

St. Andrew's Anglican Church, Douglas GA

The Rev. Fr. John E. Commins+ Rector

Scripture: Mark 1:21-28

“The Holy One of God”

To set the stage for today's Holy Gospel reading, Jesus is teaching in the synagogue of Capernaum, right in the midst of this fisherman's village. Please open your pew Bibles to Mark Chapter 1, Verse 22 on Page 1556. *“The people were amazed at His teaching, because He taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law.”* Of course, Jesus spoke God's Word with authority, power and hope for everyone present that Sabbath day in the synagogue. The people could just sense His authority – which was apparently very different from the scribes and Pharisees who usually taught *about* the authority of God Himself – present from the beginning of time. John the Baptist was reminding the world of the promise of healing, strength, and forgiveness that would come in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah, the Holy One of God, and how that promise would affect their lives. Look at verse 15 on that same page. John the Baptist said, *“The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe that good news!”* (Mark 1:15)

In that synagogue in Capernaum that day was the Son of God – teaching God's message of forgiveness and salvation, in such a way that you felt the assurance with every Word – and rightly so. In John 1:1-5 on page 1647, the Apostle John writes *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”* Right there that day in the synagogue of Capernaum was not only someone who spoke with authority – but THE Authority – the Creator of the Universe – the ‘Light of the World!’ There was no avoiding it – the Word of God had been revealed; Incarnate and written!

However, that day also in the synagogue was a person who was among them that was carrying a very big secret; one that was well hidden. He sat among them! In that synagogue in Capernaum, the people didn't sit in the middle in pews, but they sat around the perimeter of the room. They would be looking at each other and at the teacher. When the light of truth was present that day – the darkness inside that man was revealed – and he spoke to Jesus. Let's go back to page 1556 and look at verse 24. This man said *“What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are--the Holy One of God!”* *“Be quiet!”* Jesus said sternly. *“Come out of him!”* *The impure spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek.”*

Similar words can be found in the Gospel of Luke Chapter 4, verses 34 and 35 regarding this very same man and this same incident: *“Ha! What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are--the Holy One of God!”* *“Be quiet!”* Jesus said sternly. *“Come out of him!”* *Then the demon threw the man down before them all and came out without injuring him.”*

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We need to examine a couple of things here. The Term “*Holy One*” was specifically reserved to be used referring to God Himself – and no one else; it is used 56 times in the Scriptures – in the Old Testament referring solely to Adonai – the Lord God Almighty, and in the New Testament referring to God in the person of Jesus Christ, the Son.

In the presence of God Himself, this demoniac could do nothing but speak the truth. When light shines upon darkness everything is revealed; when the truth is shown in the darkness you cannot hide; the ‘Light of the world’ revealed the truth about Himself. This man, who apparently no one knew was demoniac, was not sitting out in the town square – but was right in the synagogue when he revealed Jesus’ true identity to the world – Jesus of Nazareth, the Holy One of God. Satan was working from right within the synagogue and was now going to try to thwart Jesus’ teaching – but Jesus, the light of the world revealed the Truth! It makes you wonder how long this evil had been infiltrating the synagogue, working from within – until Jesus revealed the truth. Jesus’ cast out the spirit – this is very, very important for all of us to know and to take to heart. Jesus cast out the demon but did not cast out the man! God hates the sin – but loves the sinner! That is so important for each of us to remember. Sometimes we carry around baggage until it is time for us to ask for forgiveness, and sometimes we are reminded of things that we received forgiveness of – because the enemy likes it that way. God hates the sin – but loves the sinner! Please always remember that and always remember that there is nothing that cannot be covered by the Blood of Jesus! Absolutely nothing! There is hope and forgiveness for those who know and love God’s WORD – incarnate and written.

Another thing to examine is that this man, this demoniac, spoke in the plural! Satan’s demons had possessed this man as a group to do the maximum damage, but in the presence of God Himself – they were powerless and had to be obedient, even to the point of proclaiming who was standing right in front of them – ‘the Light of the world’ – the Holy One of God.

A similar incident occurred when Jesus encountered the two demon possessed men in the Gadarenes, on the eastern shore of the Galilee – the pagan side of the lake – where they raised pigs. You would not find pigs being raised on the Jewish side of the lake. When in the presence of Jesus, the Word revealed – they could do nothing else but proclaim the truth: Matthew 8:29 says: “*They cried out "What business do we have with each other, Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?"*” And when Jesus met the man possessed by the demons named “Legion” in the Gerasenes, also on the same side of the lake, a similar truth was heard: “*What business do we have with each other, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg You, do not torment me.*”(Luke 8:28) When in the presence of light – darkness cannot help but reveal the truth!

How sad it is for those who do not know the Word; for those who do not seek Him; for those who reject Him or seek other gods. We heard this morning in 1 Corinthians chapter 8 that there are other gods or idols, created by man, but we all know that there is only One True God! Jesus was hope for that man in the synagogue and He is hope for each one of us today!

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I think you will agree with me that the world today is virtually infested with darkness – it is everywhere – and with the light of His Word revealed to us – we have eyes to see it, and we can pray against what the evil is doing. Think for a minute, if you will, of some of the movies that deal with darkness – either through victory or struggle against it. Evil, in effect is glamorized – with attention drawn to it, and in some cases it is made enticing. The list is long but not exclusive to: The Exorcist, End of Days, The Matrix, Devil’s Advocate, as well in Harry Potter movies, The Lord of the Rings, The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe, and all of the Chronicles of Narnia, even all of the Star Wars Saga. I am not condemning any of these movies, some of them I rather like, (especially the ones toward the end of the list). I am just simply saying that the struggle between good and evil is quite evident. In many, the light is victorious over the “dark side,” but unfortunately not in all.

It is not just the media, the movies, or TV. Listen to this quote: “There is probably no God. Now stop worrying and enjoy your life.” That was a sign that appeared on buses all over Toronto. This is an organization called “Freethought Association of Canada” that purchased these signs, following in the footsteps of others who have had successful campaigns in the UK, Washington, D.C., Barcelona, and Madrid. Countless others had lined up to do the same in Montreal, Vancouver, Calgary, and other cities in the US.

You and I know that there is a God! This nation was founded on the Christian Faith, but it seems our nation has been losing touch from its spiritual roots and origins of which was Truth! Ever since the study of God was taken out of schools there has been an ever-increasing problem of youth issues such as drugs, violence, weapons, etc. These problems probably existed well before hand, but the great increase of issues did not occur until the study of God was removed from our education systems and institutions starting in 1961!

So how do we battle evil; this flood of lies that some people want to perpetuate? What is the answer? The answer is indeed God’s Word. We are all called to be prayer warriors and intercessors in this battle which belongs to the Lord. There is indeed a battle going on – and we cannot fight it alone. With God’s strength; with God’s truth and with God’s Word – we can help to shed the light of His Truth upon the darkness – and His truth will be victorious. Satan knows the end of the story – He knows Revelation; he knows that he loses – but he is going to go down with a fight. As faithful servants of our Lord Jesus Christ, through our obedience to prayer, obedience to His Holy Word, and in being an instrument, helping to see the Word revealed to others - hearts can be changed, minds will be opened, and souls will be won for the Kingdom of God!

Jesus came to be the human bridge across which people could climb to safety. And in the process, He Himself paid with His own life the price of this saving authority - a human bridge with outstretched arms carrying people from death to life, that was simply part of the integrity of His action. The demons had their final shriek at Him as He hung on the cross, challenging and mocking for the last time the validity of His authority. On the cross He completed the healing work He began that day in the synagogue. The demons knew Jesus and knew

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that He had come to defeat them once and for all. They can still shriek, but since that Friday at Calvary - they no longer have authority. To believe this is the key to Christian testimony and saving action in the world that, despite its frequent panic and despair, has already been claimed by the loving authority of God – His Holy and Anointed One – the Holy One of God – Jesus of Nazareth.