

Living Like Jesus Is in Charge

The Gospel of Mark #5

Mark 1:21-28

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the highest places. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes with the gospel of peace. Take up the shield of faith. Take up the helmet of salvation. And the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

Summer pests in Florida are not your friends. Momma knows this. Daddy knows this. Brother knows this. Sister knows this. As a matter of fact, every Floridian with any sense at all know this. And the catechism to reenforce the idea that summer pests in Florida are not your friends is on the tip of every parent's tongue between the months of May and August. "Derrick, if you go outside to play in the yard, make sure you have shoes and socks on." Why? Fire ants. That's why. They are not your friends. "Derrick, if you go climb a tree, make sure you have a long shirt and long pants on." Why? Wood chiggers. That's why. They are not your friends. "Derrick, if you go fishing at dusk, make sure to spray on insect repellent." Why? Mosquitos. That's why. They are not your friends. But the worst summer pest in Florida isn't a fire ant, wood chigger, or mosquito. It's the East African Lowland Honey-Bee, better known as the "killer bee." You see, several years ago, some ole slick in a lab figured it would be a good idea to take honeybees from Europe and honeybees from Africa and blend them together. Now, no backyard BBQ is safe in Florida. No garage, shed, or crawl space will offer you respite and protection from them either. For the East African Lowland Honey-Bee has been unleashed with all its fury. And they are coming to an abandoned vehicle, old tire, or manhole cover near you to let you know they are not your friends either.

Unfortunately, when we think about the spiritual forces of evil in the highest of places that we see at work in our world right this very minute, we view them much like the East African Lowland Honey-Bee. The Devil's bees have been unleashed from the manhole cover and they are not only impossible to contain, but they also keep reproducing at a rapid pace. The only thing we can do is run for our lives. It's almost as if we think the world is the devil's domain. His bees are too numerous to fight against. So instead of battling him as a representative of a Higher Authority, we resort to just wishing Jesus will come back soon so that He can take us out of here as soon as possible. Well church, I have great news for you today. The world isn't the devil's domain. It's Jesus' domain. And the last time I checked the Gospel, which was just this morning, the first time Jesus came into this world, he demonstrated authority dark spiritual force in the highest of places. And the next time he comes, he will do away with it permanently. And that's because Jesus is in charge. Not you. Not me. Not the devil. Not his dominions. Not your circumstances. Not your successes. Not your failures. Jesus has dominion on this earth and in your life. The question I have for you today, people of God, is this: Are you living like Jesus is in charge?

You see, I'm of the firm opinion that there are two types of Christians not only in the world today, but also in this room. The first group consists of those timid followers of Jesus who live in that murky, gray twilight between almost victory and not total defeat. The second group consists of those who have confidence in the Lord when engaging in spiritual battles against killer bees because they know they engage in the battle as a representative of the One who is really in charge. Which one are you? So today, I want to show you from the Gospel of Mark the difference between those Christians who live like Jesus is in charge and the ones who don't. To do that, please turn with me to Mark 1:21-28.

²¹ They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. ²² The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law. ²³ Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an impure spirit cried out, ²⁴ "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!" ²⁵ "Be quiet!" said Jesus sternly. "Come out of him!" ²⁶ The impure spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek. ²⁷ The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, "What is this? A new teaching—and with authority! He even gives orders to impure spirits, and they obey him." ²⁸ News about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee.

When Jesus Isn't In Charge vs When He Is

1. Manufactured vs Derivative (22)

- **The Strangest Request:** (1) Several years ago, I got the strangest request. I got a call from an older lady at the church to move something. I knew I was in trouble when she said you might need to bring one or two more people. I found out that something was a piano. And she had stairs. (2) If you move a piano up the stairs, you must manufacture strength. To move it down the stairs, your strength is a derivative of gravity. (3) Problem in spiritual life is we think we must push the piano up the stairs.
- **Main Idea of the Point:** Not to live like Jesus is in charge is to manufacture power, confidence, strength, and authority within yourself. To live like Jesus is in charge is to derive your power, confidence, strength, and authority from another source: Jesus.
- **Textual Emphasis: Exousia:** (1) Do you see that word "authority" in v 22, it is important because it occurs over 20 times in the Book of Mark. It's the word exousia and means power, confidence, strength and authority. (2) But the phrase that comes immediately after it that begins with

a negation is no coincidence. (3) The teachers of the law didn't have this power. They couldn't manufacture it either. We can't manufacture it either. But we can have power, confidence, strength and authority over evil when we recognize it comes from a greater source. We are just the derivatives.

- **App:** How do we do this? One phrase: "in Jesus' name." Incorporate it into thoughts, actions, words and prayers. You don't have to verbalize it. But you can experience it. When you do, you'll notice what Paul did: His strength is manifested in your weakness.

2. Timidity vs Guts

- **I'm Sorry, But:** (1) There's a lot of phrases that can really make your skin crawl in the English language. Phrases like: "Ya'll come go with us" right before people leave. (2) But the worst is: "I'm sorry, but." (3) We say it a lot: "I'm sorry, but this isn't right." (3) Why are people sorry about saying something isn't right? (4) You can say you are sorry for something you've done that wasn't right. But to say you're sorry to help the truth go down a little easier means you have your apology in the wrong place.
- **Main Idea of the Point:** Timidity, lack of confidence, and having one's apology in the wrong place are the surest signs of a life absent of the authority of Christ. On the other hand, boldness, confidence, guts, and being unapologetic about the truth are the surest signs of a life that represents the authority of Christ.
- **Textual Emphasis: The Main Reason Christian's Live Defeated Lives:** (1) Is right here in the first exorcism ever recorded in the New Testament. (2) What's interesting is how demons address Jesus. They know more about him than the People of God. And they tremble. (3) But look how Jesus rebukes evil: with power, strength, authority, boldness, confidence, and guts. (4) But it doesn't stop there. When Jesus unleashed the disciples on the world, he gave them the power, strength, authority, boldness, confidence, and guts to do the exact same thing. (5) The only requirements were that they couldn't have a spirit of timidity and their apologies in the wrong place.
- **App:** For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline (1 Tim 1:7)

3. Surprise vs Expectation

- **The Thin Line Between Victory and Defeat:** (1) In athletic competitions at the highest levels, the margin between victory and defeat is often razor thin. Just one more yard; just a little bit stronger; just a little bit faster can determine the outcome. (2) The Christian life works very similar, but in a different way. It concerns surprise vs expectation. Many pray and go through life asking God to work in a particular way and are surprised when he answers. On the other hand, others expect him to.
- **Main Idea of the Point:** If Jesus' divine display of heavenly authority on this earth surprises you, he isn't in charge and needs to be. When you expect it, Jesus is where he needs to be.
- **Textual Emphasis: Amazed in Church:** (1) The setting of the entire passage is the synagogue. That's very important to the story because (a) Jesus casts out a demon from a person who went to church and observed religious occasions. As if to say, spiritual battles are not just outside the walls. They are inside it. And (b) the people of God in church were surprised. These are the same folks who grew up hearing about the Red Sea parting and Joshua making the sun stand still. They grew up hearing stories about Hezekiah's intercessions that stopped an invasion and Elijah bringing the dead back to life. But when they saw it, they were surprised. If those stories they heard were their stories, they would have expected it.
- **App:** The best way to avoid the tragedy of being surprised by God in church is to make the stories of the miraculous your story. Then the Word of God in your life isn't just a religious text. It's living and active, sharper than a double-edged sword.

4. Contradiction vs Representation

- **Ambassador of the United States:** (1) A United States Ambassador is our nation's highest-ranking representative to nations abroad. (2) That person is both a spokesperson for the USA and a spokesperson to the USA on behalf of the other nation. (3) Consequently, they operate in a spirit of reconciliation, not retaliation, especially if there is an issue. (4) As Christ followers, we are those representatives. We are sent with a mission to see His agenda is carried out in a spirit of reconciliation, not retaliation. For to retaliate is to contradict the authority bestowed as an ambassador.
- **Main Idea of the Point:** When Jesus is in charge, we live as representatives of that authority because he's bestowed that responsibility to us. When He's not, we live as walking contradictions of the authority we profess to represent.
- **Textual Emphasis: Where the News Originated:** (1) Notice what happens in the last verse. It's just as important as the others. (2) The news of a Messiah who demonstrated power, confidence, strength and authority over evil traveled from the synagogue to the region of Galilee. (3) In this one single solitary verse, we have a glimpse of God's future for the whole entire human race: he has given us the power to tear down the forces of evil in the highest of places with the Good News of the Gospel.
- **App:** This world isn't the devil's domain. This is the father's world. The battle is not done. For Jesus who died shall be satisfied. And earth and heaven be one. So, live like Jesus is in charge.