



Image of Christ from the cupola of Pammakaristos Church, Istanbul, Turkey

Capernaum is the base for Jesus' ministry in Galilee and the incident in the synagogue there is the first public act of Jesus' ministry after his rather private gathering of companions for his mission.

The story of the exorcism on the sabbath is the first of four such encounters between Jesus and demonic powers. The mention of the "unclean spirit" simply tells us that there was something wrong with the person concerned: it is the opposite of what is (ritually, not morally) holy, that is, reflecting God with whom the fullness of life and being a complete human being is associated. Jesus' acts of power, commonly known as "miracles", are examples of the kingdom of God breaking into situations in human existence where a person is somehow impeded from enjoying full health.

In a way, this incident confirms publicly Jesus' identity as "the Holy One of God", recalling the private announcement to Jesus himself at his baptism. It is a feature of Mark's writing that supernatural forces perceive who Jesus truly is, unlike the human characters in the story. This initial encounter with the forces of evil shows Jesus as the stronger one, who has authority over such hostile beings and can subdue by the power of his word. The people react with astonishment to the successful exorcism and declare that the word of Jesus' teaching is different from that with which they are familiar, namely that of their scribes, as mentioned at the beginning of the passage. The exorcism enhances Jesus' authority as a teacher and Mark also presents Jesus as a mysterious figure who provokes questions about himself, as throughout the Gospel narrative people will ask, "Who is this...?" ■

REFLECT

In Mark's version of the Good News, Jesus is presented as a teacher, but there is little record of what he actually said. Generally, Jesus teaches through his deeds, which is often a more effective way of communicating a message. His acts of power ("miracles") illustrate God's saving action in the human realm.

In Matthew's Gospel account, Jesus describes the gates of hell not being able to prevail against the Church. This description suggests the Church as being on the attack, entering the stronghold of evil and sin. Too often, we think of sin in personal, individual terms, what we ourselves do wrong. In

the Bible, sin is usually something social, something seriously wrong in the way in which human affairs are organised: the existence of poor people is seen by the prophets as an indictment of society, not an unfortunate, inevitable by-product of the economic system.

If we are to continue Jesus' mission today, then the Church has to confront those forces which deprive people of what they need to flourish as human beings. But the Church is not the bishops: the Church is the people of God. As such, the word of God has a message for us today: we are asked to interpret it in terms of our present world – and to act. ■

SAY

Father, may your kingdom come!

(see Matthew 6:10/Luke 11:2)

DO

Consider how you could help the Church's involvement in the social concerns of your local area. Then get involved.

LEARN

Capernaum, a city on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, becomes the base for Jesus' ministry in Galilee.

Jesus' acts of healing and the like are called "acts of power" in the Gospel tradition, rather than "miracles".

The synagogue was a place of prayer and instruction: the Temple was the place of sacrifice.



Roman ruins at Capernaum. Capernaum was a fishing village on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee.

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Save us, O Lord our God!
And gather us from the nations,
to give thanks to your holy name,
and make it our glory to praise you.

GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you,
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,
have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

COLLECT

Grant us, Lord our God,
that we may honour you with all our mind,
and love everyone in truth of heart.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of
the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

FIRST READING Deuteronomy 18:15-20

A reading from the book of Deuteronomy.

Moses said to the people:
"Your God will raise up for you a prophet like
myself, from among yourselves, from your
own brothers; to him you must listen. This is
what you yourselves asked of the Lord your
God at Horeb on the day of the Assembly.
'Do not let me hear again' you said 'the voice
of the Lord my God, nor look any longer on
this great fire, or I shall die'; and the Lord said
to me, 'All they have spoken is well said. I
will raise up a prophet like yourself for them
from their own brothers; I will put my words
into his mouth and he shall tell them all I
command him. The man who does not listen
to my words that he speaks in my name,
shall be held answerable to me for it. But the
prophet who presumes to say in my name a
thing I have not commanded him to say, or
who speaks in the name of other gods, that
prophet shall die.'"

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 94

Response:

O that today you would listen to his voice!
Harden not your hearts.

1. Come, ring out our joy to the Lord;
hail the rock who saves us.
Let us come before him, giving thanks,
with songs let us hail the Lord. (R.)

2. Come in; let us bow and bend low;
let us kneel before the God who made us
for he is our God and we
the people who belong to his pasture,
the flock that is led by his hand. (R.)

3. O that today you would listen to his voice!
"Harden not your hearts as at Meribah,
as on that day at Massah in the desert
when your fathers put me to the test;
when they tried me, though they saw my
work." (R.)

SECOND READING 1 Corinthians 7:32-35

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the
Corinthians.

I would like to see you free from all worry.
An unmarried man can devote himself to
the Lord's affairs, all he need worry about is
pleasing the Lord; but a married man has to
bother about the world's affairs and devote
himself to pleasing his wife: he is torn two
ways. In the same way an unmarried woman,
like a young girl, can devote herself to the
Lord's affairs; all she need worry about is
being holy in body and spirit. The married
woman, on the other hand, has to worry
about the world's affairs and devote herself to
pleasing her husband. I say this only to help
you, not to put a halter round your necks, but
simply to make sure that everything is as it
should be, and that you give your undivided
attention to the Lord.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!
Blessed are you, Father,
Lord of heaven and earth,
for revealing the mysteries of the kingdom
to mere children. Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Mark 1:21-28

A reading from the holy Gospel according to
Mark.

Jesus and his followers went as far as
Capernaum, and as soon as the sabbath
came Jesus went to the synagogue and
began to teach. And his teaching made a
deep impression on them because, unlike the
scribes, he taught them with authority.
In their synagogue just then there was a
man possessed by an unclean spirit, and it
shouted, "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." But
Jesus said sharply, "Be quiet! Come out of
him!" And the unclean spirit threw the man
into convulsions and with a loud cry went
out of him. The people were so astonished
that they started asking each other what it
all meant. "Here is a teaching that is new"
they said "and with authority behind it: he
gives orders even to unclean spirits and they
obey him." And his reputation rapidly spread
everywhere, through all the surrounding
Galilean countryside.

The Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with
the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,

(all bow during the next three lines)

and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the
Virgin Mary,
and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under
Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,
the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored
and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and
apostolic Church.
I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness
of sins
and I look forward to the resurrection of the
dead
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

O Lord, we bring to your altar
these offerings of our service:
be pleased to receive them, we pray,
and transform them
into the Sacrament of our redemption.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

Let your face shine on your servant.
Save me in your merciful love.
O Lord, let me never be put to shame, for I
call on you.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Nourished by these redeeming gifts,
we pray, O Lord,
that through this help to eternal salvation
true faith may ever increase.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Do not waste time bothering whether you
"love" your neighbour; act as if you did and
you will presently come to love them.

C.S. Lewis