

Jesus: "Teaching with authority!"

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Date: 27 September 2026

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[0:00] We're continuing in Mark's Gospel this evening, so please, if you have one of the Blue Church Bibles, turn over to page 836. We're reading from verses 16 to 39, saying what Jesus continues to do as he takes out his Gospel.

So Mark chapter 1, verses 16 to 39 on page 836. Passing alongside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew, the brother of Simon, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men. And immediately they left their nets and followed him. And going on a little farther, he saw James, the son of Zebedee, and John, his brother, who were in their boat, mending the nets.

And immediately he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and followed him. And they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath he entered the synagogue and was teaching.

And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority and not as the scribes. And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, 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.

[1:37] But Jesus rebuked him, be silent, and come out of him. And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying out with a loud voice, came out of him.

And they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, What is this, a new teaching? And with authority, he commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.

And once his fame spread everywhere throughout all the surrounding region of Galilee. And immediately he left the synagogue and entered the house of Simon and Andrew with James and John.

Now Simon's mother-in-law lay ill with a fever, and immediately they told him about her. And he came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and the fever left her.

And she began to serve them that evening, at sundown. They brought to him all who were sick or oppressed by demons. And the whole city was gathered together at the door, and he healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons.

[2:47] And he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him. And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed, and went out to a desolate place.

And there he prayed. And Simon and those who were with him searched for him. And they found him and said to him, Everyone is looking for you. And he said to them, Let us go out onto the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out.

And he went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues, and casting out demons. Well, let's pray as we turn to God's words together.

Father, your word is perfect, radiant, and pure. It speaks to us of your Son. So we ask that by your Spirit, you would prepare our hearts to hear you speak this evening through your word.

Show us Christ, and conform us to his image. We pray in his name, and for your glory. Amen. I want you to imagine, you're holding a brochure from a letting agent in first century Costa del Galilee.

[4:04] It says, Welcome to Capernaum. Good temperatures, leafy vineyards, lakeside views, vibrant local fishing community, family-owned businesses. Sounds lovely.

But you go read the local newspaper, the Galilee Gazette, What Do You Read? A review of the local synagogue. It's a good place to meet, but it feels like the teachers have nothing to say.

Also, there's a demon-possessed man who comes every Sabbath. Three stars. There's an article that says that demon possession is actually on the rise in the local area, and no one knows what to

do.

There's no local health care providers. No resident physicians available. Diseased people are to stay at home indefinitely. The life of an average first century Galilean fisherman is probably quite tough.

It doesn't seem a bit hopeless as you read this passage. Israel, God's people are, well, have become an unimportant nation that seems forgotten and irrelevant in the eyes of the world.

[5:14] Illness and demonic possession are rife, and those in charge seem to have little to say to comfort the people. So let me ask us, how much has really changed?

We live in 21st century Scotland. Our life expectancies are a lot higher than 1st century fishermen. That sickness and illness impact all of us.

With every single endeavor of modern medicine, the mortality rate is still 100%, as it has always been. The problem of evil has in no way gone away.

We might be less familiar or comfortable with the language of demon possession in this passage, but none of us can argue that we live in a world that is purely good, where evil is not a problem, where there are no spiritual things wrong with us.

Our culture and society, I think, is waking up once again to the reality of the spiritual and the fact that there is real evil around us. And we live in a culture where those in charge, those with the loudest voices, still don't seem to have the answers.

[6:29] The culture is swamped with messages, and it feels like nothing really changes. I wonder if you resonate with a sense of powerlessness, finding the world bewildering, wondering where to find hope.

Some of you do feel, or are prone to feeling quite hopeless. The question I want to ask you is, where does your hope come from? Is the world giving you what you seek?

Can you point to something out there and say, there it is, the thing that will fix everything, make everything good forever? Where is the good news? Well, friends, last week, Mark's gospel started with the good news.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God himself, is the good news for us. Mark 1, 14 and 15, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God and saying, the time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God is at hand, repent and believe the gospel.

The time has come. God's kingdom is here in Christ, in a backwater village in the first century. And he's calling people to repent of their sin and believe in his gospel, to put their faith in him.

[7:53] But the question we need to begin to ask is, who is Jesus to command that of anybody? Why does he get to tell us what to do and why is it good news?

Did he really come to deal with the world's true and real and actual problems? Can he provide hope for us now? And that is the question that Mark is going to answer through this whole gospel.

Because he knows as readers, we can't put our faith in the one that we do not know. But as he reveals Jesus to us through this gospel, we see who Jesus is.

We begin to see what it means that he is the Christ and the Son of God. And today we see his amazing, wonderful authority and also the priority of his ministry.

So if you're following along on the sheets and the screens, our first point this evening, Jesus has authority to call which changes the course of life forever.

[8:57] Now our story this evening starts in such a mundane way. Four fishermen, Simon and Andrew, James and John, two sets of brothers in family businesses. And we're told nothing about these men other than their occupations.

In a sense, they're notable by being completely average. Just regular Galilean fishermen. Now Jesus could have started his kingdom with nobles or with priests or with the powerful, but he starts with four normal fishermen.

What stands out is not the people that Jesus calls here. It's the fact that they follow and the cost that they bear in following him.

See the call Jesus gives, verse 17, follow me and I will make you become fishers of men. Let's just break that down a bit. Follow me, says Jesus.

It doesn't come with a big list of new things that you have to do. This is not a lifestyle change. He's called to these fishermen, follow me. Because he is the subject of his own gospel.

[10:12] He is the one who calls these men to place him at the core and center of their whole lives. Follow me. And he doesn't say, would you like to follow me?

Might you consider following me? Maybe if you have time, could you fit me in? He just says, follow me. A call that is a righteous command.

Jesus chooses these men and he does the seeking, calling them to himself for a specific task. The second half of Jesus' call, I will make you become fishers of men.

Jesus is going to take these average Galilean fishermen and make them the founding cornerstones of his new kingdom. He's going to make them into something they were not before, training them, discipling them into becoming preachers of the gospel, fishers of men.

It's a metaphor they should have understood. They spent their whole lives fishing. They're going to go and seek people out, speak the gospel to them, and see what the gospel catches, what souls are brought in, who comes along to heed that call of Jesus, follow me.

[11:35] It's a task that is defined by Jesus himself and we're going to see that become clearer and clearer over the course of the gospel. What does it look like to be a fisher of men?

Well, keep reading, says Mark. But it's going to have to have something to do where it's preaching the gospel that Jesus has already spoken. The only other thing that we're really told about these fishermen at this stage is the cost of following Jesus.

Notice how often Mark uses the word immediately, immediately, immediately, immediately. It's all happening so close together in this story. There's a real urgency to Jesus' call.

They must follow and they do. There's no time to wait around. But look what these four men leave behind. Family, security, jobs, livelihood, homes, colleagues, parents.

Yeah, when Jesus calls, they go. Think, what would someone actually have to say to you in order to take you away from your family, your home, your job, your security, and all that you knew just to follow them?

[12:53] I don't think there's anything that anyone could actually say to me that would make me do that. And what we should think is, Jesus' call is not the call of any other human being on earth.

It is the call of God himself on the souls of men that they may follow him. because that call comes of alarming authority. And so they follow.

I wonder what you make of this as you read it. We're not all called in the same way that these disciples are. These founding cornerstones of the church chosen by Jesus out of all humanity and history are special and important.

We're going to hear a lot more about them in Mark's gospel. people. We might not be called to the exact same role as the apostles. But we are called to the same Lord.

We are called knowing that we must respond. A call that would change the direction of our entire lives, that turns us out from ourselves and to the Lord.

[14:04] Changing the very core and center of my life from me and my desires to Christ and his kingdom and his priorities and turning me out towards the world so that the world might also know him.

And we do bear some of the same cost. Ultimately, following Christ will cost my very life and soul. But the earthly cost will differ for every single person.

some of you here know that following Christ has cost you friends, families, jobs, people not knowing how to respond to you in the change, thinking that you're strange for following this Jesus.

Yet through this gospel, we will see that the one who calls us is perfectly good. And his call on our lives is for our good as much as it is for his glory.

We will see more of that as we progress through this passage. But on to our second point, building a picture of Jesus' authority. Jesus has authority to command, dismissing evil and bringing freedom.

[15:24] Now, in this section, verses 21 to 28, we see Jesus' authority in two ways, in his teaching, to which the crowds react, but also in his power over evil.

Now, demons, let's face it, some of you just flinched when I said the word. It makes us uncomfortable, doesn't it? Because our culture just has no box for that, really.

But what Mark needs us to know is not to answer every question we might have about them, but merely to say that they are real, that they are a spiritual evil being, and that they cause real harm. Oppression to a person that so overtakes their life that they need, freed by the Son of God himself. In Mark's Gospel, we see in Jesus' ministry an explosion of demonic and evil activity around Jesus as the devil and his kingdom try and fight back against the Son of God and at every point fail, and are wonderfully trampled by the Son of God and his amazing authority and power.

We see that in this passage here. Galilee's not looking fantastic, you walk into a synagogue, the teachers say things that don't seem to matter, and all of a sudden, a demon-possessed man in verse 24 is shouting, what have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth?

[16:49] Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God. Isn't it interesting? What do the demons exist to do?

What, to take people away from the Lord to cause evil? So why is this demon saying the true thing about Jesus? Because Jesus is the Holy One of God.

Well, think. Is that the source you want for your gospel? A demon telling you the truth about the Son? That's the wrong source entirely. It is not the right source, it is not the right time, so Jesus silences this demon.

And he will go on to silence many demons even in this passage today, and actually silence many others who come to know about him through this gospel. The question we will keep asking is why? And the answer is because the truth about Jesus is going out on his plan, in his timing. He is the one who is in control. people. But notice, even the demon believes in Jesus' authority.

[17:59] He says he's the Holy Son of God, but way more than that, that that means that Jesus has authority to destroy this demon. And so Jesus, in verse 25, gives two commands, be silent and come out of him.

Demon silenced immediately. And then come out. And notice no ritual. Jesus doesn't need a magic wand. He doesn't need to light a load of candles. Jesus just says come out and the demon is out. Evil doesn't have a chance in the face of the Son of God. Jesus brings wonderful, beautiful freedom to this man. Now, if I'd been there in that crowd, I think I would have sat there going, this is amazing.

Have you seen the demon possessed man who is now free? This is beautiful. And that's not what happens in our passage. Look with me at verse 22 and verse 27.

22. They were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority and not as the scribes. 27. They were all amazed so that they questioned among themselves, who is this?

[19:08] A new teaching with authority commands even the unclean spirits and they obey him. Fascinating to take away from this whole interaction that the important and impressive thing is not the exorcism of a demon over which this man has power, but that his teaching, his teaching is coming with authority.

The none of Israel's religious teachers are speaking with that authority, not able to do what he can do, not able to speak what he can speak. Here is something completely new, something that astonishes and amazes the entire crowd.

heart. And Mark shows us that the one with power over evil is the one in authority, the one who is truly king over all, one who from this action is heralding once again his defeat of the devil that will come through his cross, his resurrection, and the final day when he comes again.

Here is one who is absolutely fundamentally not under the power of evil struggling. Whatever you think about the demons in this passage, let me say the message is clear, that Jesus has the power and authority that we don't over the things that we fear.

And therefore we must listen to his words. We must respond like this crowd being more amazed at what Jesus is teaching than what he is doing. Now that battle between Jesus and the forces of spiritual evil will play out over the rest of the gospel.

[20:50] But for now we see even more of Jesus' authority in this third point, that Jesus has authority to heal, holding a greater restoration.

Now the narrative continues at pace. I just want you to figure in your mind, this all happens in one day, one Sabbath. As soon as we go from the demon-possessed man, we go to Simon and Andrew's house with James and John.

That little group is beginning to be right at the focus of this gospel. We'll see more of those disciples together. But the picture becomes really small. A family home, an ill mother-in-law.

How fathers, Jesus' authority extend, well straight into this home and verse 31. He came and took her by the hand, lifted her up and the fever left her and she began to serve them.

Notice again, no ritual, no potion, no spell, this time not even words, just up and the woman is free. It's almost casual, which should make it even more remarkable.

[22:00] Jesus has such clear-cut authority even over this woman's very health, as if the disease had never been there. Imagine someone walked into ARI and started lifting cancer patients out of

bed so that they looked as if they'd never had any symptoms, any chemotherapy, any problems.

It's mind-blowing. A miracle beyond what we can even comprehend. And so no wonder news spreads so far and so fast. Verse 28 already told us his fame was extending, but verse 32, that evening at sundown they brought to him all who were sick and oppressed by demons.

And the whole city was gathered together at the door, and he healed many who were sick with various diseases and cast out many demons. A whole carnival of misery appears at the door of Simon and Andrew's house, and every single person is healed and freed, and light is breaking in to a dark world.

Hope breaking into despair, because what are we seeing? We're seeing the kingdom of God come on earth through our King Jesus Christ.

There's a beautiful small detail in the middle of that. What does Simon's mother-in-law do? Gets up and serves. Here in a sense is the first person rightly responding to Jesus.

[23 : 35] She just serves. And we see Jesus' authority laid out in full here. Authority to call people out of their lives to follow him.

Authority to cast out demons of power over all evil. Authority to cleanse people of sickness. What can't Jesus do? But for us, as Mark's readers, why does that matter?

Why does it matter that Jesus could do all of these things in his earthly ministry? Well, the question is, what is his priority? Because Jesus, immediately at the end of that night, that amazing night of healing that must have stayed in the minds of the people of Capernaum forever, Jesus disappears. Because Jesus' priority is actually proclaiming the gospel. That's our final point this evening. Jesus' priority is proclaiming the gospel. Jesus leaves the crowds, the disciples behind.

It can't have been that long since the entire crowd was there. It says it's very early in the morning. He probably hasn't slept very long. And he leaves them all to be with the Father.

[24 : 54] Something that's going to happen three times over the course of this gospel each time something monumental happens and then Jesus goes to be with his heavenly Father. Reminding us that all he is doing is an obedience to the call of the Father and all is done with dependence on the Father.

You think the disciples woke up in the morning and maybe were a bit bewildered. Where has he gone? He hasn't run away somewhere they can't find him. He's not just fleeing after a hard night's work.

But Jesus' departure makes an important point. Because the disciples in verse 37 come saying everyone is looking for you. And Jesus says 38.

Let us go on to the next towns. That I may preach there also for that is why I came out. Hear it in Jesus' own words.

Why did Jesus come? To preach the gospel. Jesus' priority isn't miracle work or fame but the gospel.

[26 : 00] Because he himself is the good news. He goes out proclaiming the gospel. Calling people to repent and believe in him. It's foundational for the whole gospel story that Jesus' mission is to go out and proclaim the gospel.

And every other miracle and every other thing Jesus does is to point to the gospel that he proclaims. He's not just a healer or a miracle worker.

We know that our world would love to paint him as that and no more. As a good man who did nice things for struggling people in history but leave him there. But we have to say that Jesus was far more than just a healer.

Not just a miracle worker but the son of God himself who comes with a much greater gospel. gospel. Because the kingdom is coming.

Why does he move on to preach elsewhere when that has to mean that he didn't heal absolutely everybody? I imagine the indignation in Capernaum. Where did Jesus go?

[27 : 07] Why didn't he stay? Well because Jesus has something far greater in mind. His coming kingdom. And for us if we're thinking yeah I'd be there thinking I wish that he stayed.

Why did he go? Well think through the now and the not yet of what Jesus is doing. Because he taught with words of authority against lies and misunderstanding.

But one day he'll bring about a kingdom of truth forever where there was no misunderstanding. He freed so many people from demons.

But one day in his kingdom evil will be defeated forever and never again plague or haunt humanity at all. Simon's mother-in-law healed but would one day die again.

But with faith in the Lord Jesus Christ raised forever in his kingdom to live eternally. All these pictures, these beautiful things that Jesus does are a sign of a greater thing that he is doing.

[28 : 15] The coming of his kingdom where death and evil and suffering and illness are gone forever. Do we want freedom and healing from Jesus?

Well I'm sure we do. Friends if you believe in him one day we will get that in full completely forever when his kingdom comes and it will never be taken from you.

Because in our lives now evil will continue, we will see it, it will do us great harm. Your health will one day fail. And those things will be the most painful things of our lives as we see our very bodies fall to pieces and our world crumble and yet every single moment is an opportunity to say I do not live for this world now but for the kingdom of my God that Christ brought where everything will one day be made right and whole forever.

forever. And if that's what Jesus is bringing about then of course he has authority to call me because he is calling me for my good.

Mark wants us I think to end with two things, clarity and to see Jesus compassion. If this is who Jesus is and the kingdom Jesus is bringing about then I can trust him.

[29 : 38] Because he has authority to save me. He can do all the things that I cannot do. Nothing in this world could save my soul except Christ alone.

Salvation through his cross and resurrection. But if that's who Jesus is then I must obey his call.

Who am I to say to the king, none of your kingdom I don't care, my kingdom instead.

My kingdom is nothing. I have nothing. But Christ has it all and is freely offering it to me in calling me to himself. To reject Jesus' call on your life is ultimately to sinfully reject the God that made you and to choose to spare over hope.

Don't, if you're a person who's yet to follow Jesus, walk out without really knowing an understanding that Jesus calls you to follow him to a perfect kingdom forever and in rejecting him you reject the source of life itself.

But for those of us who know the Lord and love him already, it reminds us of Jesus' priority.

[30 : 54] Jesus says, this is why I have come to preach the gospel. We don't get to change the priority of Jesus, that is his priority. Discipleship will always mean knowing Jesus and participating in his work.

which means the priority of our lives must be participating in Jesus' gospel ministry to the world. It is right and good that the church goes and does kind and good things to people out in the world, but never outside of speaking the truth about Jesus to them.

Because if we help people now but don't speak the eternal truth to them, we have not done them any real good. our priority must be his priority.

The gospel going out. But finally as we finish, I don't know if maybe you're like me and you hear priority and authority and it just feels a bit cold and a bit clinical.

But notice what Jesus is doing through his authority and his priority is full of compassion. speaking truth to lost souls, setting the captives free, healing the sick, comforting the fearful, and saving sinners at the cost of his own life.

[32 : 11] He is the one that is right and good to follow. He is the one whose call we must not ignore. He is the one whose gospel priority we must share. Let's pray together.

Amen. Heavenly Father, thank you that you sent Jesus to be king over us, that he would rule over us perfectly and bring about a kingdom of perfect freedom, of peace, of healing, and of freedom from evil forever.

Lord, we long for the day when we see the kingdom in full and we thank you that as we live together as your church, we see the kingdom revealed in part already. We ask that you would help us to share Jesus' priority of the gospel, to be willing and ready to speak it, and to know that the highest good we can do for anyone is to speak the truth about Christ to them that they may hear his call, know him, and be saved forever.

Thank you for the gospel of your son, for his death, for our sin, and resurrection for our life. Lord, we praise you in his name and for your glory. Amen.

Well, let me invite the band up as we come to our final song. It's right and good that we praise the Lord for the gospel that we have have received.