

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.

In the name of our Savior Jesus, dear friends,

Have you ever tried to teach something? I'm not just talking to school teachers or Sunday school teachers, although you are included too. But even if you are not that kind of a teacher, I'm certain that you have taught someone something somewhere along the line. As parents, many of you have a full time teaching job on your hands. *“Don't touch the hot stove, you'll get burned!”* That's teaching. *“Look both ways before you cross the street.”* *“Say thank you.”* *“A,B,C,D,E,F,G...”* It's all teaching. You don't even have to be very old to teach someone. Kids can teach too. I remember when I was little, it was my buddy from across the street who taught me an easy way to tie my shoes—you know, the “bunny ear” method?! Sometimes we simply learn things through life's experiences. For example, I learned that it's not a good idea to hit a basketball with a baseball bat because the bat bounces off the basketball and back onto your head. And it only took one time and a number of stitches for me to remember that too!

Once we've learned these things, we can then teach them to someone else, perhaps our own children or a friend who needs to learn what we have learned. There's one area of learning I have failed to mention so far and that's going to be our focus today. I'm talking about the teachings that come from God's Word. Today the words of Mark's gospel tell us a little about Jesus' teaching. And this is very important for us because no matter who or where we are, we play some kind of teaching role as forgiven children of God. We will benefit as we

LISTEN TO JESUS' TEACHING

1. TO LEARN FOR YOURSELF

2. TO HELP OTHERS LEARN

You've heard people say, *“You learn something new everyday!”* I suppose there could be some truth to that. For example, I really think that we can learn something new from Scripture every time we look into it. I truly believe that the more you look at what God has given us in his Word, the more things you will find. Even if you knew the entire Bible backward and forward, you could learn new things from it. As we grow older we see things that we might not have understood before. As we go through different situations in life—some good changes, some bad—we realize the full implications of some of the things God says which may never have meant much to us before.

But maybe you haven't always thought like that. Perhaps you've thought that there's really nothing in Scripture that we haven't heard before. We go to church and it's pretty much the same week after week. The Jews of our text may not have been much different. Here they were in the synagogue...again. This time though, Jesus was there

teaching. Did you notice their reaction? **The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law.** The real problem for the people was their usual teachers. These religious experts, who were spiritually responsible to instruct them, neglected much of what the Bible said. The people weren't learning well because their teachers weren't teaching what they should have been.

In this account, you heard that they even considered what Jesus was telling them to be **a new teaching**. Well, it's no wonder! Listen to what Jesus later said to the teachers of the law and Pharisees: **Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices -- mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law -- justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel (Matthew 23:23-24).** Jesus called them blind guides, blind teachers. They were so concerned about giving one tenth of everything, right down to the stuff in the spice rack, that they never even got to talking about what God says about his justice, his mercy, his faithfulness. That was indicative of their teaching. It's no wonder that what Jesus said sounded so new to the people gathered in the Capernaum synagogue! It's a good thing that Jesus did not teach them as the teachers of the law did! Their salvation was at stake.

Don't you find it interesting that so many people and religions today do just as those teachers of the law did at the time of Jesus? So many get caught up with one or two things that they neglect the rest of what Scripture says. People eat it up when they hear a preacher talk about how God is love and how we should be kind to everyone just like Jesus was. You and I would walk out of here feeling good every Sunday if that's all we heard, wouldn't we? But it wouldn't be enough. I think of it like vanilla ice cream. It's good. It's acceptable. No one's going to get too upset over it. But it's not real substantial and it's not as interesting as some Ben & Jerry's concoction. And it can't be your meal (no matter how bad your day has gone!). God says preach and teach all of Scripture—not just the easy to accept parts. You need the whole “meal” of Scripture. That includes talking about sin—and not just sin in general, our sin. It includes sharing the truth that God is certainly love, but also that he is divinely just. It includes the fact that there is both a heaven and a hell.

It is no wonder the people who heard Jesus were amazed. He was a teacher who taught with authority! Have you noticed that in the gospels Jesus didn't hold back when he taught? He called sin “sin.” He didn't try to *understand* the situation of the woman at the well. He didn't avoid the subject because she might be *uncomfortable* with it. He said, *“Hey, you've had a bunch of husbands and you're not married to the guy you're with.”* He gave her the law and exposed her sin. But then he also came with the gospel as well, to let her know that there is forgiveness and salvation through him. A moment ago, you heard how he dealt with those religious leaders. Those were no uncertain terms he used! Jesus wasn't going to win any popularity contest with some of these people, but he was going to teach them God's truth!

Boy, if we ever get tired of hearing the law and gospel as Jesus himself brings it to us in his Word, something is wrong with us! We should be every bit as amazed as the people in our text because that's Jesus teaching us. As he teaches us, Jesus confronts us with our sin too. He doesn't say, "*Oh, that's okay, I understand.*" He says, "*Repent!*" and then he says, "*I forgive you.*" And each time we go through that, we learn over and over again. And with the Holy Spirit's help, we can learn to not commit those sins as we did. Wouldn't it be nice if we listened to Jesus' teaching and learned God's will and how to obey it as quickly as we learn not to touch a hot stove or not to hit a basketball with a baseball bat?!

Those people had a special opportunity to hear Jesus preach and also to see him do a miracle. A man possessed by an evil spirit yelled out to him as he was teaching: "**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!**" Jesus had shown his authority simply by his teaching, but now he would show his power as he cast the demon out of the man. This too amazed the people who were there. Jesus' power and authority exists among us today every bit as much as it did that day. Jesus displays and exerts his power and authority through the Words of Scripture. Remember, it is the power and authority of that Word which changes sin-hardened hearts and disinterested minds. It brought you and me to faith and keeps us in faith. We ought to marvel at Jesus' powerful and authoritative teaching as those people did that day in Capernaum!

Since we have been amazed at Jesus and touched by his Word, God has given us some directives about what to do with that powerful Word of his. And that's the second thing we can take from these words of our text. God has taught us and he continues to teach us daily if we use that Word. But not once in all of Scripture, does he say to keep his teaching to yourself. In fact, he tells us just the opposite doesn't he? Jesus spoke to his disciples: **Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing... and teaching...** Those instructions are for us too. God wants us not only to let our light shine with godly behavior, but we are to teach others about God so that they too may know Jesus and believe. We listen to Jesus' teaching to LEARN FOR OURSELVES, but then we must HELP OTHERS LEARN.

It's actually a pretty natural thing that happens. If we appreciate that Jesus has given his life as a sacrifice so that we might have forgiveness and eternal life, then we want others to have the same peace and comfort we have. Jesus is the Savior meant for all the world. It's a responsibility of ours given to us by Jesus, and it should be a joy to help others learn what we have learned.

The preaching of the gospel should cause excitement in us just like it did for those Jews. You heard what happened when they heard Jesus teach: **News about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee.** No one was tweeting about Jesus or posting pictures of him on Instagram. There was no radio, no CNN, no local Capernaum news on TV to get word of this powerful and authoritative teacher out to the whole area! It happened quickly because Jesus' teaching touched their hearts and they couldn't keep it to themselves. They had learned from Jesus and now were

teaching others! They wanted others to know the Word of God Jesus had told them and they wanted them to know this teacher who was more than just a teacher!

In our joy over Jesus, what do we do to ensure that the saving gospel is spread quickly to people who desperately need it? There are so many ways we can help others learn about their Savior. We could tell our friends and family. We could walk or drive through the streets of Benson or Vail or Sahuarita or Tucson and tell everyone we see. We could help with outreach efforts at church. We might even be able to reach a great deal of people that way. But could we do it all? Maybe we're not even gifted enough to do all of those things. And there are many places we can't even get to.

We need people to help others learn all over the state, our country and the world. We need people willing to go to those places. And those people don't just grow on trees. They don't all grow in places like Wisconsin, Michigan and Minnesota either! There are people everywhere who can serve God in the preaching and teaching ministries, people who can go and make it their life calling to help others learn of our Savior. Is it possible that you could be one of those people? You know, God calls people of all ages and abilities. If you're not one of those people who can fill a pulpit, or a classroom, there are other things you can do. You may have the opportunity to encourage someone whom God has blessed with the gifts to be a pastor or teacher. You can include in your prayers all of those studying to be pastors and teachers. You can pray for those in the ministry to keep teaching and preaching the Word without compromise, but with power and authority like that displayed by Jesus. You can thank God for sending out workers in to his harvest field. Generous offerings enable our members and pastors to teach others about Jesus and part of every dollar sent as Grace's Congregational Mission Offering goes to support our synod schools to train these called workers.

There are so many ways that you can play a vital role in helping others learn about forgiveness and salvation through faith in Jesus. You can and should do it on your own life to whatever extent you can, and then support those whose calling it is to train for that and do it as their life's work. That's the way the news of Jesus' teaching spreads quickly today!

Once you hear the gospel and understand what God has done for you through our Savior, you cannot remain unchanged or indifferent. What we learn from Jesus calls for a response. That response is teaching others. We can do our part, but we need others to take that message to all parts of our world. God has given us this responsibility in order to make sure the saving gospel goes out into all the world for the salvation of many souls. Do it. Teach others and support that teaching in any way you can. When we do, we can expect that what happened in our text—**News about him spread quickly to the whole region**—will also occur today. May God grant it. AMEN.

Now the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding,
will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.