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Mark 1:21-45

“Risky Business (The Cat Is Out of the Bag)”

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Background Information

The Gospel of Mark was the first written of the Gospels. Yes, before Matthew, Luke, and John! Mark used for his writing what is known as “Q” “Q” stands for *Quella*, which is the German word for “Source”. Q is believed to be a collection of the sayings and teachings of Jesus that were handed down in oral and written tradition that circulated after the resurrection of Jesus and before the writing of the gospel of Mark around 70 A.D.

Mark is important in part because of its status as the earliest gospel. In the New Testament, only the genuine letters of Paul, written in the 50’s are earlier. But they are letters, not gospels, addressing questions and conflicts within early Christian communities. Paul’s letters do not tell the story of Jesus; that was not their purpose. Paul had already told these communities about the gospel – the good news – of Jesus during his missionary journey, when he was with them in person. Thus, that makes Mark the first to tell the story of Jesus *in writing*.

Mark is important for a second reason: it is the primary source for two other gospels, Matthew and Luke. When the authors of these subsequent gospels wrote a decade or two later, they used Mark as one of their sources. About 90% of Mark is in Matthew, and about 2/3 of Mark is in Luke.

The Gospel of Mark, begins with the adult Jesus be baptized and then starting his ministry. As opposed to the later gospels, Matthew and Luke starting with the birth of Jesus, and John

starting with Jesus being at the creation of the world, in other words, where was Jesus before he came to earth, and was born in manger. It is a hymn to the Word made flesh.

When Mark wrote there were revolts going on between the Jewish people and their occupier Rome. During this time, there was widespread death and destruction, leading to Jerusalem as a wreck and the Temple nothing but rubble.

The content of the gospel of Mark evolves around the teachings, healings and exorcisms of Jesus.

In our scripture text for today, Mark 1:21-45, we see Jesus beginning his public ministry - by healing, and several times no less. There are three separate stories of Jesus healing: first a man with an unclean spirit (vv. 23-28), then at Simon and Andrew's house Simon's mother-in-law (vv.30-31), followed by a multitude of all those sick with various diseases or possessed by demons (vv.32-34), and finally of cleansing a leper (vv.40-45).

Sermon Summary

Jesus told the unclean spirit to “shut up”; this was not the traditional way to address an unclean spirit.

For the tradition was to ask the name of the unclean spirit and then use that name to gain power over them.

Rather, the Jesus way is to tell them “no more”.

Jesus spoke with authority, and thus in this act was now being recognized as one who spoke with power and authority.

Jesus heals Simon Peter's mother-in-law.

She had a fever.

Jesus was not too big to go to the house, nor too big to address such a smaller matter a fever.

Jesus can handle it all – the big stuff and the small stuff too!
In addition, he chooses to break the rules –
To touch a woman, to touch someone who is sick,
and to do so none the less, on the Sabbath,

Jesus goes to pray. Pastor Tim Keller says, “Jesus response to a time of extreme busyness, a time of tremendous opportunity, incredible popularity, over-the-top productivity was not to get more of the same done, but to go, be quiet, alone, and pray. Life was pressing in on every side for him. Yet, he chose to put first things first – go for silence, solitude, and prayer, and not let these essential things be squeezed out.

The busier Jesus gets, the more he prays.

In him, we see the supreme priority of prayer.

Nothing else is more important.

So, if the One with supreme power and authority needs prayer,
how much more do we!

Leper healed.

Leprosy back then was not just a disease,
rather it was a total condition.

It affected you in every way: physically, socially, spiritually,
emotionally and psychologically.

They were like the zombie we see on TV – the walking dead
from whom everyone runs.

Literally and figuratively, leprosy ate you alive.

It also meant absolute emotional isolation from community.

Therefore you were, socially cut off, emotionally alone, physically
and psychologically falling apart.

And spiritually, most people thought lepers were cursed by God,
and you were punished if you came near a leper.

So, in this encounter with Jesus, we see this leper asking for it all.

He comes for cleansing physically, emotional and psychological wholeness, social acceptance and total healing.

His needs are multi-dimensional and he finds that Jesus is a multidimensional Savior who will give him everything he needs.

Sermon Application

Jesus tells the unclean spirits no more. This cannot continue, this must stop, be gone. He speaks truth to power. And, to do so, he put himself at great risk. Why? -So freedom could be gained, and because it was worth the risk.

Peter's mother-in-law needed to be healed.

Those rules needed to be broken. He took some huge

Why? - So wholeness could happen, and because it was worth the risk.

Jesus came aside from the busyness to be alone and pray.

Why? When so much needed to be done.

So he would receive the strength, resolve, and resilience he needed for the future risks he would be called to continually take.

The leper needed not to be healed with a word or thought, which Jesus did do, nor to be healed from afar.

Jesus is not touching him because his body needs it. Rather, because his soul needs it. He is doing it out of love. Here is a man starved for love. Why? When it would make him contaminated and unclean. So, he would be cleansed and healed by Jesus contagious holiness, and because it was worth the risk.

Following in Jesus footsteps is risky business, but in each and every case when we do so; it will be worth the risk. You say, you're not sure you can do it. In that case, let us all remind

ourselves that Jesus himself said, “Greater things shall you do.”

The risk – speak truth to power, break the rules, pray when the “to do” list is a mile long, and bring a loving touch to those who are contaminated, so they may be contaminated with nothing, but love.