

Sermon preached by Chris Moroney at the Healing Service at St. Andrew's Cathedral,
Sydney on Wednesday 30th August 2006. Reading: Mark 1:29-45
Topic "The Authority of Jesus"

Once upon a time, the minister of a church had to speak to someone and ask them to leave the premises. They had come to reception and spoken to the lady who looked after people at the door. The man who came to the door was not happy with the answers he was given. He began to swear at the receptionist. The minister was in his office nearby and heard the bad language. He came out of his office and asked the rude fellow to leave, in no uncertain terms. It became a question of whether or not the man from the street would recognize the authority of the minister to ask someone to leave the church offices.

For a few minutes it was a verbal stand off, each one speaking to the other, at close range.

Fortunately for the minister, he had the backing of a burly caretaker. Eventually the man left the premises. After his rude behaviour and his bad language, he will not be very welcome if he was to come back. The minister was doing his best to care for his staff and protect them from offensive behaviour. In the end it became a question of authority. Would the man from the street respond well to request of the minister. Or would the minister have to get some extra help from the police. Fortunately it did not come to that.

When we come to look at Jesus in the gospel of Mark, it is also a question of his authority.

Does he have the right to tell people what to believe? Does he have the authority to drive back the forces of Satan? Does he have the authority to forgive sins, like God?

The summary of Jesus' preaching ministry is given right at the start in Mark 1:14-15 *Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, [15] and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."* The healing ministry of Jesus illustrates and authenticates his preaching ministry. The two go hand in hand. The preaching ministry explains the message about the kingdom of God. The healing ministry shows that Jesus is the king in God's kingdom. The preaching ministry calls upon people to come back to God. The healing ministry drives back the forces of evil because God's king has come. As we come here tonight we need to be aware of both the message of Jesus and the power of Jesus to hear and answer prayer

1. THE HEALING MINISTRY OF JESUS

As we come to look at this passage in Mark 1:29-34 I want us to firstly note that Jesus has the power to care for all sorts of people and the passion to care for each one individually.

- **One person**
- Peter's mother in law
- *Mark 1:29-31 (ESV)*
- *And immediately he left the synagogue and entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. [30] Now Simon's mother-in-law lay ill with a fever, and immediately they told him about her. [31] And he came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and the fever left her, and she began to serve them.*
- This is the place where Jesus and the disciples were staying in Capernaum
- Simon Peter's mother in law was seriously ill.
- To be laying down with a fever is to be near death's door.
- As soon as they arrive Jesus is told about her condition
- He takes her by the hand, a very personal touch
- He lifted her up
- And the fever left her
- It is all so understated – what's your problem
- – of course it happened that way
- This is King Jesus
- She was so well that She was able to serve them

- It is much more an indication of the recovery that took place than any male dominated use of power to save the disciples and Jesus from having to get their own dinner!
- Many people
- Naturally, after the episode in the synagogue, the news spread about the healing power of Jesus. Lots and lots of people came to be healed by this new prophet.

Mark 1:32-34 (ESV) "That evening at sundown they brought to him all who were sick or oppressed by demons. [33] And the whole city was gathered together at the door. [34] And he healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons. And he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him."

They all lined up and Jesus healed many who were sick of various disease. Not just some select people, with a special type of illness, but all sorts of diseases.

We too should not see any limits to the power of Jesus to confront the effects of the fall, and of Satan, on this world in which we live. Jesus is the supreme healer.

He is the word made flesh. Through him all things were made. Therefore he is more than able to remake and repair all things and wind back the effects of the Devil, the father of lies and deceit and sickness.

- **Many demons**

We not this most dramatically in the conflict with the evil spirits here as well.

In the previous encounter, in the synagogue, with one demon-possessed man, we read about Jesus' authority.

Here it is much more a summary statement. They know who he is, but he will not let them speak. He does not need or want the praise of the evil spirits. In the spiritual realm there is a much clearer recognition of Jesus than there is in the human realm, where people think they have the right to take Jesus on!

There is still a lot of controversy about the work of the Devil in people's lives. There is still a lot of worry among some people about the work of demons in people's lives.

As we think about King Jesus we need to affirm again and again that the Devil is a loser, and that demons are subject to the power of Jesus.

We express that in our prayers. We display that in our lives. We demonstrate it in the way that we resist temptations.

We rejoice in God's good gifts. And when it comes to concern about evil spirits we rejoice to know that God has sent his Holy Spirit into our hearts and minds, so that God is with us every day. That is, if we are indeed Christians. So we follow the bible's directions to go on being filled with the Holy Spirit, day by day.

A heart that is filled with the Holy Spirit has no room for the evil spirits of a defeated Satan.

2. THE PREACHING MINISTRY OF JESUS

It may be surprising us to think that if someone was on a winner and doing a lot of good business, that they would pull up stumps and go away from it.

- **Going away**

Mark 1:35-39 (ESV)

And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed. [36] And Simon and those who were with him searched for him, [37] and they found him and said to him, "Everyone is looking for you." [38] And he said to them, "Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out." [39] And he went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons.

Jesus, gets up early, goes away from the township.

He is once again in a quiet place, in a desert, or wilderness place.

It is similar to Moses and the people of God in the wilderness.

It is a reflection of the earlier verses where he is in conflict with the Devil.

There he prays.

He seeks again the guidance and direction of his Heavenly Father.

We notice that his disciples did not expect him to be there.

They thought he would keep going with the ministry of healing in Capernaum.

Notice too, that Jesus did not always tell them ahead of time what he was going to do. They let him know that heaps of people are clamoring for his attention and his healing. He has left a crowd of people in great need in the lurch.

- **His purpose**

Jesus tells them that his main task is preaching.

He wants to go to many different towns and preach and teach the bible.
He wants as many people as possible to hear about the news of the coming of God's kingdom.
He is on the move.
It is a preaching tour to the population areas.

- **Speaking out**

Jesus goes throughout Galilee – the region around the lake of Galilee.
He is preaching in all the synagogues – where the people who were keen about the things of God would gather.
Side by side with this teaching was the casting out of demons.

So we can see that the teaching and preaching ministry of Jesus has the priority. The healing ministry is supplementary. It goes hand in hand. But people need firstly to understand the message and the person of Jesus, in order to appreciate any healing or exorcism that might follow.

3. THE MINISTRY IN TURMOIL

- **One person**

Mark 1:40-45 (ESV)

And a leper came to him, imploring him, and kneeling said to him, "If you will, you can make me clean." [41] Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand and touched him and said to him, "I will; be clean." [42] And immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean. [43] And Jesus sternly charged him and sent him away at once, [44] and said to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, for a proof to them." [45] But he went out and began to talk freely about it, and to spread the news, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter a town, but was out in desolate places, and people were coming to him from every quarter.

Once again we have the story of an individual, from the many many people who Jesus healed. We see the way in which Jesus cares for people at a very personal level.

If you have ever visited a leprosy colony in Africa or India you will know how isolated they are, ostracized from society. They are shunned and separate, so that they will not contaminate or infect other people. And if you have visited a leprosy colony and been asked to lay hands on people you will know how much they appreciate your being there, your care and attention, your support and your message.

And so, in our story of Jesus meeting a leper in his travels, we also see Jesus compassion. See v41 *Moved with pity.*

He stretched out his hand and touched him.

When many other people would have walked past on the other side of the road, Jesus saw the man and had compassion on him. He showed him very personal concern and gave him that human touch that means so much.

And Jesus is willing and able to heal the man.

With a word: he says: "I will be clean"

And we see not only Jesus' love and power, the terrible effects of leprosy. For it makes a person unclean and unable to share with others, but more than that unable to go to the Temple in Jerusalem and draw near to God.

- **One instruction**

On the basis of the healing Jesus gives him instructions about being restored into society. See verse 43 He sternly charged him...

You would think that it would be enough, wouldn't you?

Show yourself to the priest. Do the right thing by the law of Moses.

Get on with your life and make sure that you keep this healing to yourself.

Say nothing to anyone.

But v45 he blabbed it out. He told it freely. He thought he knew better than Jesus.

He went around telling people about his wonderful healing.

In the end lots of people wanted to see Jesus, just for healing, and not for his preaching.

- **One confusion**

It ended up in confusion. Jesus wanted to go to the various townships and speak to the population centres. And he went to desolated places. Lots of people came to him from every

quarter, but it is not as good as Jesus being able to get around from town to town and preach his message.

What lessons can we learn from this passage before us today?

- 1 Jesus is the king in God's kingdom. Jesus announces it in the early chapters of Mark's gospel. He becomes the King through his death and resurrection at the end of the gospel. He is the King now and one day he will return and make everything and everyone come under his rule.
- 2 Now is the time for people to turn back to God, through repenting of their sins, and putting their faith in Jesus. There is power in the blood of Jesus. His death was the power of God for our forgiveness. If we do not recognize the authority of Jesus, we remain in opposition to God, facing his wrath.
- 3 Jesus comes with his main mission of preaching. His message is a message of love and forgiveness for one and all. He still wants that message to go out into all the world.
- 4 Jesus has the power to push back the forces of evil, in terms of sickness and evil spirits. That power fulfills the Old Testament and authenticates his message. That some power is the power of Jesus today. That is why we can pray to God in the name of the Lord Jesus, for healing and for the removal of evil spirits.
- 5 We see the very personal way in which Jesus deals with people like you and me. When we are in pain, physical, or emotional or spiritual, we can be sure that Jesus knows that and is compassionate towards us. Therefore we can pray with confidence that he cares for us.