

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Mark 1:21-34

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the bible again. Today, we will continue to read Mark 1, verses 21 to 34.

Yesterday we read that Jesus called four disciples, Peter, Andrew, James, and John, and then Jesus began to preach with His disciples. The disciples lived with Jesus, learning and doing together. Jesus' discipleship training was open-ended, learning and applying in daily life. In fact, the best discipleship training today is similar, learning and serving in the church; feeling insufficient in serving brings motivation and drive for learning. This kind of learning can be effective and enduring. Learning is for serving, and in serving, one can exercise their gifts. When gifts are manifested, one can rise to undertake God's entrustment. In the process of learning to serve, Jesus is our best example. In verses 21 to 34, Mark presents Jesus' day before us, showing us how Jesus served, how He arranged His time, and how He met various people's needs.

Verse 21: "Then they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and taught."

The location is in Capernaum, and the time is on the Sabbath. As for the manner, Jesus went into the synagogue to teach. Let's break it down:

Capernaum was a city situated north of the Sea of Galilee, serving as the central location for Jesus' ministry in Galilee. Capernaum wasn't Jesus' first city of ministry; after overcoming Satan's temptations in the wilderness, as recorded in Luke 4, Jesus returned to Nazareth first. Nazareth was where He grew up and began His ministry. Luke 4:16-30 details Jesus' first preaching, which also occurred on the Sabbath. Just like the Jews gathering in the synagogue on the Sabbath, it was customary for them to read a portion of scripture, and on that day, they happened

to be reading from Isaiah. Jesus turned to Isaiah 61:1-2, a passage that prophesied about Him. In Luke 4:18-19, Jesus read, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." After reading the scripture, Jesus told the people that this scripture was being fulfilled in their hearing.

Jesus, anointed by God, came to preach the gospel, which would release captives, restore sight to the blind, and free the oppressed because the time of God's favor had come. However, the people of Nazareth at that time were not prepared to accept the gospel. Instead, they drove Jesus out of the city, fulfilling the saying, "A prophet is not without honor except in his own country." Jesus then came to Capernaum, where He went to the synagogue on the Sabbath. His actions in Capernaum were likely similar to before: reading a portion of scripture and teaching based on that scripture to help people understand God's word.

Verse 22: "And they were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes."

The people were very amazed at Jesus' teaching because they were accustomed to hearing from scribes in the synagogue. Scribes were ordinary Jews who specialized in studying scriptures and were typically the ones teaching and explaining scripture in the synagogue on the Sabbath. Therefore, they were very familiar with the teachings of the scribes, which mainly involved the transmission of knowledge and explanation of principles, much like going to school to acquire knowledge today.

But Jesus' teaching was very different. It reached a point where the Jews were astonished because His teaching was filled with authority, making Him appear as one who had authority. Although Jesus outwardly appeared as just a carpenter from Nazareth, without formal education or training in a college, His words were full of authority, unlike the scribes.

Why were Jesus' words full of authority? First, Jesus Himself knew authority and submitted to it, thus His words were full of authority. In Matthew 8:5-13, which also happened in Capernaum, there was a centurion whose servant was paralyzed. The centurion came to Jesus and only asked for a word from Jesus, believing that his servant would be healed. Jesus even praised the centurion's faith. The centurion said, "For I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." He understood authority and obeyed it, so he knew that just a word from Jesus would be enough. Everything Jesus did on earth was according to the Father's will; He was completely under the Father's authority, so naturally, His words also carried the Father's authority.

Second, life is the source of authority. Like a son's life comes from his father, naturally, the father has authority over the son. Jesus' teaching was about conveying the message of life, and life was in Him. This life is the light of men. Jesus preached the word of God, which brings life, and this life brings illumination. People are guided and able to follow in the light, and where there is light, there is also authority.

Dear brothers and sisters, it is the same in the church today. The most important aspect of speaking for God is the supply of life. Those who supply life naturally have the authority of life, and such authoritative speaking will surely bring impact.

Verses 23-24: "Now there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, saying, 'Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!'"

Because Jesus' words bring life, life brings illumination, and illumination brings authority, once authority comes, it separates those who obey from those who do not. Mark specifically records that there was a man possessed by an unclean spirit in the synagogue who protested loudly. We should pay special attention to Mark's account: Jesus did not actively attempt to drive out the demon, but the light in His

words was too strong, and the demon could not bear it; when the authority of God came, the demon felt threatened.

As for the origin of unclean spirit, the Bible does not provide detailed records, but generally, scholars believe they were creatures from the era before Adam. They rebelled along with Satan, and later they were judged by God and became disembodied spirits. Since they have no place to reside, they like to possess people and dwell within them. The man possessed by the unclean spirit cried out loudly, saying, "What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth?" When a person is possessed by an unclean spirit, their will is controlled by the unclean spirit, and the unclean spirit speaks through the person's mouth. The unclean spirit first addressed Jesus by His name, calling Him "Jesus of Nazareth," and said, "Did You come to destroy us?" This indicates there were many unclean spirits in this man, and they directly asked Jesus if He came to destroy them. One of the unclean spirits even declared, "I know who You are—the Holy One of God."

Externally, Jesus appeared as a man from Nazareth named Jesus, but what about the unclean spirits? They recognized Him as the Holy One of God, one who is set apart for God. The term "Holy One of God" is also an honorific title for the Son of God, and the unclean spirits recognized God's authority; they knew God. If we do not know God today, we are even inferior to demons. James 2:19 tells us, "You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the unclean spirits believe—and tremble!" unclean spirits also believe in God, but their belief is accompanied by fear and trembling.

Verses 25-26: "But Jesus rebuked him, saying, 'Be quiet, and come out of him!' And when the unclean spirit had convulsed him and cried out with a loud voice, he came out of him."

When Jesus heard the unclean spirit acknowledge Him as the Holy One of God, He immediately commanded the unclean spirit to be silent. There may be three reasons for this: First, Jesus was fulfilling His role on earth and stood in the position of the Son of Man, so He did not accept the title of the Holy One of God. Although

in eternity, He is the second person of the Holy Trinity, on earth, He stood in the position of humanity. Second, He did not accept the testimony given by demons. Although what the demons said was true, Jesus did not accept such testimony if it came from an impure source with wrong motives. Third, Jesus was introduced as a humble servant; He came to serve rather than to be exalted. He did not accept the praises of men. Then Jesus, in His authority, commanded the demons to come out of the man. Jesus went to the synagogue to preach the gospel of God; His purpose was not to drive out unclean spirits, but it happened to coincide, so He commanded the demons to come out of the man.

When God created man originally, He made him in His image and according to His likeness, giving man a lofty purpose to represent and manifest God. But now, man has been overtaken by unclean spirits. Jesus wanted to expel this unlawful occupation by unclean spirits. When the unclean spirits heard Jesus' command, "And when the unclean spirit had convulsed him and cried out with a loud voice, he came out of him." We see that unclean spirits come to control people, their bodies, and their voices. Now, when they leave, they cause the person to convulse and cry out loudly before departing. The unclean spirit was thus expelled.

Here we see something remarkable: while the people gathered in the Jewish synagogue to read the word of God, there was actually someone among them who was possessed by an unclean spirit. Is there anyone possessed by unclean spirits in church meetings today? This question is not easy to answer. We must understand that unclean spirits are very cunning. In uncivilized societies, they use uncivilized methods to possess people, leading them to engage in many crazy and barbaric behaviors. In civilized societies, unclean spirits use more sophisticated methods to control people, causing them to act against their will. Some people may be addicted to various vices such as gambling, drugs, or other psychological and emotional control, preventing them from worshiping God according to His design. Jesus came to do cleansing work, using the authority of God's word to drive out those things that do not please God. Let us be filled with the Holy Spirit and return to the original purpose for which God created us.

Verse 27: "Then they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, 'What is this? What new doctrine is this? For with authority, He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him.'"

This man who was possessed by unclean spirits may have been in this synagogue for some time, and everyone knew him. Perhaps in previous gatherings, this man would speak out incoherently, and over time, they became accustomed to it. However, they did not expect Jesus' teaching to be full of authority, not only for people but also for those possessed by unclean spirits. With just a word, Jesus commanded the demons to come out of this man, and indeed, the unclean spirits left. This was a completely new experience for them. They said, "What is this? What new doctrine is this? For with authority, He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him." This demonstrates that God's word is full of authority, and even unclean spirits must obey it.

Verses 28-29: "The fame of Jesus spread throughout all the region around Galilee. As soon as they had come out of the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, along with James and John."

Jesus and these four disciples were together; Simon Peter and Andrew lived in Capernaum. Archaeological work in Capernaum has been quite extensive, with the ruins of the synagogue and Peter's house being discovered. It was just a 10-minute walk from the synagogue to Peter's house, and they walked there together.

Verse 30: "But Simon's wife's mother lay sick with a fever, and they told Him about her at once."

Here we see that Simon is already married, as he has a mother-in-law. It is mentioned in his letters, Simon serves in the church together with his wife. At this time, Simon's mother-in-law is living with them and is lying sick with a fever. Fever is a symptom that can have many causes, and when one has a fever, they cannot

function normally and often need to lie down. From a spiritual perspective, being sick with a fever can symbolize being excessively passionate about something to the point of being unrestrained; similar to how the Pharisees were zealous for the law to the point of being unyielding. Today, Christians often become overly passionate about politics during elections. If someone genuinely loves the Lord, they wouldn't be lying sick with a fever. Typically, this fervor is directed towards many things that are not of God, reaching a point where the person is paralyzed and unable to do the Lord's work. At this point, someone tells Jesus about the situation. For believers, this is a great Gospel, and it is the greatest power of Christians to bring everything before the Lord. Christians are not people without recourse; we can bring our situations and needs before the Lord.

Verse 31: "So He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and immediately the fever left her. And she served them."

Notice the sequence of verbs in this verse. Jesus first came forward, then took her by the hand, lifted her up, the fever left, and finally, she served them. We see the effectiveness of Jesus' ministry here. When faced with a situation, He approached, came close to her, then physically touched her by taking her hand. The purpose of this touch? To raise her up, to no longer remain lying down. Through these actions, the fervor that was not pleasing to God diminished, and the person returned to normalcy, able to rise and serve the Lord. After the fever left Peter's mother-in-law, she immediately rose to serve the Lord and others. This should also be our disposition. On our journey of serving the Lord, it's inevitable to encounter imbalances, to fall into certain fevers, to the point where we are paralyzed and must lie down. Jesus comes close to us, touches us, lifts us up, and removes these fevers from us, allowing us to return to normalcy and serve the Lord once more.

Verse 32-33: "At evening, when the sun had set, they brought to Him all who were sick and those who were demon-possessed. And the whole city was gathered together at the door."

On that Sabbath morning, Jesus taught in the synagogue, then immediately after, He cast out the first demon-possessed person there. In the afternoon, He went to Peter's house, where Peter's mother-in-law was healed. As evening approached, marking the end of a busy day and a time for rest, people began bringing all who were sick or demon-possessed to Jesus. The crowd grew so large that they gathered at the door of Peter's house. Jesus had been diligently ministering in Capernaum, preaching, casting out demons, and healing the sick, and word of His deeds spread rapidly, drawing many to seek His help. Among the crowd were those genuinely in need of healing and deliverance, but there were also many curious onlookers, all clamoring around Peter's house.

Verse 34: "Then He healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and He did not allow the demons to speak, because they knew Him."

We don't know exactly how many people were there, but Mark records that all the people of the city came, so there were at least dozens, perhaps even hundreds. Jesus healed and cast out demons one by one, likely working tirelessly from dusk until late into the night. He ministered diligently, meeting people where they were and addressing their individual needs. Although the demons recognized Jesus, He silenced them because He didn't seek fame from human recognition, which could distract from His mission. Jesus' ministry focused on meeting the needs of each person while remaining faithful to His ultimate purpose of preaching the word of God.

Let's pray: Lord, thank You for the account in the Gospel of Mark, showing us Your diligent work on earth. Every day was busy, yet You healed each person who came to You, showing us Your faithfulness. Help us learn from Your example, to serve every person You place in our path with faithfulness, so they may find release through Your word. Bless my church and our community, in Jesus' name I pray.