

Mark 1:14-15

*“Now after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”*

Mark wastes no time in introducing the authority of Jesus Christ as he presents for us five scenes from Jesus ministry, all with the intent of demonstrating Jesus’ authority as the Christ. He begins with the calling of four fishermen: Andrew, Peter, James and John, to follow Him as His disciples. From there, Jesus moves to the synagogue at Capernaum where He teaches with authority and destroy the demonic reign of terror of a man possessed. Then Jesus heals Peter’s mother-in-law and many others who flock to Him for healing. Jesus concludes by healing the leper who directly disobeys His command to remain silent and tell no one what happened.

The authority of Jesus is a key theme in the Gospel of Mark. Not only does Jesus have authority as a teacher and over human disease, He has authority over the Sabbath (2:27-28), over the forgiveness of sins (2:5-12), over unclean spirits, over nature (6:45-52), over the Law (7:1-13), over the temple (12:1-12), and over the mysteries of the Kingdom of God. What I find remarkable is that One with such authority is also the One we can approach directly in our time of need. As we see with the healing of Peter’s mother-in-law and the leper, Jesus is not a dominating authority but a compassionate healer.

Sadly, the temptation for many of us in ministry is we crave the same thing for ourselves that was said about Jesus. We want people to say of us he speaks with such authority. With the availability of sermons on demand and entire satellite networks to broadcast and the availability of messages on the internet, it is tempting for ministers to try winning adoring crowds, Facebook friends, and subscribers to our podcasts. And so to gain followings, religious leaders can mislead the distraught and disenfranchised. Others, through the charismatic ranting and ravings, draw crowds but have only provided entertainment for the masses and not transformed hearts for the Lord. Even the smallest of churches and most traditional of denominations are sometimes led by those who fold their arms and state, “I know this is the will of God. Is there anything you would like to add?”

Anyone who desires to lead must be evaluated by the standard of Jesus Christ. Do they actively seek public acclaim or do they avoid it? Do they want credit for all that happens or can they sincerely give God the glory and pass the compliments to others? Are they seeking to build an empire for themselves or for the Kingdom of God? Are their doors open only for the largest donors and the influential families or are they accessible to those who dwell in the margins of society? Jesus had all the authority of God, but never used it for His own purposes. He was in charge of all things, but set His authority aside to do the will of the Father. As Jesus said, *“For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.”* (John 6:38)