

February 1, 2009

Fourth Sunday after Epiphany

Mark 1:21-28

A Greater Teaching

In the name of the † Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

They were nearing the entry into the land of their fathers. Moses was issuing them a final extended sermon reminding them of the past. Of their time in Egypt, of the plagues, of the promises of the Lord, how God continued to watch over His children, and also of the sins of the children of Israel and their repentance. From 400 years in Egypt and then another 40 wandering the desert Abraham's sons and daughters were to enter into the land of Abraham.

Moses had greater news to report. News that **the Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers-it is to him you shall listen.** This prophet will come from among them. He would be a GREATER prophet! He would preach a GREATER Word than Moses. This prophet won't be like the other prophets after Moses for all the other prophets would speak Moses word. Look forward to that future time of the Greater Prophet with a Greater Teaching.

In Capernaum they had gathered together to hear the Word of the Lord. The word that they would hear would be the words of Moses written to them in the first five books. Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy. As this Word is read Jesus goes on to teach about it. During this time of teaching a man with a demon approaches. In the synagogue, as Jesus taught this man cried out, **What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I**

know who you are-the Holy One of God. The demon knows who Jesus is. And how does He know? It is because Jesus is the one to fulfill the prophecy of Moses. That this Jesus of Nazareth is the Holy One of God! These demons cry out in anguish, so Jesus sends them out: **Be silent, and come out of Him!** He rids the man of the demons, and it brings peace.

The crowds, amazed, asked each other, **What is this? A new teaching with authority!** It was a new teaching with authority and with power. It was the teaching of the greater one than Moses! It was to lead to a greater Exodus, not just the Exodus out of Egypt and the entrance into the Holy Land. This greater prophet would exodus His people from sin and bring them to the eternal promised Land. Jesus death and resurrection would exodus us from our sins. The Holy One of God came down and became man to lead us out of the land of Egypt to Heaven.

As He leads are we eager to follow? Do we leave behind our nets and follow after Him? Do we say, Let's go! Let's follow after Him into the wilderness that leads to the promised land? I'm ready! Lead the way Lord! Is it ever that easy? No. Look at our spiritual forefathers. Even when they were finally free from the bondage of Egypt, headed toward the promised Land, they grumbled. The food wasn't good enough. They would be more comfortable back in Egypt. At least they would be taken care of there. What about those of our Lord's time? How about us? Do we really want an exodus? Do you want to walk in the comforts and pleasures of sin instead of struggling in the freedom of repentance and forgiveness? Are the blessings of God never sweet enough for us? Would you prefer to complain about time lengths rather than giving thanks that so many have gathered together to receive our Lord's gifts? Do we long for an easier way? A way without failing health, arguing children, judgmental friends, for a church that does not struggle for the Truth but gives in to whims of the culture (might as well conform, that's the only

way to get people anyways) rather than listening to the Word of the Lord? Do we look for a way where we just ignore our sins, because we don't actually want people to know we are sinners, but continue to think that the Lord will bless us if we try and fix everything that we believe is wrong, but NOT confess our sins of not trusting in HIM with our whole being? We want an easy God, with easy ways out.

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As our Lord did in the synagogue of Capernaum He does today. He removes demons, sins from us! He does it with His Word. He drives the sin from out of us. It probably won't happen with the convulsing and the loud cry that came forth from the man, but that doesn't make it any less evident. We come here week in and out to hear God's saving Word. That we poor miserable sinners come and repent of our sins, and by His Word and authority our sins are forgiven. Satan no longer lays claim over us.

Satan hear this proclamation
I am Baptized into Christ!
Drop your ugly accusation
I am not so soon enticed
Now that to the Font I've traveled
All your might has come unraveled
And against your tyranny

God, my Lord, unites with me! (LSB 594, v.3)

And we wanderers through this barren wasteland of sin and death can come hungry and thirsty to the Lord's Altar where He feeds us with His body and blood, to strengthen and nourish our bodies and souls on this long pilgrimage. Moses never promised the Israelites that their wandering would be easy. No where does the Greater Prophet promise to us that our wandering will be easy. He never promised He would be easy! Christ has promised us salvation and forgiveness of sins, not just

a little bit, but all that we need to support this spiritual life. He has made us His very own by giving us His very SELF! He is the head we are the body. He is the Groom we are the bride!

And so our salvation from the wilderness of sin is finished! And Holy One of God took on flesh to join Himself to us. In baptism His journey is our journey. His death is our death. His resurrection is our resurrection! He keeps the law perfectly and in Him so have we. His work is complete. And then so is ours. Paradise is ours, the gates having been flung wide open. All that is left is to cross over the river, through death and the grace, to the life awaiting us in Heaven.

You have nothing to fear, dear Christian. For you have already passed through death in your Savior. Your baptism has secured your passage and has defeated Satan. When your pilgrimage here on earth is over the Promised Land is yours! Bought by the Savior's Blood! Until that day we hear His preached Word, we wash in it daily, we eat and drink it, for it is HIS WORD OF LIFE AND FORGIVENESS! His Word given to strengthen and preserve your body and soul in the true faith until life everlasting. Until you depart in peace.

And now, during this pilgrimage, live as a baptized child of God. Live as the child you are! Not in slavery to sin, gossiping, arguing, lying, but in freedom with compassion, kindness, patience and love. Not captive to the things of the world, but in the freedom to serve others.

Your kingdom, your homeland is not of this world. For a greater land is waiting for you on the other side of the waters. What God does in and through you now is only a preview. Wait and see what the Lord has in store for you! For it is already yours in Baptism! Amen!

May the peace of God which passes all human understanding guard and protect your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.