

Daily Discipleship

Fourth Sunday after Epiphany – Mark 1:21-28

An Attitude of Discipleship: *Openness*

Focus Question: *How might disruptions help you to know Jesus?*

word of life

“I know who you are, the Holy One of God.” Mark 1:24 (NRSV)

Read Mark 1: 21-28.

Jesus begins his ministry by calling disciples to follow him. (Mark 1:16-21) Next, he honors the Sabbath by going to the synagogue to worship and teach. He teaches with authority as one who knows God. One can almost picture listeners scratching their heads and wondering, “Who is this man? How did he get such insights to the scriptures?” There is a slight dig at the scribes because they apparently have taught without authority.

1. *What does it mean to teach with authority? Describe such a teacher.*
2. *How does one get “authority”?*

Suddenly, the scene is interrupted. Out of the crowd comes a voice. It is someone who clearly understands the identity of Jesus. The only problem — this man has unclean spirits and speaks in plural. He cries out to Jesus, “What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God.” (Mark 1:24 NRSV)

3. *How can such a confused person be so clear about Jesus?*
4. *How can people without unclean spirits be so confused about the identity of Jesus?*

Here on his first days of his mission Jesus finds his teaching disrupted and himself in conflict. Jesus is at the synagogue to teach, but instead he is being challenged. What more could go wrong? Or is this an opportunity to put things right, at least with one person?

5. *How might this disruption be an opportunity for ministry?*

Yet, this man realizes the authority of Jesus far exceeds that of teaching. Jesus’ authority extends to healing and transforming lives. This man realizes Jesus has the ability to change his very life and release him from his disease, but he appears hesitant to be transformed to health.

6. *Why might this man be resistant of the healing power of Jesus?*
7. *Even when change is for the better, what makes change so difficult?*

Despite the questions, Jesus heals the man. Mark is quite descriptive of the convulsing and crying out as he is healed. This entire scene, from the teaching of Jesus to his healing, leaves people asking about the identity of Jesus. *Who is this man? What is he doing?* It appears beyond their grasp.

8. *Why do these witnesses have such difficulty believing in Jesus?*
9. *Who, if anyone, has an open attitude in this passage?*

Mark describes how the word spreads about Jesus. People tell others about his teaching and healing. Thus Jesus begins to become famous, but not all who hear about Jesus choose to become disciples and follow him.

10. *What is the central point of this passage?*

word *among us*

By the time Hurricane Katrina devastated the Gulf Coast and moved north, all agreed. Never had the United States seen such a storm. Yet, the full impact from Katrina was yet to come. The breach of the New Orleans levees turned the city into a lake, sending unsuspecting people into a panic as the waters rose in their homes. Some went to their roof to wait for days for rescue. Others left by boat or anything that might float.

In the midst of the chaos, many tried to bring order. Some tried to speak with authority, but their words revealed that they hadn't a clue how to bring order. Now and then, someone in the crowd would step forward and say something that made sense. Sometimes, it was not a word people wanted to hear,

“Be patient.”

“Night is coming. Everyone get as comfortable as possible. Make the best of it.”

The hurricane was a disruption to the maximum degree. Lives, homes, businesses, and dreams were wiped away. People were ripped raw with anguish. Yet, slowly, healing is coming. The journey to rebuild lives and communities is a long one. Some people have turned to God in new ways. Others continue to seek order in the midst of the chaos. Some may not have the emotional stamina to start again.

1. *How might a crisis, small or large, open us to God?*
2. *Besides living through a disaster or crisis, how else might we develop an attitude of openness?*
3. *Why is it important for disciples of Christ to have an attitude of openness?*

The man in Mark 1 was at a crisis point. If Jesus healed him, his life would change. Sometimes change is difficult even if it is for the better. After the hurricane, hundreds of thousands moved into shelters such as schools, churches, motels, and civic centers. When people got the word that they could leave the temporary shelter, some found it difficult to leave the security of their new home. It is known as “evacuee syndrome.” It might not have been the best of homes, but at least the shelter was a known place of comfort.

The love of Christ brought healing and wholeness to the man with an unclean spirit in Mark 1:23; but radical change is not always readily accepted. The man was unsure about receiving such a gift, and the crowd seemed unsure about the authority of Jesus to do such things. Change can be difficult. Sometimes we can resist the good gifts of God because we are not open.

4. *How might we, as disciples of Christ, adopt a more open attitude?*
5. *How might God be stirring your congregation to adopt more open ways?*
6. *What might we learn from this story?*

Prayer

Creator of the universe, create in me an open heart and spirit.

Dig Deeper

Psalm 51

last word

Make a list of ways
to be more open to others.



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