

Any Given Saturday

Mark 1:21-28 March 5, 2025

Sometimes celebrities go viral after sharing their daily routines. Mark Wahlberg got a lot of attention a few years ago after sharing his typical daily schedule, which he claims starts at 2:30am with prayer, breakfast and then "Workout A" from 3:40am to 5:30am.

Orlando Bloom also went viral after sharing his typical daily schedule. Sadly, no one was impressed. In fact, many of his fans thought he must have been joking. He said things like he "earns" breakfast in the morning by going on a hike and listening to *Stone Temple Pilots*.¹ That mixed with the "brain octane oil" he eats must make for quite a day.

In our last study, Jesus defeated the Devil after withstanding 40 days of temptation. For anyone else, that title fight would've been followed by a well-deserved off-season. Mark shows Jesus going *immediately* to the seaside to seek out disciples and then straight into ministry in Galilee.

What follows are some very memorable stories of Jesus teaching and healing and interacting. But scholars believe that what Mark wants to do here is show a day-in-the-life of Jesus' ministry.² This is one particular Sabbath, but these are things things He filled *all* His days with.

As we watch, there are a lot of fantastic feats, colorful characters, interesting incidents, but Mark wants us to see *Jesus*. In this first scene, Mark references Jesus 12 times in 8 verses. There are scribes and disciples and a congregation and a demon, amazement, antagonism, and activity, but our eyes should be fixed on Jesus. Who He is, what He says, how He acts, where He leads.

Mark 1:21 - ²¹They went into Capernaum, and right away he entered the synagogue on the Sabbath and began to teach.

Synagogues were gathering places for Jewish believers, Gentiles who had converted to Judaism, and people called "God-fearers," which were Gentiles who were interested in the God of Israel but had not officially converted. They didn't offer sacrifices there - that was only done in the temple in Jerusalem. Instead, according to what we know, their services weren't that different than ours.

They prayed, read the Scripture, heard a sermon which expounded the text, and gave benedictions.³ Traveling teachers or rabbis would often be asked to give the sermon. Jesus often took advantage of this custom, as did Paul and Barnabas in the book of Acts.

What did Jesus teach *that* day? We've already seen the *general* message He preached back in verse 15: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!" But His address that morning wasn't just a stump speech like politicians recite when

¹ <https://www.businessinsider.com/orlando-bloom-daily-routine-involves-brain-octane-oil-fans-react-2021-3>

² William Lane *The Gospel Of Mark*

³ Ben Witherington *The Gospel Of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*

they're on the campaign trail. Jesus' message had a profound, stunning effect on His listeners. The word used for teach means He *instructed* them.⁴ He had a living message *for them*. Something that shook them up and totally arrested their hearts and minds.

One writer notes, "Judaism had become a book religion."⁵ The chosen people of God were walking in darkness. God hadn't sent them a new message in 400 years. They had lost dominion of their promised land. Their king was not a son of David, but a perverse murderer installed by Rome.

Religious life in Judea had become a snarl of fragmented and polarized groups, each in fierce opposition to the others. And all of them were weighed down by an ever-growing burden of human traditions masquerading as Godliness that no one could ever hope to actually achieve.

So let's say you're a faithful Jew - you want to follow God - but God seems to have forgotten Israel. You're oppressed by a Gentile government, discouraged by your religious leaders, waiting generation after generation for the Messiah to arrive or a prophet to arrive or just someone who *actually knew* some truth about God and His dealings. And then, one day, God Himself comes to town, with hope and help and kindness and grace - with a message for *your* life and future.

Mark 1:22 - ²²They were astonished at his teaching because he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not like the scribes.

The scribes weren't just court reporters. They were professionally trained to be experts in both the Law of Moses and in the traditional laws and regulations that had been built up *around* the Law.⁶

When *they* taught at synagogue, usually they would just recite doctrinal precedents - long quotations of what other teachers had said.⁷ It was theoretical, abstract, and tedious.

In one dialect, their title is paraphrased as "Those who know the Jews' ways."⁸ But it will become very clear that they did not know *God's* ways. They didn't know His heart. They didn't know His love. They didn't know how to actually connect man to God and God to man. Jesus came to show us the Father - to reveal that everything the Father has is Christ's and to declare it to us.

When Jesus spoke to them, they were absolutely amazed. Mark uses a very strong word here.⁹ It hit them hard, but not in a bad way. When the *scribes* "taught" the people, with their lifeless recitations, all they did was put millstones around the necks of their listeners. But when Jesus spoke, He set them free.¹⁰ They were *overwhelmed*, not by discouragement, but with comfort.¹¹

⁴ *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries: Updated Edition*

⁵ David Garland *Mark*

⁶ *The NET Bible First Edition Notes*

⁷ Morna Hooker *The Gospel According To Saint Mark*

⁸ Clifton Allen *Broadman Bible Commentary: Matthew-Mark*

⁹ Frank Gaebelin, D. A. Carson, Walter Wessel, and Walter Liefeld *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 8: Matthew, Mark, Luke*

¹⁰ Archibald Robertson *Word Pictures In The New Testament*

¹¹ Witherington

Mark 1:23-24 - ²³ **Just then a man with an unclean spirit was in their synagogue. He cried out,**
²⁴ **“What do you have to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!”**

Talk about a pivot! If you thought Will Smith slapping Chris Rock at the Oscars a few years ago was shocking, try to imagine *this* situation.

The Devil didn't quit after getting beatdown in the wilderness. He waited for other opportune times to strike at Jesus. There seems to have been a convergence of demonic activity *especially* during the three and a half years of Jesus' ministry.

Demon possession can and does still happen today, but it does not seem to be as frequent as it was in the Gospels. And that makes sense, because Satan was focused on *stopping* Jesus.

This demon *immediately* recognized Jesus and He even knew where He was from - both His heavenly and earthly homes - *but* He wasn't sure what Jesus was about. It's clear that the demon felt his very existence was threatened, and he clearly had *some* knowledge of the plan of God, but he honestly didn't know why the Lord was there that day.¹² The question he asked indicates that the demon was wondering *why* Jesus was invading "their" turf. Why was Jesus interfering?

More than that, it *seems* that this demon tried to battle against Jesus, to get the upper hand on Him. You see, the demon specifically spoke both Jesus' earthly identity *and* His heavenly identity. The Jews there that day would've seen this as offensive maneuver because "it was widely believed at that time that if you knew a person's true identity and could utter his name, you could gain a magic power over him."¹³

Now, this demon stood no chance, but this situation does teach us something: *Knowledge* alone doesn't save.¹⁴ This demon knew more *about* Jesus than anyone else in the building. Yet, obviously, he was the furthest from salvation. The scribes knew *a ton* about the Old Testament - the ins and outs of every phrase and syllable - but they would be instrumental in having Jesus killed.

We need knowledge, because we must have the truth revealed and preached to us, but salvation is about faith and trust and obedience, not just intellectual familiarity.

Mark 1:25 - ²⁵ **Jesus rebuked him saying, “Be silent, and come out of him!”**

So Jesus came into their service, shared a sermon that blew their minds and made them think, "This Guy speaks as if He has real authority from heaven!" And now we see that Christ *really* does have authority from heaven. When He speaks, demons *must* obey. When He speaks, the wind and the waves listen. When He speaks, mountains move.

¹² Lane

¹³ David Garland *Mark* (see also Gaebelien, Witherington, Lane)

¹⁴ Douglas Mangum *Lexham Context Commentary: New Testament*

Jesus certainly didn't need a demon as a PR person. He didn't need their accursed advertising. As it is, some of the people would ultimately say Jesus got His power from the ruler of demons.

But notice this exorcism: He needed no incantations, no rituals, no props of any kind.¹⁵ He spoke a word and the fight was over. The demon was muzzled. The man was set free.

Mark 1:26 - ²⁶ And the unclean spirit threw him into convulsions, shouted with a loud voice, and came out of him.

This demon did not go quietly. Luke assures us this demon left without hurting this man at all.¹⁶ But this image gives us a sobering reminder about the character and conduct of our spiritual enemies.

Sin, satan, the rebel self within our hearts are all part of the same fallen kingdom of darkness. I doubt anyone here is demon possessed, but we still have sin lurking in our hearts. It crouches at the door. It wants to capture you and rule you and enslave you. It isn't your friend. It doesn't make you stronger. It wants to dominate your life the way the demon dominated this man.

Jesus wants to set you *free* from that domination. And we see here that the power of His word is enough. The process can be unpleasant, but Jesus kept this fellow safe, even as the demon was shouting and kicking and trying his best to keep control over this life.

There's *nothing* Christ can't free us from. *That's* why He came - to rescue us. To unshackle us. But don't give sin a foothold in life. Because *this* is how sin treats a person.

Tonight, maybe you didn't come in with an *unclean* spirit, but with a fearful spirit, a worried spirit, a discouraged spirit, a confused spirit. Christ will help you. Jesus is willing to minister to you.

Mark 1:27 - ²⁷ They were all amazed, and so they began to ask each other, "What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him."

As one scholar points out, don't confuse their *astonishment* for *faith*.¹⁷ Mark gives the impression that they're in a bit of a panic.¹⁸ This was an intense discussion.¹⁹ "Who is this Guy???" They realized that *everything* about what they had just heard and seen was *new*. New in quality as compared to the old, worn out, dead religion they had always known.²⁰

This Teacher was not just another rabbi. He wasn't just another exorcist. What He said and did was so strikingly different that they were astonished and alarmed. "What is this???"

¹⁵ R.T. France *The Gospel Of Mark*

¹⁶ Luke 4:35

¹⁷ Witherington

¹⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁹ France

²⁰ Lloyd Ogilvie *Life Without Limits: The Message Of Mark's Gospel*

But, they spoke to each other, not to Him. They spoke to their neighbors, not the Man Himself.

Mark 1:28 - ²⁸At once the news about him spread throughout the entire vicinity of Galilee.

Fascination spread, but not necessarily faith. Even what they were spreading around was more like rumors than reports.²¹ Paul would later use this term in 2 Timothy when he warns about people have an itch to hear what they want to hear.

Jesus became a local celebrity, but generally speaking, their astonishment didn't lead to acceptance. God was shaking them up - disturbing everything they had known with truth and power and real hope for the first time in centuries - but most of the people just rolled over and went back to spiritual sleep.

But we know there *were* some who took seriously what was being revealed in their midst. We think of those Greeks in John 12 who had *heard* about Jesus and they put foot to pavement and came and found a disciple and said, "We want to see Jesus." They wanted to *speak* with Jesus. He told them, "If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me."²² Eyes and ears and heart and mind and hands and feet all together in faithful discipleship. God *reveals*, we *respond* with living, exercised faith.

If Jesus had instruction for a Capernaum synagogue, He has instructions for me. If Jesus had commands for a demon - His adversary - what does He command me, His servant?

Like the people in this Gospel, I often find myself focusing on the wrong thing. I'll think, "Oh, I *wish* Mark would've told us what Jesus' awesome sermon was that day. I wish we knew what He said." We do! It's called the Bible.

I think most of us would say, "I want to know what God wants me to do and if He showed up to talk to me today, I'd definitely do what He says." But He *has* shown up! He *has* spoken. Come and see what God has said. Come and see what God has done. Come and see what God has commanded. *And* He has sent His Holy Spirit to speak to us day by day. Our job is not to wait for a miracle to be performed in front of us. Our part is to learn to understand what the Spirit says to us, how the Word applies to us, where the Master is leading us. To realize that the Messiah *is* in our midst, teaching.

Mark shows us that a typical day in the life of Christ is filled with Him doing work in *your* life. He wants to teach you, to rescue you, to reveal things to you, to lead you.

I don't want to suggest we put ourselves in the place of the demon in this text, but the question he asked is a good one for us to ask, albeit from a completely different perspective: Lord, what do you have to do with me today? What adjustment? What opportunity? What encouragement? What task? You've come to disrupt my life with Your new life and so, Lord, speak, direct, bring me along, because I know Who You are: The Messiah, the King of kings, my Savior and Master and Friend.

²¹ *NASB Dictionaries*

²² John 12:20-26