

Lectionary Gospel Commentaries

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Based on the Lectionary Pericope Covering:

SOLA-LSB (Lutheran Service Book):
RCL (Revised Common Lectionary):

Mark 1:21-28

Year B - Epiphany 4, Text: Mark 1:21-28
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In Mark 1:16–20, we read of Jesus calling four disciples: Simon Peter and Andrew, James and John. No disciple ever volunteers to become a student/follower of Jesus; Jesus does the calling. The disciples do not choose Jesus; Jesus chooses them. In Mark, the first miracle that Jesus performs involves a confrontation with a demoniac (1:21–28).

Jesus and the first four disciples enter a synagogue in Capernaum on a Sabbath day — and Jesus teaches. Those present are astonished by His teaching. Jesus does not say that *Rabbi So-and-So said this, and Rabbi So-and-So said that*. He says, “I say unto you...” Jesus teaches with authority, making an absolute claim on His hearers. His message is in the best tradition of the ancient prophets — not that of the rabbis and scribes of His day.

A man possessed with an “unclean spirit” comes before Jesus. He is “unclean” because of the spirit’s resistance to the holiness of God. The demonic presence knows who Jesus is, why He has come, and fears Jesus’ power to destroy its influence. It addresses Jesus as “*Jesus of Nazareth, the Holy One of God*” — an action reflecting the belief that the use of the precise name of an opposing spirit establishes mastery over him. But Jesus forbids the demon to speak, demonstrating His mastery over it! After Jesus casts the demon out of the man, the crowd is even more astonished, and Jesus’ fame begins to spread throughout Galilee.

Jesus then continues to proclaim His message in synagogues throughout Galilee and throws out numerous demons (1:39). Until Jesus takes control of a land and the hearts of its inhabitants, they are under the control of demonic powers.

In the latter part of the pre-Christian era and in Jesus’ day, the Jewish people grieved over the fact that down through the centuries they had lived under the domination of the Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians,

Persians, Greeks, Ptolemies, Seleucids, and Romans. They longed for the time when they, the “son of man,” “the saints of the Most High,” would be freed from foreign domination, and would themselves rule the nations of the world forever (Daniel 7, a most important chapter!). However, the true Son of Man, Jesus the Messiah, revealed to His hearers the true enemy: Satan and the realm of the demonic. Jesus conquered that demonic realm by living the life of a servant-without-limit to the point of giving away life on a cross. At Calvary, Jesus emerged the conqueror!

The Reformation fathers made reference to the existence of the Satanic Trio in terms of “the devil, the world, and our flesh.” We might think of the demonic in terms of every spirit, power, institution, and pressure that seeks to sidetrack us from serving God and others into serving ourselves.

Many who live in the Western world link “being blessed” to what they possess and enjoy. Jesus links it only to the degree His followers serve Him in all His distressing disguises. Jesus is, after all, the hungry one, the thirsty one, the one lacking friends and clothing, the sick, and the prison inmate (Matthew 25:31–46). The following statement by C.S. Lewis is profound — and will remain valid until time gives way to eternity: There is no neutral ground in the universe. Every inch is claimed by God and counterclaimed by Satan.

Several of Crossways International courses contain references to the reasons Edward Gibbons (author of *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*) lists for the decline and fall of the Roman system:

- Family life disintegrated.
- The world of entertainment became corrupt.
- Moral absolutes were discarded.
- The cost of the empire’s military system was paralyzing.
- The empire’s economy collapsed.

Indeed, food for thought in relation to today’s world!

