

“Be Renewed!”

Sermon January 28, 2018 - Mark 1:21-28

What could happen to the church where Jesus is present? People can be renewed.

Anytime, when you invite Jesus to be close to you, some amazing things can happen.

Based on our Scripture reading, Jesus was invited as a guest preacher to Capernaum. His audience was amazed at the way Jesus preached the gospel. People felt that God was talking to them.

Jesus, in His sermons, always faced people with reality. He was teaching about human’s sin, the broken law, human’s disobedience, and the judgment throne, where we all have to stand after we finish our race, as it is written: **“And just as it is appointed for mortals to die once, and after that the judgment.”** Hebrew 9:27 Jesus also always finished his sermons by calling people to repent and to rejoice in receiving God’s love and mercy.

Jesus’ words were powerful, full of authority and power. People realized that everything Jesus said in His sermon was true. They understood that they had to take God more seriously, and they had to adjust their words and actions to God. They recognized who **God is** and who **they were**. Even those, who had a hard time to acknowledge that Jesus was right, had to agree with Jesus, because they realized they had to be renewed and saved.

On that very day, the effect of Jesus teaching was revealed in a very special and difficult moment. Before Jesus finished His sermon, before He would be able to prove that He had come to rescue, redeem and renew us, a person, who was listening as well and was silent for a while, suddenly got angry and spoke up, yelling at Jesus, as we read: **“Just then 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?’”** Mark 1:23-24

The reason for his action was that he **was possessed by demon, by an “unclean spirit”**. He was a member of that congregation, listening and acting like a normal person. But after a while, he started to act weird, because he could not stand Jesus. His goal was to turn the whole congregation against Jesus, to divide the congregation, and to break the message of God which was delivered. This weird man was blaming Jesus for what Jesus said, for His words and actions, and He wanted to turn other people, too, against Jesus.

With his actions, he said things like:

- Preacher, why did you come here?
- I don’t like what you say.
- Are you here to turn everything upside down?
- You are not preaching us what we want to hear.

- We are coming here, week after week, to be told that we are good, that we are perfect, and that we deserve God's love and mercy.
- We are here to hear that God should be proud that He has servants like us.
- Jesus, you are not doing what I want you to do, so please go.
- So when are you leaving?
- It seems that this man was ready to say to Jesus: I am here to walk you out.

I am sure that many of those who attended the service turned towards Jesus to protect Him saying:

- We can't tolerate this kind of behavior in our church.
- We cannot allow this man to stand up and accuse the preacher.
- We are a well-functioning congregation and we cannot allow a person to behave like this.

I can imagine that by this time the synagogue elders were beside themselves saying:

- Was this really happening?
- Did this man, whom we have worshipped with for quite a number of years, really get up and say all of that out loud against the preacher, asking Jesus if he had come to destroy this congregation?

From this story today, we can learn TWO things.

The first we will figure out together.

Why do you think this story is in the Bible. The Bible says that not all the stories Jesus did are written in this book, but this one IS included. Why?

(walking around with the microphone asking people to share their thoughts)

What is the most sacred place where God meets His people regularly? – THE CHURCH

The devil, with so many tactics, wants to destroy the CHURCH. Talking to other ministers they confirmed that, in more and more churches, the devil is using some particular people turning them against the church, against leadership and the minister, to create chaos and to take the church apart. Today, in the United States, every week 2 ministers leave the ministry because they are tired of dealing with those few people who are in the church, not to worship, but to take the church apart. The suicidal rate amongst ministers has raised drastically, also. More and more ministers go on stress leave or leave ministry because of the pressure some people, used by devil, lay on them.

Let me repeat the question: Why is this story in the Bible? To empower the members and the minister to deal with these situations in case the devil want to use somebody to take the church apart. Secondly, Jesus was to remind the preachers what He said in John, what we as pastors don't want to hear: 'If the world hates you, be aware that it hated me before it hated you. If you belonged to the world, the world would love you as its own. Because you do not belong to the

world, but I have chosen you out of the world—therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, “Servants are not greater than their master.” If they persecuted me, they will persecute you; if they kept my word, they will keep yours also. But they will do all these things to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me.” John 15:18-21

Jesus was not surprised by this behaviour. It was easier for Jesus to deal with the situation because He was God, and He had power over demons. He said to him only two words: **BE SILENT !**

We read that this man was under the influence of a demon, and the demon cannot stand Jesus. The audience did not know that he was possessed. They saw only a mad and misbehaving man, who stood up and turned against Jesus.

A question for you: do you know people who always complain about everything? Nothing can satisfy them. They point out only the bad things in everything and everybody. They like to magnify people’s mistakes. They blame others but never themselves. They always have better plans than others.

The problem is not that they are like that, but they don’t realize who they are. Their biggest obstacle is that they don’t want to change. They don’t want to be renewed because they don’t know how badly they behave. They don’t ask Jesus Christ to save them because they don’t know that they are possessed by demons. The man from our story did not know either that he was possessed by a demon until Jesus cast the demon out.

Jesus first said only two words: **BE SILENT !** Then Jesus looked at the man and commanded: “Come out of him!” Immediately the demon came out of him. After the demon was not able to use this person anymore, it dropped this man into the middle of the synagogue, at Jesus’ feet, and left him. This renewed person started to speak with love and gentleness, and everybody around him were amazed.

What are we learning from this story today?

We gather Sunday after Sunday, not only to say a quick prayer or two, to sing a few songs and to put some money on the plate, and then go home. We are here to learn what it means to invite Jesus into our worship space and lives.

Every time we make Jesus the center of our worship, something breathtaking happens. We can be supernaturally renewed. We can experience a transfiguration and a transformation in our own lives. We can experience true freedom and our lives can be set free. The devil is doing His best to enslave everyone to some sin, addiction or spiritual disorder.

Please notice that the Bible does not say that this man was evil. The Bible does not tell us that Jesus condemned this particular man in any way. Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit and

commanded it to leave the man alone. After that, the person was free to worship, to learn and to give thanks like never before.

Today, Jesus is here to bring us abundant life, to rescue us, to redeem and renew us. He wants to help us to enjoy life here on the earth to its fullest and to be ready to enjoy everlasting life in Heaven.

This man was spiritually oppressed. He needed spiritual help and freedom. Jesus was there to rescue him.

This man was able to hide his brokenness for a while. Some of us are better at hiding our feelings until a certain moment. Some of us are better at controlling our problems and our issues when we are around a group of people. Even today, many people are coming to church while being burdened down by oppression of the devil. Maybe you or I are one of them. All of us could have issues with things like gossip, lying, anger, depression, despair, pride, fear, forgiveness, selfishness, greed, and various addictions.

None of us is perfect. Somehow we all are broken, even though we may not want to admit it. We all need Jesus, and the freedom and healing that only Jesus can bring. We are broken, but not so broken that the Holy Spirit cannot cleanse us, purify us, and lead us towards renewal.

We all can find healing and wholeness in the blood of Christ Jesus. There is hope for everyone because His blood was shed for you and for me on the cross. Only His blood can make us clean again. Let us ask Jesus to bring grace, mercy, healing and love. Let us allow the blood of Christ to bring His cleansing and healing grace.

Jesus is here today again to make us free. No longer does the penalty and power of sin have dominion over you and me because Jesus is here to bring us New Life, Abundant Life, Genuine Life. Amen