his name we pray, Amen.