

## **Christ Puts Down Satan, Under Our Feet.**

Text: Mark 1:23-28

Suggested Hymns:  
516, 338, 181, 195, 202

- 1) Satan is real and very dangerous
- 2) Not all preaching of Christ's name is preaching to Christ's glory
- 3) True preaching of Christ is backed up with His power to overcome Satan's opposition

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Mark 1:23-28, <sup>23</sup> *Now there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, <sup>24</sup> saying, "Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are -- the Holy One of God!"*

<sup>25</sup> *But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be quiet, and come out of him!" <sup>26</sup> And when the unclean spirit had convulsed him and cried out with a loud voice, he came out of him.*

<sup>27</sup> *Then they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, "What is this? What new doctrine is this? For with authority He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him." <sup>28</sup> And immediately His fame spread throughout all the region around Galilee. (NKJV)*

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

John, in his Gospel, tells us that after Jesus performed His first miracle in Cana of Galilee, He moved together with His mother and brothers to Capernaum. Capernaum is located on the shore of the Sea of Galilee and at the intersection of several important trade routes. This made Capernaum an ideal base for carrying the Gospel into the regions of Galilee and beyond.

Capernaum was also the home of Zebedee and his sons, James and John, and the home of Peter, whose mother-in-law was living with him.

On the Sabbath following their selection to become fishers of men, Peter, James, John, and Andrew, together with Jesus, attended the synagogue service. Since synagogues had no resident ministers, the rulers of the synagogue would

invite some rabbi or scribe present to teach the lessons. It happened that Jesus was often invited to address the congregation.

Mark tells us about the impression Jesus' preaching made on the worshipers. They were amazed, for Jesus did not teach as the teachers of the law did. They always appealed to the interpretations of past rabbis and were particularly adept at breaking down God's Word into any number of legalistic regulations.

Jesus instead always proclaimed the Gospel of God. He quoted no experts but proclaimed the Good News on His own authority. This was one of the first lessons the disciples had to learn, namely, that in Jesus they were face-to-face with the final authority.

For us too Christ is more than just a wise teacher or a model on which to pattern our lives. He is the one who in word and deed reveals to us the undeserved love of God for sinners incorporated in His own person. His is the final word.

Today we are considering the fourth miracle of Jesus by the sea. This is where Jesus cast out an unclean spirit from a man who was in the synagogue. There are three points to note. Satan is real and very dangerous; not all preaching of Christ's name is preaching to Christ's glory; and the true preaching of Christ is backed up with His power to overcome Satan's opposition. Here we shall see that Christ puts down Satan, under our feet. May the Lord bless our meditation.

### **1. Satan Is Real And Very Dangerous**

Luther knew Satan to be a very real and a very dangerous adversary and therefore prayed, "*Let Thy holy angel be with me that the wicked foe may have no power over me.*"

The inspired writers of the Scriptures warn us about the devil. Paul wrote, "*For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood.*"<sup>1</sup> We read in 1 Peter 5:8 to <sup>8</sup>*Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.*

Jesus knew that that devil was not only real, but also dangerous. Jesus was in the wilderness 40 days, and then "*tempted by Satan.*" Jesus also spoke to unclean spirits, casting them out as He did in our text.

Likewise, Jesus said in Luke 22:31-32, *“Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat.”* <sup>32</sup> *“But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.”*

We need to oppose Satan by whatever power Jesus has given us to fight against him on many different battle fronts. We can see that our text teaches us the same as when Jesus’ says, *“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.”* <sup>16</sup> *“You will know them by their fruits.”*<sup>2</sup>

They show two fronts of the same battle the devil is waging against us. The devil works through false teachers, as well as through the possession of the inner compulsions of man.

We pray in the Third Petition of the Lord’s Prayer *“that God would hinder and defeat every evil scheme and purpose of the devil.”*

And in the Sixth petition we read. *God tempts no one to sin, but we ask in this prayer that God would watch over us and keep us so that the devil the world, and our sinful self may not deceive us and draw us into false belief, despair, and other great and shameful sins. And we pray that even though we are so tempted we may still win the final victory.*

Therefore we also ought to equip ourselves to oppose and overcome the devil’s every evil counsel.

## **2. Not All Preaching Of Christ’s Name Is Preaching To His Glory Some Preaching Christ Does Not Want**

It is not at all surprising that Satan, despite his defeat in the wilderness, was not ready to let such a message and such a preacher go unchallenged. It was the devil who caused a man in that synagogue to cry out against Jesus, for it is clear that this man was not speaking for himself.

He could not of himself have known what he said about Christ. However, Satan and the evil spirit that possessed this man knew who Jesus of Nazareth was, and what His purpose was. They knew He was the Son of God and that He had come to destroy Satan’s hold over mankind.

With his words Satan revealed himself wiser than many modern theologians. But this knowledge did him no spiritual good; it only filled him with fear and trembling. He knew that he faced hell and the Gospel was not meant for him.

Even though what the evil spirit said was the truth, Jesus would not accept its words as testimony. Satan was not a proper witness, for those hearing him could say, *“Those are the words of the father of lies. How can we believe them?”*

Besides, Jesus was not as yet ready to proclaim openly that He was the Messiah. Most of His audience would have read political aims into that word.<sup>3</sup> That is why Jesus told the evil spirit, *“Be quiet!”*

Our Lord indeed had compassion on the man possessed by the evil spirit — a most dreadful condition, as we see when the spirit left him. *“Come out of him!”* the Lord commanded, and the evil spirit could not resist.

This brought home to the people, including the Lord’s disciples, that Jesus spoke with authority. A simple command — no elaborate ritual — the spirit had to obey. Jesus was and is Lord.

Perhaps it is somewhat startling to us to hear Jesus’ response to the unclean spirits’ confessing Him as *“the Holy One of God!”* Jesus says, *“Be quiet, and come out of him!”* Also at other times Jesus rebuked unclean spirits for confessing Him.

For example in Mark 3:11-12 we read that *the unclean spirits, whenever they saw Him, fell down before Him and cried out, saying, “You are the Son of God.”*<sup>12</sup> *But He sternly warned them that they should not make Him known.*

We wonder at this strict prohibition. Did not Paul say,<sup>18</sup> *What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice.*<sup>4</sup>

### **Some Preaching Drives Men Away from Christ**

A comparison will help us understand Christ’s forbidding attitude. A pastor was once approached on the street by an uncouth, wine-soaked, wild-looking man, who spoke with thick-tongued accents, the saliva thickening at the corners of his mouth. *“Buddy, could you do a favour for an ex-convict?”* he asked.

Now, what would you think if that same individual, in the same condition, stood in front of your church on a Sunday, detaining passersby with *“Buddy,*

*come in, and hear about Jesus Christ.*” You will agree that such a person would drive people away from Christ rather than attract them.

It was just for this reason that Christ did not want the evil spirits to proclaim His name before men.

From this we know that it is possible to use the name of Jesus and not give glory to Him as we see in today’s text. Luther knew it and said, *“But he that teaches and lives otherwise than God’s Word teaches profanes the name of God among us. From this preserve us, heavenly Father.”*

Jesus says in Matthew 7:22-23, <sup>22</sup> *“Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’* <sup>23</sup> *“And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’*

Beware of the kind of preaching that makes people stand out as great lights, but does not help you to draw closer to Christ. Beware of the preaching that is a mere cover-up for a life that betrays Christ with an unyielding spirit of pride and self-will. Beware of the preacher that will have all people bow to the word he preaches, but he himself will be counselled by no one.

Many theologians deny the possibility of demon possession then and now. It is true that we today do not identify many such cases. Perhaps the trouble is with us — we fail to recognise them.

But we also know that Satan and his evil angels are sufficiently wise to adapt themselves to the times. Today we find their power displayed in the human attempts — usually by highly educated people — to undermine Scripture and its teachings.

False doctrine, cults, pagan religions, science that rejects Scripture — all these are the working of Satan. Since they attack us on all sides, we too need to turn to Christ and to the Scriptures for refuge. Jesus, the Holy One of God, points us to the Scriptures and testifies in John 17:17, *“Your Word is truth.”*

**3. The True Preaching Of Christ Is Backed Up  
By His Power To Overcome The Works Of Satan  
Casting out the evil spirit gave proof of His preaching**

Christ's preaching was many times coupled with the doing of miracles, among them the casting out of evil spirits. The people that heard Jesus appreciated that the two went together and complemented each other.

When the unclean spirit convulsed the man, cried with a loud voice, and came out of him, the people amazedly questioned, *“What is this? What new doctrine is this?”* They recognised that Jesus' actions had testified to that which He preached and had substantiated that which He had previously demonstrated by His preaching, *He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.*<sup>5</sup>

### **Disciples Cast Out Demons**

The disciples of Jesus found in their ministry that Jesus *gave them power over unclean spirits.*<sup>6</sup> <sup>12</sup> *So they went out and preached that people should repent.* <sup>13</sup> *And they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick, and healed them.*<sup>7</sup>

Even after Jesus' visible presence was removed, *a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed.*<sup>8</sup>

Likewise we read in Acts 8:5-8, <sup>5</sup> *Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them.* <sup>6</sup> *And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.* <sup>7</sup> *For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed; and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed.* <sup>8</sup> *And there was great joy in that city.*

### **Power to Oppose Satan**

Christ has not left us defenceless against the attacks of the evil foe today. When He, through the apostle Paul, warns us against the deadly power and purpose of the adversary, He also tells us to <sup>11</sup> *Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.* <sup>12</sup> *For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.* <sup>13</sup> *Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.*<sup>9</sup>

And among the armour Jesus gives us are *“truth,” “righteousness,” “the Gospel of peace,” “faith,” “salvation,” “the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.*

This equipment is still available to His warriors today. The Gospel, His powerful Word, is still the weapon that dislodges the wicked one from the hearts of those whom he would possess forever.

The Word, that assures us that in Christ’s birth, suffering, death, burial, and resurrection, the Seed of the woman has come and bruised the head and crushed the power of the Serpent. Scripture says that through His death Christ *“destroyed him who had the power of death, that is, the devil.”*<sup>10</sup>

### **We Must Use It**

All that remains for us to do is to use these powerful weapons that Christ has given us to put down Satan, under our feet. May we let the word of God dwell in us richly, teaching and admonishing one another on the basis of this precious Word, at home and in the fellowship of the congregation.

May this Word grow in us and make us strong as we receive it also in the Lord’s Supper, that ours may be the confidence of victory that Martin Luther had.<sup>11</sup>

Let us conclude with the words of Luther,

Though devils all the world should fill,  
All eager to devour us,  
We tremble not, we fear no ill,  
They shall not overpower us.  
This world’s prince may still  
Scowl fierce as he will,  
He can harm us none;  
He’s judged, for e’er undone;  
One little word can fell him. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Ephesians 6:12

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<sup>2</sup> Matthew 7:15-16

<sup>3</sup> John 6:15

<sup>4</sup> Philippians 1:18

<sup>5</sup> Mark 1:22

<sup>6</sup> Mark 6:7

<sup>7</sup> Mark 6:12-13

<sup>8</sup> Acts 5:16

<sup>9</sup> Ephesians 6:11-13

<sup>10</sup> Hebrews 2:14

<sup>11</sup> Hymn 195