

Pre-Lent Pastors' Bible Class

January 29-30, 2012

Mark 1:21-

Vss. 21-22 The teaching of Jesus is contrasted with that of the scribes as *having authority*. Whence the authority? What kind of teaching today would be a teaching that lacked authority? What warning/encouragement is there for the preacher?

Vss. 23-26 Do you notice how always the devil makes a lot of noise; noise is no substitute for *having authority*, but people are easily confuse the two. Note the utter irrationality of the devil's behavior and his comment to Jesus. Note the choice of the verb for *knowing*. Consider the cause and the effect of the noise that the devil makes as contrasted with the cause and desired effect of Jesus' voice when he raises it (Jn 7:37-38, Lk 23:46); given the contrast it shouldn't even be necessary for the gospel to necessarily contain within it the power to convert and to preserve us in faith. What a wonder of grace that God nevertheless gives it such a power!!

Vss. 27-28 Was anybody even listening that only such a superficial conclusion comes from those who had heard the teaching and seen its confirmation? As the devil is always irrational, so ultimately is unbelief/the failure to draw the correct conclusion from the evidence.

Vss. 29-30 It's all so simple. And the ultimate purpose is likewise so simple: She got up and served!

Vss. 31-34 It was the Sabbath and the allowable Sabbath day's journey had already happened with the trip to the synagogue and back home again. How filled with longing must have been the hearts and minds eager for the sun to set that day!

Vss. 35-39 Jesus' focus on preaching may inform us of the nature of his prayer life. How sweet to him must have been those moments or hours in which, freed from the pressures of sinful men, he could speak in his lowliness to his Father. But about what? What else than the reason he had come forth.

Vss. 41-45 An absolutely fascinating story!! The prayer of the leper is about as perfect as it can get. The end of the story is about as bad as it can get. The response of Jesus puts in sharp interplay Jesus' omnipotence and his omniscience with his grace and the whole focus of his preaching. Likewise the contrast between Jesus and the rest of us is put into sharp focus.

Chapter 2

Notice how the chapter uses imperfect tenses: again the imperfect for "he was teaching" and then the imperfect as well for both of the responses to his teaching: ongoing following by some, on going fault-finding by others. The gospel is ever thus, always a savor of life for life and death for death.

Vss. 1-4 Mark regularly ignores the taxis of events, and so also here. Jesus has returned from the other side of the Sea of Galilee. No mention is made this time of the crowds bringing people to be healed; the people flocking to his home are content to listen this time to his teaching. But why don't they get out of the way for this obviously needy man? Is it because they only care for themselves and their own? Is it because, as some of the older authors suggest, that this form of paralysis was the result of a debauched life and thus no one cared whether he was helped or not?

Vs. 5 Which attributes of the Savior are brought to the fore in this short verse? How many sides of the human character does Jesus appeal to as he manifests his attributes in teaching and in doing?

Vss. 6-9 So, which is easier? Jesus could have made his enemies look like fools had he waited for them to answer. How kind of him that he doesn't!

Vss. 10-12 Jesus proves an otherwise unverifiable theological affirmation with an irrefutable observable action. Again, what aspects of his character and our nature/need come to the fore?

Truly he is *the Son of man*, a title he gives himself here for the first time in Mark's gospel. (In John's gospel we see already in the first chapter that he used it early on at least with the disciples.) It fits so well the context of the scribes' accusing hearts and should fill us with wonder that he picks this designation as his favorite description of himself in the *unio personalis* (cf. Daniel 7, Rev. 1, 14). How exalted the office of the ministry when mere sons of men appropriate the work of *the Son of man* to themselves in the liturgy and in private confession (aka *counseling!*).

The people were amazed. At which miracle? No doubt some at one, some at the other, some at both. But only God knows which at what - - a comforting thought for the preacher of the gospel.

Vss. 13-17 Not less comforting is the choice that Jesus made of Matthew to be an apostle, even a writer of the gospel! What must have gone on in Matthew's heart and soul before that call is at least slightly suggested by the banquet he held for his fellow low-lives.

Jesus' use of metaphor and proverb as both law and gospel here is absolutely brilliant: Who is sick and who is righteous, and who therefore needs him and for whom has he come? The scribes were not dummies! They knew the rules of rhetoric better than most of us do. Their criticism is veiled, not direct; Jesus answer employs rhetorical device and does it incomparably better. They could not have missed the point, a point at once both killing and healing! His answer is such a masterful summary of the whole of the gospel.