

HONOR TO JESUS

21 They went to Capernaum, and as soon as the Sabbath came Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. 22 They were amazed at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority and not like the scribes. 23 Just then a man cried out in their synagogue. (He had an unclean spirit). 24 He said, "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!"

25 But Jesus rebuked him and said, "Be silent! Come out of him!" 26 Then the unclean spirit threw the man into a convulsion. It cried out in a loud voice and came out of him.

27 Everyone was amazed and began to discuss this with each other. They said, "What is this? A new teaching, and with authority! He even commands unclean spirits, and they obey him." 28 And news about him spread quickly through all the region of Galilee.

An Epiphany is an appearance or manifestation of God. we have just one more Sunday of the Epiphany season after this, but this year we have seen the coming of Wise Men, the baptism of Jesus, the call of the first disciples of Jesus, and here, one of the first miracles of Jesus, the healing of a demon-possessed man.

Jesus healed a great many people during his ministry. The whole village of Capernaum was freed of disease during his first year of ministry, and many other villages and towns, too. We see the intention of God's plan through Jesus when we remember the command of God to Moses about Hebrews who were forbidden from bringing offerings of any kind: **"No man who has a defect may come near to offer to present offerings or approach the altar, no man who is blind or lame, disfigured or deformed, no man with a crippled hand or foot, or who is hunchbacked or dwarfed"** (Lev. 21:18-19), and that isn't even the whole list.

But Jesus cured people of those things; Jesus took away the things that kept people physically from God in order to show that was taking away the things that kept people spiritually from God. He didn't only come to heal the deaf and the blind and the hunchbacked. He came to take away sin, and he came even to the cure the problem of unbelief.

Think of the people who were believers before he came but had diseases or other troubles. Was their faith for nothing? No. They passed their faith to their children, and they went to heaven. Think of the people who were believers after he came, after he ascended, but did not get their diseases healed. Was their faith for nothing? No. They passed their faith to their children, and they went to heaven.

Jesus went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he preached. His message wasn't what they were used to. The Pharisees and the Levites and scribes who normally did the preaching were skilled at debating forbidden foods and just what teeny tiny things were forbidden under the Law of Moses-- but then came Jesus with a clear message about the grace of God covering over sins, and the response of God's people to God's love. They were amazed by this!

And then a man cries out in a loud voice, **“What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us?”** He was possessed by a demon. Now. We might ask just what kind of teaching usually went on at this Synagogue that a demon would feel comfortable there, but I want to quickly make these points about demons:

1. Demons are real, and not to be explored or investigated by us. They are to be run away from.
2. Demons tend to show up when the gospel is brand new in a nation, in a village, or in a home. Once faith has been established and the gospel takes root, reports of demons decrease or disappear altogether.
3. The appearance of demons in the Scriptures are like the voice of the devil inside of our heads and hearts: It's always a loud shriek: *This is what I want, and I want it right now!*¹

Jesus doesn't accept the testimony of this demon, even though he called him “the Holy One of God.” Why not?

1. Jesus did not come to save demons. He came to save you.
2. He came to plant and create faith in your heart, not in demons.
3. He came to bring out the witness of people; for you to confess your faith. Not demons.
4. What would the witness of a demon do? **Confuse. Frighten. Enrage.** Not God's will.

The result of Jesus silencing and driving out this demon was amazement. They honored him. The miracle of driving out this demon brought out the witness and stirred the beginnings of faith in these people, which is why he came.

Sometimes people think, I wish I could see him do that now right here. But Jesus drive unbelief and hatred of God out of your heart and mine when we were baptized. Jesus rescues you and keeps you safe from demons every single day. Praise God that he has kept you away from peering over the edge of that terror or brought you safely away from it, and that he preserves your faith week by week; day by day.

¹ Deutschlander, *Your Kingdom Come* p. 24.

This is another reason why we honor him, by knowing and acknowledging what he has rescued us from. God commands us to love each other, to love and honor our parents, and to love, honor, and worship our God.

That middle piece, “honor,” is to give our parents and our God respect, with humility and modesty, on account of the majesty that they have. With our parents, that majesty is hidden on account of sin in the world and sin in their flesh, but they are our parents, nevertheless. With Christ, that majesty is not hidden but is revealed to us in his **epiphany** through his gracious gospel words, through his powerful miracles, and by his holy and innocent life.

To give someone honor is to give their presence, their words, and their will a special value, a heavier weight, than our own presence, our own words, and our personal will or desires.

Here the law comes knocking on our door, because we have not done this. We treat our parents and our Jesus as less important than our own desires, which shriek like demon-possessed voices in our heads: *“This is what I want, and I want it right now!”* Do we want to follow the demons shrieking and bellowing and sobbing in terror into the pit of hell? Don’t throw away the forgiveness God has given through Christ on the cross, and the way he snatched you from the yawning gate of hell by paying the fine for your sins with his own pain and bleeding.

To sit at the feet of Jesus and to listen to his words is to worship without any confusion, without any emphasis on the wrong things. Without any interruption from demonic voices or actions in the world. To sit at the feet of the Savior is our everyday worship. We give his word and his will and desire that special value, that heavier weight, than everything else.

And so consider the whole direction of your life. How can you and I give Jesus word and will a heavier weight in our hearts? Remember the people of Capernaum when they witnessed this miracle. Before they mentioned the miracle, they gave weight to Jesus’ words: They said, **“What is this? A new teaching, and with authority!”**

This begins by knowing his word better. This is also a defense against Satan scattering his seed in our lives as we consider whose words and what entertainment we invite into our homes. What friends do I gather around myself? Are they a good influence on my faith, or not?

Give the words of Jesus weight, and he will help you carry whatever other weight that you bear.