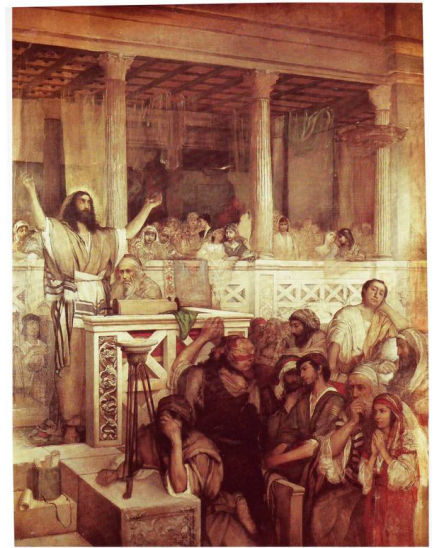


St. Luke Ev. Lutheran Church-WELS
Sermon by Pastor Anthony E. Schultz
Epiphany 4 January 29, 2012 Mark 1:21 to 28



²¹ They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. ²² The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law. ²³ Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an impure spirit cried out, ²⁴ "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!" ²⁵ "Be quiet!" said Jesus sternly. "Come out of him!" ²⁶ The impure spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek. ²⁷ The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, "What is this? A new teaching – and with authority! He even gives orders to impure spirits and they obey him." ²⁸ News about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee.

People of God – rescued from the flaming lake of fire in hell by the innocent blood of the very Lamb of God:

Did you watch any football last Sunday? A guy named Kyle played last Sunday afternoon. It was an afternoon that will never be forgotten! Kyle was playing special teams – kick returns – because the usual guy was hurt. As the 4th quarter began Kyle's team was ahead. The other guys were forced to punt. Kyle ran up to catch the ball – then at the last moment backed away. Footballs bounce funny – that's not news. The ball bounced off Kyle's knee! The other guys fell on the ball – and after one of those "reviews" the other guys got to keep the ball – and they scored! At the end of regulation time--the game was tied. The game went into overtime – when they kicked the ball to Kyle the second time he caught it – and started to run with it. A guy named Jacquian came by – pounded the ball loose – and the next thing you know – the Giants have the ball on the 24 yard line. Three plays plus one knee down – and Lawrence kicked the ball 31 yards. The guys with the black and white striped shirts went "ll" and the Giants win – the 49ers lose – and everybody in America knows why! Kyle is to blame! Oh, you can say – everybody needed to play better. You can say – there were all these missed opportunities – all these mistakes – that contributed to the loss. That it didn't just boil down to one play – *but it did!* If Kyle held on to the ball – they could have won. Give up/give away the ball on the 24 – and you give away the game! They go to the Super Bowl – and you don't because of Kyle! Can you begin to imagine how that must feel? The fact is – we are to blame – I am to blame for Jesus' dying on the cross. It's my fault! And it's your fault! We are all to blame. Jesus endured unspeakable agony on Good Friday afternoon – to pay for all my *fumbles* – my sins and my mistakes. That's why once a week doesn't seem like too much to ask – for us to come to Church and thank Him! Today God's Word is a message of Gospel encouragement:

Welcome To Worship!

- 1. Listen to what Jesus says***
- 2. Watch what Jesus does!***

They call them *opportunities to worship*. Do you know how many opportunities you have in an average year? There are 52 Sundays – plus Ash Wednesday – February 22nd this year--and the 5 Wednesdays after that – Midweek Lenten Vespers. Then there is Maundy Thursday – when Jesus established Lord’s Supper – Good Friday – an afternoon service and a different service at night. 40 days after Easter is Ascension. There is the Area Reformation Service on a Sunday afternoon. There is Thanksgiving. There are 3 Midweek Advent Vespers plus Christmas Eve – TSL Children and candle night/carols and devotions and Christmas Day – Monday and Tuesday – this year followed by New Year’s Eve! That works out to about 70 opportunities to worship. That doesn’t count special services like weddings – which are also opportunities to worship – to pray, praise and give thanks. There are funerals – opportunities to worship, too. We had 14 funerals this last year, 10 the year before that – and 12 the year before that. So ballpark – we have a funeral about once a month. That’s not very many – considering how many people belong to St. Luke’s. We like to say – we have lots of young people – young people with lots of children – lots of lambs plus lots of sheep! I love going to Church. Pastor Gartner and I try to be here at least ½ an hour before Church starts – to hold open the doors to welcome God’s people to worship. “Welcome to worship!” What a blessing to be in Jesus’ Father’s House of Prayer – to hear God’s Word – to sing God’s praises – to bring our prayers and petitions – to bring our thank-offerings – to celebrate the fellowship we have – walking together!

²¹ **They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue...** On Saturday – the Sabbath – the Old Testament day of rest – Jesus went into the Synagogue. This concept of rest from “business as usual” was built into this world – before sin! Think about it! In six literal days of 24 hours each – God made light. The Holy Spirit – like a hen sitting/in Hebrew literally brooding over an enormous soggy egg that was the planet earth! Then the Great I AM organized and filled – organized and filled – the water in the clouds from the water in the oceans and lakes and rivers and creeks and swamps and marshes. He filled the world with plants and animals and birds and fish. And on the 7th day God rested – he refrained from making any more stuff! And God said he wanted people to rest on the 7th day – a blessing. And after people rebelled and there was sin in the world – this 7th day became a picture – a shadow of the ultimate forever rest we will know when we come home to Heaven! When Moses went up on Mt. Sinai – he got the Ten Commandments. The 3rd Commandment as we count them said, **“Remember the Sabbath Day – by setting it apart for God.”** The Sabbath was to be a day of rest – a day set apart for prayer – for studying God’s Word and growing in faith. You might think this would have been very popular – a day when you didn’t cook and clean and scrub – didn’t make and buy and sell stuff. But it wasn’t popular among lots of people. Back in the days of the Prophet Amos God’s Word says, ⁴ **Hear this, you who trample the needy and do away with the poor of the land,** ⁵ **saying, “When will the New Moon be over that we may sell grain, and the Sabbath be ended that we may market wheat?” – skimping on the measure, boosting the price and cheating with dishonest scales,** ⁶ **buying the poor with silver and the needy for a pair of sandals, selling even the sweepings with the wheat.** Amos 8:4-6 Many people didn’t want to spend time hearing God’s Word – when they could spend that

time – making money. They thought happiness was to be found in things and stuff. Jesus talked about that when he told the story about the very wealthy man. Remember? ¹⁶ **And he told them this parable: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. ¹⁷ He thought to himself, ‘What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.’ ¹⁸ “Then he said, ‘This is what I’ll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. ¹⁹ And I’ll say to myself, “You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.””²⁰ “But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?’ ²¹ “This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God.”** Luke chapter 12.

²³ **Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an impure spirit cried out, ²⁴ “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!” ²⁵ “Be quiet!” said Jesus sternly. “Come out of him!” ²⁶ The impure spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek.** The more obvious Jesus’ ministry – the more powerful the preaching of Law and Gospel – the more obvious the dark side – the serpent Satan – the lord of the flies – the ruler of the kingdom of the air! This is the first of many times when Jesus’ power crushed the devil. There are different ways that demons afflicted people. Sometimes – it seems – the grief was mostly physical. The Physician Luke wrote how ³⁸ **A man in the crowd called out, “Teacher, I beg you to look at my son, for he is my only child. ³⁹ A spirit seizes him and he suddenly screams; it throws him into convulsions so that he foams at the mouth. It scarcely ever leaves him and is destroying him. ⁴⁰ I begged your disciples to drive it out, but they could not.” ⁴¹ “You unbelieving and perverse generation,” Jesus replied, “how long shall I stay with you and put up with you? Bring your son here.” ⁴² Even while the boy was coming, the demon threw him to the ground in a convulsion. But Jesus rebuked the impure spirit, healed the boy and gave him back to his father. ⁴³ And they were all amazed at the greatness of God.** Luke chapter 9. Luke wrote about a woman who was bent-over. Imagine how difficult that would be if you couldn’t even stand up! Luke chapter 13. Think of Mary Magdalene – out of whom Jesus cast out seven demons! Imagine the pure wickedness you would be capable of – the grief and regret and remorse you would know – having lived part of your life – your heart and mind filled with seven demons! As self and soul destructive as the devil is – he is no match for the Lord of Life! Jesus spoke and the demon had to leave!

²⁷ **The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, “What is this? A new teaching – and with authority! He even gives orders to impure spirits and they obey him.” ²⁸ News about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee. So – how did it work in Capernaum – for Chorazin and Bethsaida – where Jesus preached God’s Word – taught in their Synagogues and healed all kinds of diseases? Did the people repent and believe and come home to Heaven. Sadly – they did not! Jesus said, ¹³ **“Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. ¹⁴ But it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you. ¹⁵ And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted to the heavens? No, you will go down to Hades.** Luke chapter 10.**

Tyre and Sidon – could you find them on a map? Tyre and Sidon? They are way to the North – so far North they are literally outside of Israel – in Lebanon to the North! That’s where Jesus met the Syro-Phoenician woman whose daughter was possessed! Remember? Jesus ignored her – at least he pretended to – until the disciples were irritated enough to ask Jesus to send her away – because she keeps crying after us. Remember how Jesus told her he was sent but to the lost sheep of Israel – that it wasn’t right to take the children’s bread and throw it to the wild street dogs. That’s right – she said – but all she wanted was the little table scraps you might sneak under the table to the puppy! Then Jesus couldn’t pretend any longer. He told her – by the grace of God – the power of the Holy Spirit – her faith was strong! Her daughter was set free! The power of God’s Word! Have you read your *Forward In Christ* – your *Northwestern Lutheran*? There is discussion about Bible translations! It has been mentioned that for some people – the only Scriptures they read – are in fact read to them – the 5 to 10 minutes it takes to read on Sunday morning – the Old Testament reading, the Epistle lesson, the Gospel reading – and that’s it. It was suggested that most people don’t read their Bible at home very much! Do they? Do you? That’s the question. Do God’s people read God’s Word – or do they dust it on their book shelf? The people in Capernaum in the end – didn’t get it. Capernaum today is the foundation of the Synagogue and a hand full of pillars – a couple of rows of olive oil presses – and the foundation of a home thought to be Simon Peter’s mother-in-law’s home. That’s it! That’s all that’s left of the village where Jesus taught. Only by God’s grace will the people of Watertown – really hear what Jesus said – and really see what Jesus did. Amen!

To God alone all glory!

Rev. Anthony E. Schultz