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## **The Gospel of Mark: The Ministry and Life of Jesus**

### **Introduction**

Throughout the gospel of Mark, Jesus' relationship with his Father is evident throughout the text. From the first chapter, we witness Jesus being baptized in the Jordan and receiving his identity as the Beloved: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased" (Mk. 1:11). This illustrates Mark's sense of immediacy to the text and the significance of sonship that is marked by the Father's love. Despite being God, Jesus, in his humanity, considers his time spent with the Father as a priority. Whenever he can, Jesus finds quiet moments to be alone and pray. He is dependent on the Father. Even when Peter and the crowd demand for Jesus, He is not led by people-pleasing or societal pressures (Mk. 1:36) Instead, as the next verse implies, He has his eyes fixed on the will of the Father; hence, He is able to continue on his next journey to preach the kingdom without hindrance and distraction. This also shows in the way He invites his disciples to a solitary place: "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest" (Mk. 6:31). Jesus is reminding them to be alone with the Father. The life and ministry of Jesus was marked and defined by his identity as the Father's Beloved: the intimacy shared with the Father propels the entirety of his ministry.

### **Summary**

Jesus has authority to drive out demons because He rests secure in his identity in the Father. Often times, the evil spirits manifested in the presence of Jesus because they knew who He was: the Light of this world had entered in the flesh to destroy the prince of darkness once and for all. Jesus' words were marked with power and authority that surpassed any teachers of the law. His divine authority was met with a "demonstration of the Spirit's power" by the signs

and wonders He performed. As his name spread further throughout the land, Jesus was moved with compassion, casting out demons and healing many. Especially those who demonstrated a level of faith, Jesus praised their belief as key to overcoming the powers of darkness and spiritual blindness. And that by believing, they too would participate in the Kingdom of Light preaching the good news, healing the sick, and driving out demons.

### **Jesus Confronting the Kingdom of Darkness**

In the gospel of Mark, Jesus delivers many individuals from the stronghold of Satan. Often times, when He shows up, the spirits manifest themselves, whether in trembling, convulsion, or shouting out the identity of Jesus as the Son of God. For instance, when Jesus meets the demon-possessed man named Legion, the spirits beg Jesus not to be tortured or sent out of the area. Instead, they plea to be cast to the herd of pigs. Here, we see that even the demons have full awareness of the power and authority of the Son of God and can only beg in fear in his presence. We also observe Jesus having a conversation between the spirits and the man inside. Although that is not always the case, this interaction illustrates Jesus' superiority over the kingdom of darkness: He is not afraid of any evil spirits and is willing to go the extra mile to see people be set free. The power released by Jesus is so strong that even a touch of his cloak releases immediate healing power, as seen from the healing of the bleeding woman. Wherever He goes, his power and presence is constantly flowing out of Him because Jesus is living in the fullness of the Spirit: He is deeply connected with the Father at all times. This is why the spirits tremble in his presence: they know Jesus is the Messiah who has come to save the world from sin and destroy the works of Satan, though the crowd is not yet aware.

In both healing and preaching, Jesus displays divine authority unlike anything people have ever seen or heard (Mk. 1:27). There is a contrasting pattern in the way the crowd reacts to

Jesus particularly after he delivers a person from evil spirits. In many of the healings he performs, Jesus is met with with praise and admiration. Yet in other cases, as with the demon-possessed man in Gerasenes, the townspeople urge Jesus to leave their region (Mk. 5:17). Fear grips the town instead of a turning, trusting posture towards the One who just moments ago freed a man from the powers of darkness right before their very eyes. This is why Jesus praises individuals who display a level of faith. For instance, when noticing how a Syrophenician woman responded to Him with belief, Jesus immediately frees her daughter from the demon with a word from his mouth (Mk. 7:29). As Mark teaches us, faith is a powerful weapon to defeat the strongholds of darkness. Jesus did not have to be physically present to set the girl free. He simply honored the mother's faith and healed her daughter without any hesitation. This is how He honored the bleeding woman in chapter 5: "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering" (Mk 5:34). The power and healing touch of Jesus flows naturally to those who believe.

Even in his humanity, Jesus is reliant upon the Father. The intimacy He shares is rooted in his identity as the Beloved from the first chapter. In every conversation, teaching, meals shared together, visiting towns and people, Jesus is listening to what the Father is up to and responding immediately to his invitation as pertaining to the kingdom. His eyes are set towards the things of heaven. He is not distracted or afraid. In Transfiguration, Jesus is again reminded of his identity for the second time: "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!" (Mk. 9:7). Resting in the Father's love and acceptance, Jesus can conquer the principalities of evil and darkness. He is not intimidated by evil or overcome with fear but has his yes fixed on the Father, fully trusting the power and will of God to heal the sick, drive out demons, and free people from darkness to light. At the end of Mark, Jesus instructs his disciples to do the very things He did

and more: "And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well" (Mk. 16:17-18). That by believing in His name, the disciples have the same power and authority to overcome Satan and his forces. But just as Jesus' ministry was built on his intimacy with the Father, He makes sure that his disciples understand this as well and take it to heart. When they couldn't cast out the spirit, Jesus reminded them that "This kind can come out only prayer" (Mk. 9:29). It is only through a shared intimacy with God that allows for deep revelation of the Spirit's work and presence. Jesus understood He could not do anything on his own. Similarly, the disciples were learning to be dependent on God in every situation, including praying at all times.

### **Conclusion**

As the deeply loved Son of God, Jesus lived his humanity with his identity set as the Father's Beloved. He was able to minister effectively and establish the kingdom of God powerfully and without hindrance, like no one has ever seen or done, because of his shared intimacy with the Father. Just as Jesus commanded his disciples to continue to do the works He did, we are also called to follow in His example, including healing the sick and casting out demons. This kind of teaching is uncommon in my church growing up. Although I was raised within the Alliance, Jesus as the Healer was not often, if ever, preached at church. I think people believed in the idea but were too afraid to preach on it not knowing what kind of reaction or response would result from teaching on healing and deliverance. Only now at ATS am I starting to learn about what full freedom in Christ means and how Jesus' commands to his disciples still applies today, perhaps now more than ever. I am reminded to place my identity as the Father's

Beloved and sit in his love and embrace. I want to continue practicing the discipline of solitude and retreat like Jesus did: to seek Him for his face and not what He can give me. I think it's particularly tempting to "pretend" seeking Him while serving in ministry when so much of church is about goals and results. I want to develop a deep friendship with God by being intentional everyday: spending time in the Word and talking to Him each morning before I get started with the day. As I practice the discipline of contentment, I receive the Father's love, grace, and mercy for me. I want to experience more of Him and fill my mind with the Truth, where it becomes natural for me to meditate on what is good, lovely, admirable, excellent, and praiseworthy.

Especially in our current climate, I long to see the healing and power of God manifested in the church. Only recently has our church started incorporating soul care into our small groups. As a leader in my church, I will try to incorporate and bring to awareness soul issues, spiritual bondage, and the healing of Jesus in our small group and Bible study discussions as well as in prayer time. Because I sense there is a lack of authenticity and vulnerability in my church, I want to take the first step in sharing and allow the Holy Spirit to do what only He can do. But I need to make sure that I am doing this out of my identity as the Beloved rather than proving myself or living for acceptance. Making the distinction between what I do and whose I am allows me to realign the attitude and posture of my heart to the things of God. Sometimes it's hard for me to accept the Father's love and grace, but I am thankful to know that my identity is not in what I can do or produce, or in my culture or family. That my identity is founded on the King of Universe who calls me by name and all his love and affection is towards me before I can do anything. I want to walk in the fullness of the Spirit and the freedom that Christ offers to all of

us, being an active participant and creating a kingdom culture beginning with my church and family.