

The Demon in the Synagogue

Mark 1:21-28

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, February 11, 2024

Well, good morning, everyone. If you would, would you bow your heads with me in a word of prayer before we dive into our message this morning?

Heavenly Father we always talk about deep things when we come together as the Body of Christ. But this morning, we're coming to a deep and a dark subject, the subject of demons, demon possession, all that is wrapped up in this. And I don't know where everyone comes from today, Lord, but I know some of them come from backgrounds where there was demonic maybe worship or demonic activity they were witness to. And so this is a very personal subject for some people here today. And, Lord, I just pray that the tone of the sermon, the words would be helpful for them. And I pray just in the beginning Father, they would know, if they're in Christ, they are free from this problem. And not only that, Lord, but those who are going to be baptized are going to come up here and testify to the fact that they're free by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, would that be prevalent in the things we say today? I pray this in Christ's name. Amen.

Well, in order to begin our sermon this morning, I want to say a few statements to you, and I want you to tell me if they're true or false, okay. So this is kind of a little bit of a pop quiz for you. You weren't ready for this, but I think you'll do fine. A couple statements, say if they're true or false. Satan is real. True. The demons are real. True. Satan, and the demons are our enemies. They're powerful. They're dangerous. They're active, intelligent, and they're everywhere. Okay, you guys have done fine. You're thinking this is simple. This will be a very easy message. No problem.

Well, let me say one more thing that I think is going to make you scratch your head a little bit. They possess people. True? False? There's some different ideas on that. That's why I'm asking you that. That's a statement that makes you kind of stop and think for a moment that there are times when the demons or Satan steps into someone's life to take it over. So that the personality of the demon mixes with the personality of the individual forming something straight from the pit of hell. What do you think about that? Not so simple, really, is it? Something to consider. But if you're tempted to say, "No," I want to remind you that it has happened before.

And in order to show you that, please open your Bibles with me to the Gospel of Mark. That's the book we're in this morning. We're going to look in the Gospel of Mark, and we're going to see a time when Jesus met a demon. More specifically, He met a man who was demon possessed. So the demon was in the person. And I want to read this story to you again, so you have it in your mind as we talk about it. I know Kevin already read that for us, did a great job. But I want this on the recording of the sermon, and I want you to be thinking about it. But look at Mark 1:21. It says,

They *went into Capernaum; and immediately on the Sabbath *Jesus* entered the synagogue and *began* to teach. And they were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as *one* having authority, and not as the scribes. Just then there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, saying, "What business do you have with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are: the Holy One of God!" And Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be quiet, and come out of him!" After throwing him into convulsions and crying out with a loud voice, the unclean spirit came out of him. And they were all amazed,

I mean, who could blame them?

so they debated among themselves, saying, "What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him." Immediately the news about Him spread everywhere into all the surrounding region of Galilee.

You can stop the reading there, but the reason I wanted to go into that with you is because you can tell what it's about at first glance, can't you? Verse 23 says there was a man who had an unclean spirit. In other words, this story is about a man who had a demon living in him that had decided to take him over. You're only one chapter into the gospel of Mark at this point, and you're already seeing this phenomenon occur. You're going to see it a lot in this book. There is going to be demons all over the place in this gospel.

And another thing that jumps out at you, when you read this, is where the story takes place. Did you pick up on that? The same verse says it took place where? In a bar? No. In the street? No. Pagan temple, cannabis store? Synagogue, a place of worship because the demon wanted to prevent the Jews from praising God or pervert their worship of God. Which would be discouraging if it were not for what it says next. And that is that when Jesus shows up, He drove the demon away.

And the point is that how do you get a demon out of your life? You put Jesus in it, amen? And how do you keep your soul from being taken over by the evil one? You give it more gospel. You don't give it more rules, the Jews already had that. And you don't get any more laws, the synagogue was full of laws and laws upon laws upon laws, and then they made up laws. You need something else. And that is the healing power of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I mention that because I think a lot of people get this all wrong. They think to avoid the demons, I need to go to church. And they tell themselves to avoid evil spirits, I need to be religious. They're wrong. This guy's religious and he's got a demon living inside of him. He went to church every Sunday, or the equivalent of it to the synagogue, and it didn't save him from this problem. And it won't do that for you either. Friends, listen, you can go to church, teach Sunday school, leave the choir, go on mission trips, serve as an usher, chair of the Finance Committee, read your Bible faithfully every day, and still be

under the control of the devil. It happens all the time. It takes more than that to be saved from it. You have to believe in Jesus in your heart as a personal thing.

That's hard for some people to do. I mean, if you've grown up in church your entire life and you've been faking it, it makes a lot of people wonder, "Will God, forgive me? I mean, would Christ show mercy to me if I've been a hypocrite for decades?" The answer is yes, He will, because He did it right here. He will show mercy to you because He helped this man when He was possessed. Just out of curiosity, how many of you have studied the subject of demon possession before? A few, not too many? How many of you have studied the subject of demon possession, in church? That's just off the radar. We just don't think that way. And that's the setting that you're seeing here.

A lot of the books on demon possessions can get really convoluted. They talk about things like commanding the demons and confronting the demons. They tell you you need to rebuke them, reproach them and get on the offensive so you can break the generational curse that they have on you. You don't see that in here. This doesn't talk about generational curses; it talks about Christ. You focus on Him; He'll drive the demons away. And that's what we're going to talk about this morning. Some of you thought that was the whole sermon. That's not. That's the introduction. We're just getting worked up here.

This morning, we're going to look at three things Jesus teaches us about His relationship to the demons. So if you're reading this, and you're wondering, well, what does Jesus have to do with demons? Well, that's what we're going to talk about. We're gonna look at three things the Lord teaches us about His relationship to the demons.

And the first one is that they hate His teaching. First things Christ teaches us about His relationship to demons is that they hate it when He preaches. That's where the trouble begins. And the story starts in the pulpit. Jesus gives a sermon and the whole thing just comes unleashed.

And just to let you know, as you come to this part of the gospel of Mark, it picks right back up where we left off last week. When it says in verse 21, they see that word there "they" that refers to Jesus and the four disciples that He called earlier in the previous passage. If you were with us last Sunday, we learned that their names are Simon and Andrew, James and John. They're four men and two sets of brothers who obey Jesus when He comes to them when they're in their fishing boats. And He says, "Follow me. And I'll make you fishers of men." Because what Mark is doing now is he's saying that as they're following Him, they come to a place called Capernaum.

And I want to stop for a moment and talk about that because that's a term that most of us are not familiar with. I mean, you've been to Abbotsford before, you've never been to Capernaum probably. But Capernaum is a small town located on the northwest side of the Sea of Galilee that had a population of several thousand. It was built around the fishing industry there. Chilliwack is built around farming. This

was built around fishing. Fishing was a big business on the Sea of Galilee. And as such, the people of Israel built several towns to accommodate all the traffic that went through there. Capernaum was one of those places. Historians tell us it was one of the most prestigious towns in that region because King Herod had created a half mile walkway that went out into the sea from the shoreline that allowed the men to launch their boats far out into the lake. You didn't have to just walk up on the rocks and do it straight in that way you could go way out on this walkway. He also had a garrison of Roman troops there and a customs center along with some important buildings to house Roman officials. Because it was fixed on a major roadway from Damascus to Egypt called the *Via Maris*, the way of the sea. Which is why Matthew eight and nine tell us that Peter live there along with his family; he was from Capernaum. So did Matthew, the tax collector. And so did the Lord Jesus.

If you look in Mark 2:1, just a little background here it says, “When Jesus had come back to Capernaum, several days afterwards, it was heard that he was at home.” So Jesus had his home in Capernaum, as much as He ever had one. He was constantly traveling, so it wasn't a home in the ordinary sense. But He made Capernaum the base of His operations for ministry, which is why it's talked about so often in the Bible. When you do a survey, you find Jesus would heal Peters mother-in-law there, along with the paralytic who was let down through the through the roof, everybody remember that story? And He would heal the nobleman's son there with the synagogue official's daughter. And He would go to Capernaum after walking on the water and feeding the 5,000. And we could go on and on, but the point is, this was a very popular place in Scripture. So much happens there.

And not only does it happen in Capernaum, but if you look back in the passage that we're talking about, you're going to find a number of things happen in a specific building mentioned in verse 21, the synagogue. It says, “As they went into the Capernaum, immediately on the Sabbath, Jesus entered the synagogue.”

Now, what's the synagogue? We're learning some different places here we're not always familiar with. A synagogue is the place where the Jews worship God at this time. Before the exile they worshipped in the temple, but once the temple was destroyed in the sixth century BC, the people began to meet together in small groups they called synagogues, or assemblies. The rabbis said, if you had 10 Jewish men in a town like Capernaum, you could establish a congregation where they would call their own rabbi and set up elders to hold services and sing and pray and listen to scripture on the Sabbath. The way it works is that the people would come in, and the men would sit on one side, and the women would sit on the other side, and they would face a large chair on the front of the stage called the seat of Moses. When I preach, I have to stand, they sat. I liked that tradition better personally. But the rabbi would sit on this chair and teach you. In larger synagogues, they would have separate rooms to instruct the kids during the week and other rooms to hold court and judge legal matters for the community.

Interestingly enough, if you went to Capernaum today, you could see the remains there of a synagogue from the first century. Some think it was this synagogue. It's positioned in the center of town facing

southwards towards Jerusalem. And the dimensions are a little bit fuzzy, but some say it's probably about 70 feet long and three stories tall, with large columns made of stone and carvings on the walls of things like the Torah. And here it says Jesus goes into this, possibly this synagogue, for a specific purpose, and that is to teach. In other words, He's not going in there just to sit and worship as a normal person. He wants to instruct the people in the Word of God. He wants to sit in Moses' seat.

The question is, how does the crowd respond to this? What do they do when Christ begins to preach in their synagogue? Well, if you look back in your Bibles, it says they were amazed at it. For He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as their scribes who were the normal teachers in Israel at that time. The scribes' job was to translate the Old Testament from Hebrew into Aramaic and Greek because the people didn't speak Hebrew. And as the scribes would do that, during the service, they would often say, "Well, Rabbi so and so says this, And Rabbi so and so says that." Anybody heard a sermon like that before? They would get into endless arguments and debates about syntax and grammar and just bore the people to tears. Mark says when Jesus spoke, it was different. Because instead of saying, "Rabbi, so and so said this," He says, "God said it, period, end of story." And instead of getting into debates and arguments, He gave them the pure milk of the word, which almost brought an awakening to Capernaum. I mean, that manner of preaching was so foreign to them.

It was about to bring something like a revival but look at what happens next. The next verse says this, "Just then" during the sermon, while he's preaching, "there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit. And he cried out," that word means hollered, "saying, 'What business do we have with each other, Jesus of Nazareth?'" Now, I don't know if you've ever been in a church service like that before, but that means that while He is giving the Word of God, the guy just loses it. Right in the midst of the sermon, while He's on point number one or two or whatever, he lets out a shriek that makes everyone's blood turn cold. Because as long as the scribes preached, the demon loved it. And as long as they bored people to tears and talked about syntax and grammar, and Rabbi this Rabbi that, they were so happy. But the moment Christ started talking, he came unglued.

Which would have made the people do this. Because they're wondering, what are you doing? But can I just say that it's not that much different today? Anytime a preacher stands up and bores people in Canada, the demons love it. And anytime he goes on about stupid things, it's like music to their ears. But the second, a man stands up and says God says something, they hate it. There are churches in Canada right now that have hundreds of people in them that do nothing but talk about foolish things every Sunday. They talk about politics, they talk about the Green Movement, they talk about what kind of clothes you wear, and what food you eat, and whether you have earrings or not, and long hair, and tattoos, and the demons could not be happier because it shows the devil has taken over the church.

What's it look like when the devil takes over a church? It looks like a bunch of good, moral, nice people who come into a place like this, but they're lost. They have rules but no repentance. They have rituals, but no regeneration. They have Christ without a cross, God without the gospel, because the Bible is

never taught there. And it's a reminder that the only way to fix this is to go back to that. You don't need to give people like that more rules. They have enough of that. They don't need ceremonies, you need to open up the Word of God to them and show them what it says, that's what Jesus did here. He didn't give the Jews more ceremonies, He gave him scripture, that was the only thing that's going to drive a devil away.

By the way, these people, you could just put yourselves in their shoes for a minute, they would have been shocked to see this guy like this. Especially the disciples because they probably knew him. Remember, the disciples come from Capernaum, which means this is their synagogue. This is where they go every Sabbath to worship. At least Peter would have; he's from Capernaum. There's no way he didn't cross paths with this guy. Jesus puts him through this in order to show Peter that this is what you can expect to find if you follow me. You're going to see demons in the synagogue. Don't be surprised by that, Peter. Don't be shocked. Don't ever buy the lie that when you come to church, you're going into a safe place. You're not; it's dangerous. We do spiritual warfare here.

I've been a pastor for years now. I'll tell you, I've seen people do awful things in a church. You guys have too, some of them criminal things. And it makes you wonder why? What's going on? Well, the answer is because some of them are lost, and they're under the influence of the devil. And the principle is, don't be surprised by that. Church discipline that, rebuke it, but you can expect it. When you show up here, don't think everything's going to be safe and sound, the church is a battleground, not a playground. We're going to do baptisms in a moment. As many of you know, I think a lot of you've come for that today, which is awesome. And I want to speak very plainly to the three people getting baptized today. And you're about to stand up here and profess your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And I wish I could tell you that it's going to be easy from this point onwards. It will not be. You're about to go to war, like the rest of us. This is your enlistment day into the army. Jesus said, "A slave is not greater than His master. If they persecute Me, they'll persecute you." But at the same time, you've got to remember, that's only half the story. The other half is that even though you're going to war, it's a fight that's already been won because of the Lord Jesus Christ. The devil can't do anything to you when He's on your side, and you have nothing to fear. So don't walk out here thinking everything's gonna be sunshine and raindrops. It's not. But there will be a good ending for you if you're in Christ.

And that brings us to another thing that Jesus teaches us about His relationship to the demons, and that is that they submit to Him. First, they hate His teaching, because they don't like it when He talks. They like it when other people talk. Those demons heard a lot of sermons that they really appreciate, they were taking notes and everything, not His. A second thing that He teaches us about His relationship to them is that they submit to Him. Which means even though they don't like it, when He talks, it doesn't matter. They do what He says anyway. He is God over the demons.

And just for the sake of understanding this better, I want to go back and talk about verse 23 some more, because I think it's safe to say that demon possession is a very puzzling thing for people today. You

don't have to go very far in North America to find someone who will tell you they've been possessed by a demon, and they know it. Which is not what you see here, actually. Because apparently, either this man did not know he was possessed, or the Jews didn't know it. Because they had a rule whereby, they would not let a demon possessed man into the synagogue. For obvious reasons, they would block him at the door. You're not going to come in there if they think that you're inhabited by the devil. So either this guy sneaks in with one or he had no idea it was in there to begin with. When he says in verse 23, "What business do we have with each other, Jesus of Nazareth?" which means why are You bothering us, Jesus of Nazareth? Why are You preaching like this? We don't like it. We don't want You here. You're raining on our parade.

If you notice, that sentence is in the plural. That's a little concerning because it implies that there's either there's multiple demons in the man or there's one demon in the man, but it's so connected that the two of them are like this. It gives you some insight into what possession is like because this is mysterious; we just don't know a lot about this topic. It's hard to know where the human spirit ends in the story and the demon begins. Because it looks like the demon is calling the shots at this point, but at the same time he's speaking through the lips of the man. The demon doesn't come out of the man to talk. He's using the guy's vocal cords.

And he goes on to say, "Have you come to destroy us?" "I" So now we're going from we or us to "I" "I know who you are, the Holy One of God." Which is a term that refers to Christ deity. The demon is saying, "You're not just a man, this is the Son of God." People didn't know that. Jesus was just a carpenter to them. Which causes the Lord here to say, "Be quiet. Jesus didn't want the demon to talk like that. "Be silent and *exerchomai*." This is where you get your word exorcism, come out of him. At which point in verse 26 says the demon threw the man into convulsions and cried out with a loud voice as it came out.

Now, if you've ever seen an epileptic seizure before, a lot of the scholars say that's probably what it looked like. I won't go into all the details of a seizure, but that's sort of kind of the idea of a convulsion. Which would have shocked people even more, right? I mean, that sermon's weird enough, getting interrupted like this, but this isn't the middle of a service. This is a Sabbath. It'd be like it happening right here. One moment, the man is out of his mind screaming at Jesus, the next moment, he's completely silent, and acting normal again because of one statement by Christ. I want you to look at your Bibles. Tell me, where does it say that Jesus talked to the demon for hours before it left the man? It doesn't. And where does it tell you that He went on some television show and danced around the stage with a band playing while He did this?

This is something that happened a lot in the Gospel of Mark by the way. It's not the only time when the demons face Jesus and lose. For example, if you want to keep your fingers in Mark 1 for a moment and turn over to Mark 3. There it tells us about the time when Jesus withdrew to the Sea of Galilee and a great many people followed Him until verse 11 says, "Whenever the unclean spirits saw Him, they

would fall down before Him and shout, ‘You are the Son of God.’” That means the demon said that and did this. They called Him God and fell down at His feet because they didn't have a choice either. Whenever they approached Him, they knew they were in the presence of a higher power. And so they did the only thing that could be done about it, they kneeled. Friends, demons always kneel in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. They don't fight Him. They don't strike back. They don't put their fists up in the air and swap blows, they just hold a white flag and surrender every single time.

For another example, you can look in Mark 5, where it tells us about the time when Jesus healed a man who was possessed not just by one demon, but by several who called themselves Legion, “For We Are Many” they said. To the extent that they made the poor guy miserable, he had inhabited the tombs, and screamed and hollered and gashed himself with stones. But verse six says, “Seeing Jesus from a distance he, the man with all these demons, ran up and bowed down.” Does that sound familiar? Of course it does. Is there a pattern developing? Absolutely. Jesus shows up and they just collapse. In fact He doesn't just show up, look at it, says they ran to Him. He's like a magnet, drawing them and making them bow. He pops into their neighborhood, and it's over.

If you want one more instance of this, you can look in Mark 9. It's where Jesus finds a demon that had taken over the life of a little boy, so that it sent him into convulsions at will. And if you're a parent, you can just see your heart being tugged at the story. The convulsions are not happening to this child when the demon is coming out. They're just happening all the time. This demon is controlling his entire life. And so Jesus comes and tells the demon in verse 25, “You deaf and mute spirit, I command you come out of him, and do not enter him again.” And it did, to remind you that every demon you see here acknowledges Jesus Christ as King, no matter who they are, in order to demonstrate He's Lord overall.

And the reason I'm making a big deal of this is because when you read some of those books on demonology that I talked about earlier, you get a different perspective. Because they almost send the impression that Jesus isn't sovereign, but the demons are because every time something bad happens in your life, they tell you the demons did it. I got sick today, the demons did it. I lost my temper, the demons did it. I had a flat tire, demons. Stuck in traffic, demons. Laid off from work, demons. Fight with the wife, demons. Canucks lost in the playoffs, demons. That's what life is like. Demons, demons, demons, demons, demons, demons. The problem is the Bible doesn't say that. And it never says the demons rule over everything; Jesus Christ does. So if you keep your eyes fixed on Him, you have nothing to worry about as far as they're concerned. Now, if you're lost, and you don't know the Lord Jesus Christ, it's a different story. Your heart is wide open to demons. But if you have given your life to Him, and He rules over you, you'll be fine.

That's what you're going to see in the lives of the disciples. Church history tells us, after leaving the synagogue here, they're going to go on at some point to cast out demons. And the four disciples are going to do it in multiple places. They'll do it around the Sea of Galilee, they'll do it in the nation of Israel, and after Jesus died and was resurrected, they're going to do it in other countries, which sounds

amazing. What kind of faith do you have to have to do that? But the truth is, it starts here with something very simple. They just look to Christ. Simon, and Andrew, James and John, they take one small step of obedience, and they just fix their eyes in His direction.

In fact, if you would have been standing in that synagogue on this day, you probably would have fallen to pieces for one thing. But you would have also watched as this demon possessed man interrupts the sermon by shouting and then instantly becomes quiet as Jesus cast it out. And the disciples do nothing but stare at the Lord. They didn't cast the demon out. They didn't fight it. They didn't say *exerchomai* come out of him, Christ did. And they just did this in response.

I think so many times we make this whole issue harder than this because we read a passage like this and say, "Pastor Jeremy, I can't resist the evil spirits today." Yes, you can. Can you do this toward Christ? Then you can resist them. Can you stare at the Saviour? Then you can win. It's not about you, it's about Him. You can't defeat them on your own, but no one's asking you to do that. You do it in His power.

And that brings us to one more thing that Christ teaches us about His relationship to demons here. Just to review these other ones. The first one is that the demons hate His preaching. Secondly, they submit to Him. And that's good news because that means there is nothing on this planet that does not submit to Christ. Can you think of anything worse than a demon? That's as bad as it gets. To demonstrate if Christ rules over them, He rules over anything in this world today. LGBTQ stuff, He rules over that. Abortions, murders, killing, He rules over that. Heresy in the churches, immorality, divorce, broken homes, He is Lord over everything. And this story shows that loud and clear for us.

And it brings you to one more thing that He teaches us about this issue and that is that the demons are found in multiple places. The third thing the Lord teaches us about His relationship to demons is that they're found in multiple places, which means even though the story starts off with Jesus confronting one demon, or maybe just a few of them in the synagogue, it doesn't end there because they're going to pop up in other spots. Which Mark goes on to talk about in this chapter.

Before he does it, Mark actually takes a moment to give you the crowd's reaction to this. If you look in verse 27, it says that the people were all amazed at this miracle. That's kind of an understatement. It doesn't come across well in English, but that word in Greek amazed, it means they were blown away by it because they didn't have a category for this. They just saw Jesus order a demon out of a friend of theirs in a church service, and so it rendered them speechless. This is like something from a different planet. I remember the first time I saw the ocean, I was speechless at the majesty and the size and power of it. That's what this word means. They're just flabbergasted until verse 27 says, they finally snap out of it and start debating because they're religious people in a synagogue, right? They say, "What is this?" not "Who is this?" "What is this? What just happened? A new teaching with authority because He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey."

And that's a good summary of what happened here because Jesus doesn't ask the demon to leave. He commands it. They saw it. He's not begging the demon. He's just telling it and it leaves, which is why they're dumbstruck to the point that the next verse says immediately the news about Him spreads everywhere. Because after Jesus performed the miracle, the Jews go back to their homes and families and friends and say, "You won't believe what I saw today. You remember, Bob?" His name's not Bob, by the way, "the nice guy in the pew? He had a demon. You know how I know he had a demon, he talked in church. And you know what the preacher did? He said, 'Get lost demon; come out.' And it did it."

In fact, if you want to see how worked up they are about this, you can look down on the next passage because it says in verse 32, a little further down, that when evening came, after the sun had set, they began bringing to Him all who were ill, and those who were demon possessed, and the whole city gathered at the door. I'm gonna say more about that next week, but here, I want to point out that one miracle sent the whole town of Capernaum into an uproar. All several thousand of them. So the people just came to Him one right after the other looking for help.

If you want to know why they waited until evening to do this, synagogue services were typically in the morning. Why do they wait until evening? It's because the verse 21 above says it was the Sabbath. And the Jews could not work on the Sabbath or carry their sick or even walk along way until it was evening. And so they put off the whole thing until then.

But the second the sun goes down, they just come rushing into the streets, bringing their sick and wounded and crippled. And they bring their blind and deaf and mute. And they bring people with infections, people with fevers, people with withered limbs, hemorrhaging, cholera, typhus, diphtheria, skin disease, liver disease, heart failure, you name it, and they brought it. No hospitals back then. They didn't have doctors like we have today. They just heard someone could help and they went to Him. And it even says here that they brought those who were demon possessed. And that makes you wonder, what's wrong with Capernaum? I mean, how many demons do you have in a town like this? And the answer is, we don't know, but it must have been several because the Jews didn't have a magical formula for identifying demon possession. But anytime someone was behaving in an odd manner, it made them suspect.

And so the picture here is that the people are bringing Jesus the weird people. And if you notice, it doesn't say that He told them to go away. Doesn't say that He said, "It's late and I'm tired." He healed many who were ill with various diseases and cast out many demons. And the way that's worded is like He just he just kept casting and casting and casting them out. It says a lot about the compassion of Christ. I don't know about you. But how many of you would want to stay up all night dealing with demons? How many of you would want to stay up all night dealing with the weird people of Capernaum? I'd rather wait until morning so I can see what's going on. Thank you very much. Not Jesus. He just does it immediately.

In fact, things get so crazy that verse 35 says early in the morning or in the early morning while it was still dark, Jesus got up and left the house and went away to a secluded place to pray. Because if you're kind of putting this all together, it's like the crowds wouldn't leave Him alone. He had to do it to find a time to rest. And we're going to talk more about the healing ministry of Christ next week because at this point, I mean Jesus is just going to heal and heal again.

But what I would like to do before we wrap this up is actually take this moment to talk about demon possession a little bit more because I really do think anytime you talk about this, there's a lot of issues that come up. One of them is this, are people still demon possessed today? Remember I asked you that at the beginning of the sermon? Have you ever wondered that? You probably have. Do they step into people's lives and take them over in the 21st century? It's happening in Capernaum, doing it in the first century, but what about good old nice, friendly Canada? Let me say a few words about that.

One is this. I believe it is. I think people are still possessed by evil spirits today, and while there are some things that occurred in the New Testament that have ceased, I don't know anywhere where it says this one has. But you need some qualifiers to that statement because it can be taken the wrong way. One qualifier is the demons never possess a Christian ever. Even though they possess the life of an unbeliever and can take it over, they never do that for a believer, and you need to know that. If you want to write this verse down Ephesians 4:30 says you have been sealed with the Holy Spirit. And that's like you've been sealed up with the Holy Spirit. When you put your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and trust it in His name, like these people who are going to be baptized today have done, the Holy Spirit entered into your life. And He did this over you so that your heart is safe and sound. Nothing can take you from Him. Not the devil, not the demons, and not all the powers of hell combined. Now look, the devil can harass you, but he can't hurt you. And he can disturb you, but he can't destroy. And he can worry, but he can't win in the battle with sin. The Spirit will not let him. In the garden of Eden, all the serpent did was talk. He didn't inhabit Eve. It's the same way with you. It's encouraging. It shows you how secure you are in Christ.

But it also serves as a reminder that anytime you sin as a Christian, there's only one person to blame, and that's you, Amen? You thought that was gonna be an encouraging point. When you sin, you cannot say the devil made me do it. He did not. You can't point a finger at him. You say I got sick today, the devil did it. I lost my temper, the devil did it. I got laid off from work, the devil did it. He rules over at all. No that's not the way it is. All the devil does is give you options. It's up to you what you do with them. So the solution is to resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Don't try to reclaim spiritual territory, learn how to repent.

And that brings us to another qualifying statement for this. And that is that yes, the demons possess people today, but they never possess believers. And when they possess unbelievers, we don't have a lot of information about it. It's kind of an enigma. Like I just showed you, the demons can reveal

themselves in so many different ways in people's lives. It's not a one size fits all sort of thing. If this guy is in a synagogue, that's not where you would expect to find a demon is it? You would think the demons are going to go to some horrible place down the street where people are doing drugs. And they do and they're there. They're in places like this too, though, so it's hard to figure it out. They can possess people overtly and covertly. They can do it visibly and invisibly, in a synagogue and the tombs and the fields and homes. Just to name a few places, some of them team up on people, some don't. Some of them attack one at a time, some don't. Some of the demons talk, some don't. Some hurt people physically, some don't. Some give a name for themselves, some don't. Some have outward displays of power, some don't. Some hide, some don't. Some of them come out easily when they're summoned by the apostles later on, some don't do that either. We could go on and on. The point is that what we know about them is pretty limited. So you want to be careful before you go around speculating about who has a demon and who doesn't in the church. Most of the time, we're not really sure. Just because someone is acting strangely, it doesn't mean they're possessed. Some people are just strange. All right, can I just say that? Don't blame the demons because there's weird people. I've had people say to me in counseling that their spouse had a demon. When I asked them why, they said it's because they lost their temper at me. I said, "Boy, if everyone in this church who lost their temper had a demon, we'd be in trouble." Doesn't work that way, there's more to it than that.

It brings me to one more qualifying statement about this, and that is that after saying all of that, if you if you still think someone is demon possessed by what you can see in Scripture, and you're wondering what to do about it, let me just say, it's not your job to cast them out. That might be the most controversial thing I've said so far. But if you want to be strictly biblical about it and avoid all that crazy stuff you see on television, you have to realize that Scripture does not give us the authority to perform exorcisms anymore. Jesus had that the apostles had it, but you're not Jesus and you're not an apostle. That's something that has ceased since the first century. Which means that all the things you find people doing at the crusades, and the Roman Catholic settings where the priest does this on someone's forehead, it's just, it's just wrong. What is this going to do to a demon? How's it gonna stop them? They're spiritual creatures, what's your hand going to do to a spiritual creature, so don't get caught up in that. You don't fight the demons that way. Listen, friends, you fight the demons through prayer. That's what you need to do. If you find yourself up against someone that you think is possessed, you talk to God about it.

Ephesians 6:12 Says, "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, powers, world forces of this evil darkness. Therefore take up the full armor of God." That's another way to fight the demons. And then it goes on in the passage to say pray. You don't fight the demons standing up, you do it on your knees. You can't fight the forces of darkness on your own. You need the help of the power of God give it over to Him. Prayer is the secret behind every Christian life. Even though it's a private thing. It's huge. It's where you get all your power to face the enemy. God is sovereign. Christ is in control of the demons. But at the same time He listens to you when they attack, and you pray. So you need to do that.

The story is told at the time someone visited Martin Luther at the Wartburg Castle, where he was translating the Bible into German. And they saw there was a big ink spot on the wall. And they asked him what it was. And Luther said, "Well, that's where I threw my ink bottle at the devil when he was tempting me." And they said, "Did it work?" Luther said, "No, but it helped when I prayed." Friends, I tell you that story because if you're under attack, don't throw your ink bottle. Don't do this. Pray. Talk to God. A church will never rise above its efforts in this. Our songs are nothing, our services are nothing, and so are all our attempts to overcome the enemy if you don't pray, is the most important thing we could ever do.

In fact, why don't we close in a word of prayer now before we take communion and talk about the victory Christ has given us over this issue. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, Lord, I do come to You this morning with a heart that's kind of heavy for people today because I know of all the things we could talk about in church life, these types of subjects are so bewildering for most because they've heard so many different things about this, and it has just confused them. So Lord, I pray for discernment for our church family moving forward in this year of 2024 when it comes to the issue of spiritual warfare. Some of them have grown up in churches where it's all about feelings, and if you feel the demon or feel the devil, feelings, feelings. They've never been told to repent. And so their Christian life has been one that's been so high and so low and just mixed up on every level. And Lord, I pray that they would see that they can be more stable if they stand on the rock of Christ. And for others, Lord, their life has been so dark, it's hard for them not to think that there hasn't been demons involved, and they look back over who they were before they met You and they think what just happened? What's going on spiritually? Where's all this wickedness coming from? It may be coming from the things we talked about today. And they may be afraid that the wickedness is going to return now that they're Christian. Lord, I just ask that You would remind them of what they've learned today, so they could go forth in the power of God and not live in fear anymore.

Father, we thank You for how simple victory is when You know Jesus. Victory is not simple when You don't. It can be convoluted, but in Christ, all we have to have is in Him. So Lord, we thank You for that.

Lord, as we come this morning to the Lord's table, and as we come to baptism, we're doing all of this to remember Christ, and the victory and the total triumph He had over the forces of evil everywhere. Lord, may we go enjoy these next moments as we celebrate those things and then go out of this place, living in victory as brothers and sisters in Christ. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.