

They *Liked* Listening to Him!

Scripture Background

This information isn't meant to be read aloud, but as background for the leader. If helpful, share some of it in conversation with the group.

Mark's Gospel mentions a lot of unclean spirits or demons. What exactly did that mean? We can't be sure, but in some cases the people who were labeled as having a demon may have had a mental illness. In others, they may have been epileptic. In those days, any unexplained behavior could have led someone to be labeled as host to an unclean spirit.

Opening Prayer

Pray the following aloud together, beginning with the Sign of the Cross:

+ In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Lord, Jesus, may our reading, study, and conversation today help us to believe even more deeply in your healing power.

May we come to see how you are still working your miraculous healing in the world today.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Gospel Reading: Mark 1:21-28

Ask someone to read this passage aloud, then pause for a minute of silence.

Ask: What struck you about this reading or the liturgy this week?

Allow for sharing. Move on to the next section once the sharing has died down.

Reflections on the Reading

Invite each person in the circle to read one paragraph aloud:

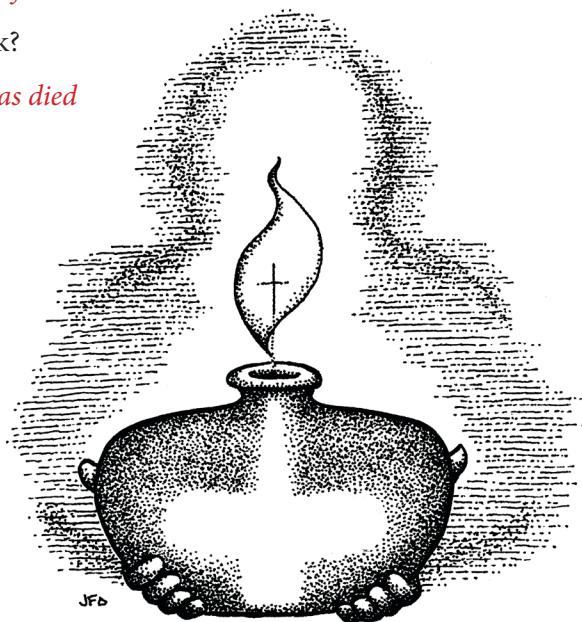
It's easy to be impressed by all the miracles Jesus worked. What we might not always catch from hearing the Gospels is what an amazing speaker and teacher Jesus was.

We've probably all had a mix of good and bad teachers in our day. The bad ones might have bored us as they taught something that didn't seem very relevant. Maybe they didn't seem interested in us as individuals. Maybe they were rigid in the classroom. Perhaps they talked like know-it-alls and

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4th Sunday in Ordinary
Time

- ▶ Deuteronomy 18:15-20 - A prophet like Moses
- ▶ 1 Corinthians 7:32-35 - The state of virginity
- ▶ Mark 1:21-28 - Cure of a demoniac



didn't have patience with students who "didn't get it" or didn't follow their directions exactly.

Then there are the great teachers. They are excited about what they are teaching, and they get the students excited about it too. They care about their students as individuals. They offer support and encouragement, but also expect a lot from their students, who usually rise to the occasion. Great teachers win the respect of their students by "walking the walk" rather than just "talking the talk."

In this reading, Mark gives us a glimpse of what people thought of Jesus as a teacher. For someone who didn't have the fancy education that the scribes and Pharisees had, Jesus amazed and astonished the crowd with his words. The gospel doesn't tell us exactly what Jesus taught that day, but whatever it was thrilled and excited his listeners. They recognized him as having authority beyond the religious leaders who usually preached during their synagogue services. On top of that, Jesus matched his teaching with his actions when he healed the man with an unclean spirit. No wonder his fame spread throughout the whole region. People recognize a great teacher and leader when they see one.

Questions for Discussion

Read each question aloud, one at a time, followed by time for sharing.

- ① Talk about a great teacher you've had in your life. What made them so good? Can you imagine Jesus having these same qualities as a teacher?
- ② What do you think the difference was between Jesus teaching "as one having authority" and the teachings the people were used to by the scribes?
- ③ When you think about the values you have that you want to teach your children (if you have children) where might you be challenged to "walk the walk" better instead of just "talking the talk" so that your teaching will have more authority?

Closing Prayer

Pray the following aloud together:

Lord, thank you for this time to reflect on your Living Word.

May what we have heard inspire us to live as more faithful disciples in the coming week. Amen.