

**Scott A. Starker**

***Jesus Amazes Us***

**my sermon based on**

**Mark 1:21-28**

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## **Mark 1:21-28**

### **I. [Intro:]**

- A. Those who know me know that I am a “space nut.” Not a “spacey nut”... a “space nut!” Ever since I was a kid I have been interested by anything having to do with outer space. I can remember sitting in front of the TV with a cassette recorder taping Apollo 11’s first mission landing on the moon. I bet that I still have several missions to the moon on tape somewhere!
- B. One of the things that I have noticed over the years is how the media seems to have lost interest in covering the space program unless something goes wrong.
- C. Maybe you know that this past Thursday the shuttle Atlantis landed after about a week long successful mission in space. I don’t think you could have seen the liftoff or landing of the Atlantis unless you happened to get a glimpse of it on the news [or if you have NASA cable channel on TV or nasa.gov on the internet]!
- D. One thing that I did see was with regard to a special contest that was made available to Elementary schools. As a result of a contest one school was picked to ask questions of the astronauts as they were in orbit.
  - 1. They had all the kids line up in a row and then a microphone was passed down the row from one kid to the next. Most of the questions were like, “Can you see Oklahoma from way up there?!” and “Do you have any trouble eating your food with it flying all over the place all the time?!”
  - 2. But one of the questions was from a little boy with combed hair, a white shirt and a little tie. His question was, “When you look back down at the earth, do you tend to re-evaluate your life?”
  - 3. This was a question that I don’t think anyone had expected! It isn’t something you expect from a little grade school boy and I bet one of his parents put him up to it!
  - 4. But, the point is a good one... when we can step back and see the whole picture and get things into perspective the experience can change our lives. That applies to our understanding of the Bible, too. Sometimes we need to stand back and re-evaluate our lives!
- E. **[Proposition:]** When we stand back and look afresh at the ministry Jesus had on earth we see that Jesus was truly amazing! He amazes us both by what he taught and by what he did! Turn, if you haven’t already, to Mark 1:21-28.

### **II. When we first look at our passage this morning, the first thing we are struck by is that Jesus amazes us by his teaching.**

#### **A. [Background:]**

1. Mark tells us that Jesus had just been baptized by John and tempted by the devil in the wilderness. It was so early on in his ministry that at this point he only had four of his twelve disciples!
  2. He took these first four disciples and went to Capernaum (a city on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee which became sort of a “home base” for his ministry in that area).
  3. While they were there, Jesus did something which would become a habit for him. On that Sabbath he went into the local synagogue to teach.
  4. It was the Jewish custom that all adult males could teach in the synagogue so the fact that Jesus would do so was not at all radical or unusual.
  5. What **WAS** unusual, however, was the fact that (as verse 22 says) “he taught as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law.”
  6. The people were amazed, truly **AMAZED** at this! Although they were amazed at the content of his teaching, more in view here is their amazement at the **WAY** he taught! The teachers they were used to, including the “professional” ones, were always quoting from and otherwise leaning upon previous rabbinic teaching as their president. Jesus didn’t teach that way. Although Jesus was without the official authorization to teach and he did not possess the conventional qualifications of a teacher, nevertheless, he displayed unquestionable competence and consciousness of his own **personal** authority... Jesus was not a name dropper; he did not rely on anyone else’s teachings to back him up. He **expected** that what he taught would be accepted based solely on his own authority!
- B. The people recognized him as having **inherent authority** not as the scribes who relied on their traditions and previous teachers for their authority.
- C. The people were **AMAZED** at this! The word “amazed” here in the original Greek carries the connotation of not only astonishment but also of **alarm**. One commentator put it this way, “Jesus’ word, presented with a sovereign authority which permitted neither debate nor reflection, confronted the congregation with the absolute claim of God upon their whole person.” The authority that Jesus displayed was reminiscent of the teaching of the prophets of the OT who were commissioned **BY GOD** to speak to the people in his name! This was **NOT** the type of teaching that the people were used to! Here was someone who was not simply expounding the man-made traditions which had been passed down from generation to generation! Jesus’ words and style conveyed the **POWER** to compel one to action! Their response indicates an accurate awareness of the disturbing character of the divine presence among them. They **WERE** astonished but they also felt a little afraid and a little alarmed at the same time. This was no ordinary teacher! They could tell that even before he did anything!
- D. It is still true today that when we stand back and take a good look at Jesus and his teachings WE may feel amazed and even a bit alarmed. After all, his words possess the very authority of God! We are challenged to respond to his authority! He calls us to action!

- E. To the non-Christian he says, “Turn from your sins (your rebellion against God) and follow me!”
- F. To Christians he says, “Live your lives in such a way as to bring Glory to God.” He says, “Feed the hungry and minister to the oppressed.” He says, “Forgive the sins of others.” He says, “Make disciples of all nations!” He says, “Love one another, as I have loved you!” He says, “Don’t allow your circumstances to cause you to doubt that ‘in all things God works for the good of those who love him...’”
- G. Like the people in Capernaum, we, too, are amazed when confronted with Jesus’ authority. Jesus challenges us to live a life of increasingly greater obedience. He challenges us to overcome our complacency and mediocrity, and that can be disturbing to us because we like the comfort of where we are! And at the same time we are AMAZED by his teaching because of his awesome authority! After all, how many people do you know that can say, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but MY words will never pass away!” (Mark 13:31)

### III. Jesus not only amazes by his teaching, Jesus also amazes us by his deeds:

- A. While the people were listening to Jesus and being amazed by his teaching on that particular Sabbath day, SUDDENLY a man with an unclean (evil) spirit cried out!
  1. At this point we have a problem... How do we explain this event?! When you read passages like this one don’t you have a tendency to rush right past it? At the most we might think, “Boy, I sure feel badly for those poor people back then who had to deal with those demons (whatever they were) but I’m sure glad they’re not around today!” Right?!
  2. In case you didn’t know, you and I are part of the technologically advanced Western World. We pride ourselves in our scientific discoveries and modern way of life. And most of these things are good even when they create their own set of new problems. However, one of the by-products of our scientific society has been ABSOLUTELY DEVASTATING to the Christian Church around the world!
  3. What could possibly be so horrible? The answer to that is related to something called “worldview”. A worldview is the set of ideas that we have learned about the world and how to relate to it. Another way of putting it is that, worldview is the set of categories into which we plug the our experiences in order to make sense of them.
  4. The problem with a worldview is that one does not chose his or her worldview after careful study! We more-or-less inherit the worldview that exists in the culture in which we grew up. It is mostly something we absorb subconsciously.
  5. This wouldn’t be so bad if the worldview we absorbed truly reflected reality! BUT, what if our worldview were faulty? What if, for instance, our worldview suggested to us that that which we cannot see or touch does not really exist, and even if it did exist it would make little difference to how we live and experience life anyway so it can be safely ignored?! You can begin to see the problem here!

**[Illustration:]** When you build a database you have to have the right categories... Paula and I

built a database of names and addresses to use as our mailing list for our newsletter. We decided we would need to keep track of names, street addresses, cities, states, and zip codes. But when we came to the city of “Ukarumpa” we ran into a problem because “Ukarumpa” is not in a state and it does not have a zip code because its not in the USA! Its in Papua New Guinea! We need to modify your database to accommodate different countries and so we had to make changes!

6. There is something else you need to know about “worldview”. Worldview is not so much revealed in what we **say** as in what we **do**. If you want to know what somebody believes, way deep down inside them, you don’t ask them... you **watch** them! You look at people’s priorities, you look at how they react under pressure, you look at how they deal with their problems... who or what they turn to when they need to look beyond themselves for help. That’s when we see someone’s worldview!
7. When we come to a passage such as we have before us this morning, we experience a CLASH between the Western Worldview which we have inherited from our culture and the Worldview which is taught in the BIBLE!
8. We’re good at confessing the creeds of Christianity and readily acknowledge that we believe in the spirit realm where God, angels, demons, and the devil exist, BUT when it comes right down to our day-to-day living we deny much of what the Bible teaches!
9. We simply have no **functional** category in which to plug an experience where a demon cries out from the mouth of a man! Yet, the Bible teaches us that that is indeed possible! We can either succumb to our Western Worldview and try to explain it away as something else or we can try to consciously overcome it!
10. The first step in overcoming our faulty worldview is to acknowledge that it may in fact be faulty! Our worldview tells us that demons and other spirit beings cannot and do not cause anything to happen in the material, natural world. On the other hand, the Bible tells us that it is a false dichotomy to make such a distinction and that spirit beings can and do in fact interact with the visible world!
11. The fact of the matter is, if we truly had a Biblical worldview we would be able to see that overt demonic activity in America is on the increase. Unfortunately, the church in America is for the most part operating under a faulty Western Worldview and is therefore not only blind to the demonic activity it is also powerless to do anything about it because it refuses to believe that it’s even there!
12. The Bible tells us that Satan has an all consuming desire to control the destiny of every persons on earth and ultimately to see that they are destroyed. We only assist him to his goal when we ignore him and hope he’ll simply go away! This is exactly what Satan wants.
13. Though, we have no reason to fear him if the have the Worldview of the Bible. We can face him and his cohorts head on because the battle has long been won. Through the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Enemy has already been decisively defeated!

14. One of the reasons we have such a fear of Satan is that we have believed several of his deceptions: 1) We have the mistaken idea that Satan is equal to God in power; that he is omnipotent. He is not, even though he would like us to believe it! He is a created being. Nothing more than a fallen angel who had been created by God! 2) We also have the mistaken idea that Satan can be everywhere at the same time; that he is omnipresent. He is not! Again, he is not equal to God in this way. He is simply a created being. He may be able to travel quickly but he cannot be in all places at the same time. Only God can! 3) We also have the mistaken idea that he knows everything that God knows; that he is omniscient. He is not! Only God knows everything that can be known. Don't get me wrong... Satan is VERY powerful, and VERY intelligent but he is NOT EQUAL to God by ANY stretch of the imagination though he desperately would like us to think so!
15. As you probably know, Satan's primary tactic is deception or clever lying. And a faulty Worldview is actually part of Satan's great deception. He can keep us from fully participating in the victory over him that we have in Christ IF he can get us to ignore him and what he is doing in the world. If he can do that then he doesn't have to worry about being challenged and can feel free to have his own way in the world.
16. Whether we like it or not, whether we admit it or not, whether we chose to participate in it or not, we are in the middle of a war! Yes, Satan has already been defeated but God has allowed him to remain at large until the day he will be bound forever. And until that day comes, unless we learn to recognize the enemy and his tactics we will be susceptible to him and even unknowingly collaborating with him in his attempt to dishonor God and ruin his creation.
17. For that reason we need to be aware of where our Western Worldview differs from the Biblical Worldview and to allow our Worldview to be molded by the truth about reality as it is revealed in the Bible...

B. Back to our text: In verse 24 the demon tried to defend itself:

1. The phrase, "What do you want with us?" means, "What have we and you in common?" It implies the sense of "Why do you interfere with us? Why don't you mind your own business!"
2. The demon obviously recognized Jesus for who he really was (the divine Son of God) and not merely who the people thought he was at that early point in his ministry. Here we see a display of the superior knowledge possessed by demons.
3. But, Jesus was not merely receiving unintended testimony to his identity by the demon, however. There was at that time a belief that if one could gain access to the "secret name" of a spirit, one could gain control over that spirit. This, apparently was what the demon was trying to do with Jesus. Considering that it knew Jesus' true identity it also must have known that it didn't have the slightest chance at succeeding but it tried in desperation anyway. It was the "grasping at straws of a dying man" as it were! After all, what did it have to lose?!

C. Jesus' response proved his authority over the demon:

1. Jesus silenced the demon with a single command and cast it out of the man. The contrast between the weakness of the demon in its attempt to control Jesus and Jesus' infinitely superior authority is dramatic!
2. It was also in contrast to exorcisms the people had possibly witnessed. The exorcist would typically pronounce some spell or perform some magical action in order to cast out the demon. But Jesus gives a simple authoritative command to the demon and there is no discussion, no debate. With a final parting convulsion, the demon shrieks and comes out of the man.

D. Again, the people were amazed!

1. They had never seen such power and authority before! "He even gives orders to evil spirits and they obey him!"
2. They had no analogies in their experience to explain the demonstration of the word invested with power that they had just witnessed in Jesus and they were alarmed! It's disturbing to be in the presence of someone with that much authority!
3. As a result, it didn't take long for news of him to spread all around the area of Galilee.

#### IV. [Conclusion:]

- A. Does it seem at all strange to you that the demons obey him and yet we don't obey him?! The difference is that the demons are **forced** to obey him but yet we are given the free-will to choose whether to obey him or not, and so, sometimes we don't. I like to define disobedience to God this way: It is allowing ourselves to be deceived by Satan into doubting that God really knows what is best for us and so deciding to live our lives our own way! The issue in obedience is always whether we **trust** God or not!
- B. Jesus' teaching and actions should alarm and disturb us because we need to be alarmed and disturbed at times. He is "God with us." He constantly challenges our sinfulness when we need to be challenged and our worldview where it is wrong.
- C. In what area have you been disturbed this morning? God doesn't want you to remain disturbed. He calls us to an increasingly intimate relationship with himself and he awaits to AMAZE us with his LOVE!