

**Mark 1:29-39**

29 As soon as they left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. 30 Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. 31 He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them. 32 That evening, at sundown, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. 33 And the whole city was gathered around the door. 34 And he cured 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. 35 In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. 36 And Simon and his companions hunted for him. 37 When they found him, they said to him, "Everyone is searching for you." 38 He answered, "Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do." 39 And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.

The Gospel of Mark is a story of Christian discipleship and conflict. The multiple conflicts make the Gospel interesting and exciting as there is always drama in the Bible. The dominant conflict builds up to a climax from the humble village gatherings of Galilee to the dramatic confrontation in the Temple as Jesus challenges the rulers in Jerusalem. The struggle itself is quite interesting to study. God easily defeats Satan while the people struggle to understand. The unclean spirits recognize the Holy Spirit while the religious leaders do not.

Jesus is on a mission of renewal for Israel – all of Israel – all of the people, rich and poor, healthy and unhealthy, and the religious leaders. So, Jesus embarks on a preaching tour and a very important mission of healing. For the crowds and the disciples, the realism of who Jesus actually is, starts to sink in. Jesus went to Galilee and recruited his first disciples. They go to Capernaum, the home of Peter, Andrew, James, and John. When Jesus taught in the synagogue, the people were amazed at his authority. A man was healed in the synagogue and news about Jesus spread very quickly over the whole region of Galilee.

Mark establishes the divine status of Jesus early in the Gospel. They leave the synagogue and go to the home of Simon and Andrew but Simon's mother-in-law is sick with a fever. Jesus heals her in private, there was no need for an audience, no need for a show of piety, and most certainly, no need for the news to spread. Large crowds develop early in the ministry of Jesus. Mark shows a rapid movement from the synagogue to a friend's house, to the crowds pressing on him, and his need for a respite. The people were excited. They witnessed an exorcism and this created a buzz. By that evening the people were bringing their sick to see Jesus. He has just started his preaching tour and all the people know about him already. As soon as possible the whole town gathered at the house. They had to wait until evening because it was on the Sabbath and work was forbidden on the Sabbath. The healing occurred that morning in the synagogue. By evening the whole community was at the house. The crowds are pressing around him as soon as he started preaching. News about Jesus could not be kept quiet. For the community Jesus was something new, different, and exciting. So when evening came Peter's house was besieged with crowds seeking Jesus' healing. Jesus was willing, able, and ready to take the suffering away from the people. The crowds came to him not because of the powerful message that he spoke with authority; not because they loved him and cared about his needs; they came to him to ease their

suffering. Jesus was left with no time alone. Jesus, like all of us, needs prayer time, rest, and solitude. He had to get up very early in the morning before the others and leave the house in order find a place for some quiet and alone prayer time. He doesn't get to finish before Peter and company find him and announce "Everyone is looking for you!" Christianity requires action so Jesus sets out on a preaching tour of the synagogues of Galilee. Jesus knows he has to go to the other towns to preach.

The teaching of Jesus is authoritative due to the source. It is necessary for all of us to know the will of God. But if Jesus is just a great teacher, his lessons would be stuck in the realm of great teaching that impressed an audience. However, the healing verifies his divine status. Jesus is more than great teacher. The healing and exorcism power of Jesus is certification that he is who he says he is. The teaching is authoritative. The healing is verification of the authority. The demons recognize Jesus and attest to his divine status. The mighty works authenticate the ministry of Jesus. The divine status of Jesus is established at the beginning of his ministry. Mark shows us that Jesus is stronger than evil. The response to suffering is ironic. God's response to suffering is to free us from suffering and take our suffering every step of the way to the cross.

How did you come upon your faith? Were you raised in the church? Did your parents teach you about Jesus? Do you know what it is like to actually look for Jesus? Some people are brought up in the life of the church, other people come to faith later in life, some never come to faith. There are people in this world that are looking for Jesus and there are people in this world that simply do not care. Jesus can do something for us that no one else can ever do. He can forgive us our sin, free us of suffering, and call us to a new life of righteousness. When Jesus went on his preaching tour, he took on the suffering of humanity.