

When Jesus Comes to Church

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[0 : 00] Mark chapter 1, I got a question for you. What if Jesus came to church here today? It's set apart because it's set apart for his purposes.

And we ought to treat it as so. It's set apart because we use it, this room, for worship. But what if he walked in?

I mean in flesh and blood, walked down this aisle to speak. I want to put you at ease. If I could confirm it was Christ, I'd let him speak, okay?

Well, that happened one day in his hometown church, and it was quite stirring. It's in Mark chapter 1, beginning in verse 21, it says this.

And they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath, he entered, meaning Jesus, 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.

[1 : 40] And immediately there was in the 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. But Jesus rebuked him, saying, 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 with authority? He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him. And at once, his fame spread everywhere throughout all the surrounding region of Galilee.

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem, he grew up in Nazareth. And he was in Nazareth until he was rejected about the time he started speaking up.

[2 : 51] And he relocated to Capernaum, which became somewhat of his home base. As a matter of fact, Matthew 9, verse 1 says that Capernaum was his own city.

Now, Capernaum means the village of Nahum. There's a great possibility that it was the home of the prophet Nahum, that little book in the back of the Old Testament.

With the move, his home church, Jesus' home church, became the synagogue of Capernaum. And it is a quite unique place. Whereas almost all the buildings in the Jerusalem area, in the Israeli area, are built with the limestone of that area.

This particular synagogue was built with a black basalt block, volcanic, made from volcanic rock.

And its foundation is still there today for you to see the actual synagogue in which he walked into.

Capernaum was a hopping little town, little village in the first century.

[4 : 08] It was the home to a Roman tax and tolling station because it was halfway between Galilee and Galilitis.

And it was on a major trade route. Galilitis was the area east of the Jordan River. And Capernaum is on the west side of the Jordan River.

And it sits about two and a half miles from where the Jordan River empties in and begins the Sea of Galilee. That made it a strategic spot.

It was a major Roman roadway went through there. And Roman soldiers were detached there. As well as it was quite the fishing hole.

There was a sea wall that stood eight feet tall that went across the shores of Capernaum for over a half a mile. And off of that sea wall, there were piers that went out into the water a hundred feet.

[5 : 14] And so off of those piers were all the boats of the fishermen of that area. There was a lot of fishing going on in Peter's town. And it was the home of Peter.

It was the home of Andrew. It was the home of James. It was the home of John. It was where Matthew collected taxes for the Romans. It was a strong fishing industry.

And that was only enhanced by the trade route. Lots of people traveled through there. And in the midst of that town was a synagogue. Now, a synagogue is different than the temple. The temple was in Jerusalem and it's a place of worship. The synagogue was a place for learning. Synagogue comes from a word that means the assembly. And synagogues were established during the Babylonian exile. When the Israelis were in Babylonia and they could not go to the temple to worship. [6 : 14] For one had been destroyed. Solomon's temple was destroyed. But also they were not in their own land. And so they set up these places to be able to come together and meet in small groups.

And when they returned home, they were in exile for 70 years, they continued that precedent. And local towns and synagogues, some of y'all will get this, was kind of like upstate meal churches. You know, every time you saw a meal on a meal village somewhere, there's a meal church. There's a Baptist church. There's a Methodist church. You know, they were all right there together. And you can ride through those areas and still see some of them are still churches. Some of them are not. But 50 years ago, it was very definitive. What was set up and very similar to that was these synagogues. They didn't have a high priest in each one. They had more like a director of sorts that was responsible for the activities that took place. And guests could speak there. And community leaders could speak there.

[7 : 18] That building was also used for small court matters and for school, which they learned the Torah, which is the first five books of the Old Testament. And it was also there for the reading of God's Word.

So each Sabbath, they would gather together for prayers, for readings, and for teachings. They were faithful. Now, let's be honest.

It was dead. It was flat. And it was unexciting church. Now, some of you may like that. I can tell by the expression on your face. You just come into church and go, I dare you to bless me. But I'm just going to tell you, if you ain't picked up on it, I don't like it. They didn't have music. They didn't have singing. They didn't have sacrifice. They didn't have a whole lot of fun. However, people that were respected as if they could teach or could speak were allowed to speak in that area.

[8 : 30] And Jesus had such a reputation. Now, it wasn't long before the scribes got mad at him. And he didn't get those open invitations near as much.

But he was welcome in the church that he often went to growing up. And so he spoke. Like no other.

So I want you to notice what happens when Jesus comes to church. When Jesus comes to church, the message is clear. Mark says here, immediately, I've told you before, it's his favorite word. He uses it 11 times in just the first chapter, 42 times in the whole book. And it's only used 59 times in the New Testament. But there's a sense of urgency here in which Jesus spoke. His message was different than the scribes. Scribes spoke with authority, but not on their own authority, but on the authority of whatever rabbi they were quoting. The man-made rules that define the commandments took precedent over the word itself.

[9 : 42] They had what was called the oral law. And so what would happen is they had the Ten Commandments and the other commandments that are in the first five books of the Bible.

But the rabbis would define those laws and how they play out and how to do those things. And the oral law that was added to it was much more than the law.

And they tended to spend more time on the oral law that they came up with than they did the word of God that was what they were based off of.

So what people heard was a lot of the oral law. Now later it was written down, became the Talmud. But at that time it was the oral law because only those scribes and very few others in the community could even read.

So they would teach them these things. And clarity was something that was missing. They quoted other rabbis, what this rabbi said and what this rabbi said and what this rabbi said.

[10 : 49] And worship was dead. And the worship lacked the movement of the Spirit of God. And that's not the way Jesus spoke. That's not the way he speaks. Jesus didn't speak of traditions or quotes.

The only quotes you see of Scripture that Jesus spoke of was Scripture itself. Jesus spoke of his own authority. And it was stunning. It was obviously from a stronger source than anybody else had ever spoken that place before.

And this was different and it stunned the room. It shocked the people. They had not ever heard anyone with such absolute conviction, such clarity, such dominion.

He had an unwavering confidence in the truth of God's Word. He didn't rest on some rabbi's interpretation of it. It was amazing. And the muddled minutia that they were used to hearing was nothing like the voice of the Lord Jesus.

They were shocked. Something else happened as well. Demons were stirred. And the reason why is when Jesus comes to church, the church gets clean.

[12 : 08] In that synagogue was a man with an unclean spirit. That means that he had a filthy demon within him. And when the text says that a demon was with him, it means that a demon had enveloped him, had consumed him.

He was possessed by the demon. When it says with an unclean spirit, that can also be interpreted in an unclean spirit. So in other words, the demon was in him and he was in the demon.

He was possessed. Now, I want you to be clear about something. He had put himself there. When I say he was in it, I mean he was under the influence of an unclean, filthy spirit.

Do you know why? Because he had immersed himself with the filthiness of sin. Now, sin seems fun. It seems okay. It seems fine in moderate doses.

But it's not. You play with sin before long. Sin will be in you and you will be in sin. You cannot play with it.

[13 : 23] Demons will possess the lost. They will oppress the saved. And they will obsess anyone who spends too much time pondering on them, quite honestly.

Ironically, you see more demon possession around Christ than anywhere else in Scripture. And the reason why is because they recognized him for who he was and he recognized them for who they were.

And all of hell was trying to shut him down as much as possible. We talked two weeks ago or three weeks ago about the temptations in the desert. Before his ministry ever started, Satan tried to shut him down.

With no success. Because Christ quoted the word of God to him. But hell got cranked up when Christ got around.

Because Satan was aiming to defeat him from the beginning. Yet demons never attacked Jesus. He would defeat them each time.

[14 : 28] I want you to listen to what the demon said to him. It's in Mark 1 verse 24. He said, what have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth?

In other words, what business are we to you? Please leave us alone. But notice that the demon didn't say, what have you to do with me? He said, what are you to do with us?

And then he goes on to say, have you come to destroy us? He wants to be left alone. But he don't only speak for himself.

He speaks on behalf of all the fallen angels. Because they all knew they were in trouble. They knew how Satan had been cast out of heaven. They knew how he would be thrown into the lake of fire in the end.

They knew their destination. And although others couldn't recognize them, they knew that Jesus could recognize them. And the reality is, we don't recognize them today.

[15 : 25] I want to be careful how I say this. Because I'm not making light of anything.

And I don't pretend to be an expert in this. Or I have expertise in it. I just love to understand it more. But I want to share with you what I've observed.

We live in a day with a strange combo before us. There are some who are untreated and mentally and dangerously deranged.

And there are others who are drug infested. I mean the drugs have taken over. They are in the drugs and the drugs are in them.

And there are others who are demon possessed. And the mentally ill are very susceptible to drugs.

[16 : 36] And drug addicts become susceptible to mental illness. And when you throw the devil in the mix of all that, and he is there by the way, it becomes dangerous and a hard to diagnose concoction.

I don't speak lightly of it. I'm not equating one with the other. It's not all the same thing. I know that. Don't get a chemical imbalance mixed up with a chemical overload mixed up with the evil one. That's not what I'm saying. However, we have the confused masses that walk the street seeming to fight with themselves. As well as anybody else that comes along the way.

And they could be fighting demons. And I'm not talking about metaphorical demons. I'm talking about real demons. You see it less in America than you do in other places in the world.

Places that have less prayer than America. Places that have less evangelism than America. Places that have less Christianity than America. Places that have less religion.

[17 : 48] Places that have less religion. However, you see it in more in America as the world has come to us. Because as the world has come to us, so has false religions.

So has godlessness. Look at Solomon and all the thousand women in his life. And what he said about their influence upon him.

You see all that on the rise as America houses the burdens of the world. And let me tell you what all those folks need.

They need Jesus. They need Jesus. Demons will cower to the name and the power of Jesus. And when they speak to Jesus in this passage, that's not defiance, folks.

It's panic. It's horror. It's dread. They know. Satan and his army know the power of God. They know it better than we do. They acknowledge it more than we do.

[18 : 49] In the first half of Mark, the only ones that are really sure of who Jesus is, is the demons. The demons, the Jewish leaders, they didn't accept him. The crowds, they didn't really commit to him.

The disciples lingered too long in half-heartedness. But the demons, they knew. Listen to Mark chapter 3 verse 11. It says, and whenever the unclean spirit saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, you're the son of God.

They know what's coming in the end. And because they can't win the war, they're trying their best to win as many battles as they possibly can. And that influences our lives too, folks.

The last thing the demon says is a last-ditch effort when he says, I know who you are, the Holy One of God. Now listen, it was thought that if you knew the identity of your spiritual enemy, you had power over him.

And so when the demon declares the name of Jesus, it's his last-ditch effort to gain a mastery over Christ. But he can't because when Jesus speaks, demons crumble.

[19 : 59] Notice Jesus didn't cast a spell. Notice that Jesus didn't speak over him with waving hands. It says nothing about Jesus slapping him in the head.

He said, nor does he speak in some chant. He just spoke. And it's clear what he said. He rebuked him.

That's a strong term. And he said, be silent. Now it was not profane, but it was blunt.

A little bit more blunt than what I'm going to say, because some of y'all get your feelings hurt. He said, shut your mouth. And get out.

That's what Jesus is saying. And the text tells us it was just as abrupt and as blunt a rebuke with no give, no take, as we can fathom.

[21 : 06] The demon came out immediately. And he came out shaking. And he came out screaming.

And that scream was one last attitude. One last attempt to get the last word in is what he's doing there. However, demons never get the last word in.

They never will. In all of scripture, they never are able to contest Jesus successfully. Not even close. And they never will be.

If you hadn't read it, read the back of the book. Something else happens when Jesus comes to church, too. The witness is contagious.

The people are blown away. An encounter with Christ will blow you away. And he teaches like no one else, like no one they had ever heard.

[22 : 08] He was spirit-filled. It was Jesus talking. I mean, they got the touch of Jesus. And when Jesus comes to church, things change. Change. Just tell folks the Lord is moving.

It works, folks. It works. People will come and people will share. God will be glorified and lives will be changed.

We ought to never settle for anything any other way. And I want you to hear me, Pickets First Baptist. We must be faithful to protect the movement and the freedom of the Spirit of God in our midst.

Don't ever take it for granted. When the Spirit of God faithfully moves in worship, decisions are made, people leave charged, don't ever take that for granted.

As a matter of fact, I ask you to pray for more of it. And pray that God will protect it. By the humility and the holiness in our individual lives.

[23 : 22] That God will protect what he's doing in our midst. It's a privilege for God that he can easily take away. And he can move on to a people that are hungry to see God move.

Hungry to get the word out. To anticipate greater things happening. When Christ brings clarity to the word of God.

When he wages war to clean up our lives. Let's be careful to be obedient. Let's be careful to leave here praying for God to do such a work.

And let's leave here talking about it. It says, And at once his fame spread everywhere. Throughout all the surrounding region of Galilee.

And you know why? Because when people left there, they said, What is this? A new teaching with authority.

[24 : 38] He commands even the unclean spirits. And they obey him. They spread the word. And because they spread the word, Christ continued to move.

I ask you this morning. Whether everybody believes you have or nobody believes you have.

Have you ever surrendered your life to the Lord Jesus Christ? Have you ever confessed your sin to him and asked him to cleanse you of your sin.

And to forgive you. And to come into your life. And to change you. The same power of God that defeated that demon that day in that synagogue. Is the same power of God that indwells us by the Holy Spirit of God.

And he allows us to have the strength to overcome the battles that are in our lives when we lean upon him. He enables us for that. If you have done that, has there ever been a time when you publicly acknowledged that?

[25 : 42] Jesus said, if you're ashamed of me before others, I'll be ashamed of you before my father. So he's very clear that our Christianity is not just a private function. People like to say my faith is private.

No, it ain't. Not if it's New Testament faith. Not at all. You're not only to live out your faith, you're to share your faith. You tell other people about it. And by his commission and by his example, he shows us that the first step of obedience for that is baptism.

It's a way of public confession of your faith. And it's also very encouraging for other people. Or maybe you're here and you've sensed that God's that move in Pickets First Baptist Church.

And you feel drawn to be here. And God's leading you here. And if that be the case, I encourage you to just follow his lead. Just follow his lead. We'll be happy to guide you in that.

But then for the rest of us, the reality is there may be some things that God's speaking to us about. Maybe today we heard it clearly.

[26 : 52] That something he said, not in what I said and not really in what we sang. But the way the Holy Spirit, there's a synergy that happens that I don't know how to, an intangible, that I don't know how to describe. That the Holy Spirit uses whatever those things are.

Sometimes it even seems off topic of sorts to just speak to our hearts about a matter in our life that we need to deal with. And I'm going to tell you, when he speaks that boldly and that clearly to us, it is a privilege that we need to respond to in obedience.

That can be private, it can be public, it can be whatever God wants it to be. You just do what God tells you to do. But you need to listen. And you need to follow.

There's a hindrance in your life. There's things that demonize you. And I don't mean that in any flippant way. But I mean the reality is patterns of sin in our lives.

Obsessions with certain things that lead us away from God. It can saturate our lives and cause us to be well off track. And God has lifted the blanket on that and shown you what that is and shows you how you need to respond to that.

[27 : 59] And you need to give that over to him today. I don't know what those things are. Nobody else knows what those things are. God knows what they are and he's shown them to you.

And for you to respond to them in obedience. I'll never ask you to do more than what God tells you to do. I'll never expect you to do less than what God tells you to do. I just want you to do exactly what God would have you to do.

And when you do that, we'll honor and we'll glorify him and we'll bless him. And we better leave this place and tell somebody, We heard from God today. And I did what he told me to do.

And that's between me and him. With every head bowed and every eye closed. Lord Jesus, we love you. We thank you for your love for us. Lead us to just be obedient today, I pray.

In Jesus' precious name. Amen.