**BCM Bible Study – Sept. 1/2, 2021**

**Mark 1:21-3:6**

**Getting Started:**

Tonight we will cover a lot of ground in three different chapters. We will see the amazement of the crowds as they experience Jesus. We will notice some of the patterns in these first days of Jesus’ ministry. And we will observe the ways Jesus began to reveal himself with some pretty amazing statements in his teachings.

Think about the best teacher(s) you have ever had, either before or during your days at VT. **Who are one or two of these memorable teachers? What was it that made them so engaging and effective?**

**Read Mark 1:21-28**

After reading the passage, ask your group - **What do we see here about Jesus’ teaching that amazed the people?** Allow time for them to look over the passage and think about it.

People in your study may notice any or all of three notable “amazements” in the passage:

1. Authority (v. 22 and 27) – They found the edge of authority in the way Jesus taught to be remarkable, especially in comparison to their experience with “teachers of the law.”

2. Newness, freshness (v.27) – It is not a surprise that Jesus teaches with a newness and freshness that they had never experienced. Messianic passages like Isaiah 43:19 hinted at the “freshness” the Messiah would bring to our experience and understanding. (“See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.”)

3. Sensational and miraculous things (v.27) – Here evil spirits are being vanquished, and in verses to come healings and other miracles become reoccurring experiences.

**If you had been there, what do you think would have grabbed your attention the most – the authority of his teaching, the freshness of his teaching, or the miracles?**

**Some Recurring Patterns**

We won’t go in depth with any other sections of chapter 1, but in these first few chapters of Mark we see some patterns in how Jesus’ ministry unfolds. Here a few repeated points of emphasis about what his disciples saw and experienced as they followed him:

1. Entering a new town Jesus would go first to the synagogues, starting with the “lost sheep of Israel” (Matthew 10:6) and then to the Gentiles. Paul would take this same approach planting churches on his missionary journeys. (seen in Mark 1:21, 1:49, 3:1)

2. Many of the first experiences people had with Jesus involved physical healings and spiritual deliverance from demons (seen in Mark 1:26, 1:31, 1:32, 1:42, 2:12, 3:5)

3. His ministry was not marked only by miracles, but teaching and preaching was central (seen in Mark 1:21, 1:38-39, 2:2, 2:13)

4. Even in his first days of ministry, Jesus dealt continually with the press of crowds. (seen in Mark 1:45, 2:2, 2:13). And despite the growing intensity of the crowds, Jesus still found ways to have moments of solitude (Mark 1:35, 1:45).

5. Opposition from Pharisees, teachers of the law, and scribes begin to become commonplace. (Mark 2:6, 2:16, 2:24)

6. Jesus continually juxtaposes revealing (showing his power through the miraculous) and concealing (don’t tell anyone who I am – Mark 1:25, 1:34, 1:44) who he is. Read examples of 1:33-34 and 1:43-44 and ask, **Why do you think Jesus continues this “don’t tell anyone who I am” approach early in his ministry?** [Note that this answer may be different based on who Jesus is telling to be silent on the matter. For the demons, “The unclean spirit is right (in who he proclaimed Jesus to be), but Jesus does not want testimony that is demonic. He will not accept the hollow confessions of spirits that are not cleansed and transformed.” (Garland) For people like the leper in 1:40-45, it seems to be a consistency throughout the gospels that Jesus wanted the spotlight on the message, not the miracles. He did not want to be a celebrity healer but wanted to always point to the good news of the Kingdom.]

**Jesus begins to give many hints about who he is**

Jesus not only reveals himself through miracles, he also drops some incredibly strong statements in chapter 2 that seem to be things only God can say. There are several strong statements here; we will look at two of them. The theme of “authority” from earlier in our study continues in these strong statements.

**Read Mark 2:1-12**. As we read about the paralytic carried by his four friends we see strong statement #1, which is focused on Jesus’ authority over forgiveness of sins – **“But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins…”** (2:10)

When Jesus saw the four friends, their actions pointed him to use the word “faith.” **What word might have been descriptive of your response if you had been there?**

- **Respect – How did they come up with such an idea to get around the crowds?**

- **Worry – Who is going to clean up the mess and repair the roof?**

- **Jealousy – How is this guy lucky enough to have such amazing friends?**

- **Other?**

Whatever our response to the action of these friends, the pronouncement Jesus makes to bring healing is earth shattering. Jesus wanted them to understand that the greater work of God here was not in the miracles, but in forgiveness of sins. (Perhaps this hits one of the better answers to the “why did Jesus say not to tell anyone” question earlier – he did not want people believing that sensational miracles were the headline when God’s forgiveness was the real headline.) **Why does it matter that the headline becomes Jesus’ ability and desire to forgive sins?**

**Read Mark 2:13-17**. Strong statement #2 is about Jesus’ authority over spiritual healing – **“It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”** (2:17) Jesus lets his complaining opponents know that the best use of his time is with these “sinners”, but he does so with a bit of irony. If the listener was not paying attention, a conclusion could be made that Jesus was declaring the Pharisees “righteous” and “healthy” – he does no such thing. Jesus is lifting up the value of those who humble themselves and admit their needs in sin and spiritual sickness. All need the spiritual healing of Jesus, even if (and especially if) someone considers themselves well and righteous.

**Do you ever find it hard to admit that you are spiritually needy, that there is a daily need for the presence and work of God in you?**

**What are some of the things get in the way of us admitting that we need the work of God in your life?** (things like fear of what others think, the barrier of humbly asking for help)

**What has it looked like (and/or what could it look like) for Jesus to be the spiritual doctor in your life?**

Close by reading Isaiah 55:1-2. This week’s challenge is to begin each day this week reading this verse – put a reminder on your phone or write out the verse on a card in a prominent place. As you read it each morning, reflect on our tendency to go after things that don’t satisfy and spend the first moments of your day on the only One who can truly satisfy.

Notes –

This week the notes section will focus on some of the uncovered verses in the passage. Hopefully this can give a fuller context to the section and help if a question comes up with verses around the focal verses.

Next week we will dive into multiple parables, but this week’s section has two very short parables, one in 2:21 and one in 2:22. We are used to parables being longer stories and these are so short that they are easy to miss and not realize that they fit the definition of a parable – an everyday example that illustrates a spiritual truth.

Verse 21 is simple enough – new cloth can shrink after multiple washings, so to blend something old and new, extra adjustments must be made. A parallel story of wineskins in 2:22 gives extra emphasis to the same truth. About wineskins, “Their natural elasticity and flexibility, as well as their strength, would allow the skin to stretch and securely contain the new wine as it fermented and expanded. However, if you put new wine in old wineskins that had become brittle and weak, when fermentation took place, the expansion would burst the skins, and both the wine and the wineskins would be lost.” (Akin)

The emphasis is not about God changing old teaching to a new teaching; God’s truth is constant. The emphasis is on our inability to adjust our mindset and methods when God’s truth calls us to action and to change.

In Mark 2:23-28 another one of Jesus’ strong statements comes in. Jesus’ authority over the Sabbath is highlighted – “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.” (2:27-28)

For the second time in the chapter, the behavior of Jesus’ disciples is questioned. Both instances come with a mentality of “Your disciples are not obeying the Law the way we want them to obey it.” Jesus redirects them to the One who gave us the Sabbath to remind them that even the Law points us to the heart and purposes of God, not purposeless and mindless obedience to things that man has added that are not at the heart of God’s commands.