

Introductory

Matthew records three miracles of Jesus; He casts out unclean spirits (31-37), then He heals the mother-in-law of Peter (38-39), and then He generically heals various people of various diseases (40-44). Mark (1:21-24) parallels this entire text, as does Matthew, who severely condenses the first part. None of those texts are appointed to be read in the TLH one-year lectionary.

In LW and LSB, Mark 1:21-28 (an unclean spirit cast out) is appointed for Epiphany 4B, and Mark 1:29-39 (mother-in-law, various illnesses, and preaching in Galilee) is appointed for Epiphany 5B. Matthew's text, which contains less information than the other two, is never appointed to be read on any Sunday in any of our lectionaries, three-year or one-year.

Review demon basics. Demons still exist, but you probably don't see as much of it in Iowa as you do in some other places, like Madagascar. *I Am Not Afraid*, (\$14.15 @ Amazon) by Rev. Dr. Robert Bennett tells you about as much as you'll ever need to know about demonic activity there. See the rite of exorcism used there and note what you might call exorcism evangelism.

I did a search of Lutheran exorcism and the angelfire site was interesting. The Lutherans don't generally have a ritual like Rome, and their exorcisms seem to be more low-key all around. It also includes a very interesting account of what how Luther himself handled the case of a young woman who was brought to him with a demon. He did what I would do if I ever met a person possessed.

<http://www.angelfire.com/ny4/djw/lutherantheology.demonpossession.htm>

I have been in my current charge for nine years, I always preach from the Gospel on Sunday morning, and this will be the fourth time I have preached on this text. New people are always coming in, but most of my hearers know the basics of this and the other texts in the lectionary. Because of that, I find myself focusing on different verses or aspects of these familiar readings.

Last week, for example, I talked a lot about the synagogue service and how our liturgy is similar to and grew out of theirs. I also reviewed some basics of Divine Service. This week, I may spend more time than usual talking about how Peter was, married and Paul told Timothy to have "one wife," the history of clergy marriage in the Church, and they know all about the alternative.

It's set in Boston, and the hero is the reporter who broke the Priest scandal there. At the end of the movie, they list all the locations of widespread Roman Priest raping children, and there are a lot of them. City after city scrolls by, and then Grand Mound, a small town in eastern Iowa. People around here, Catholic, Lutheran, converts from the former to the latter, all say the same thing.

They should let the priests get married. If you look at the history – Wikipedia and Schaff (the latter is quoted heavily in the former) – Pastors have always married, and both the Church and the State often told them not to, with mixed results. It was only after the Reformation – which included a famous monk marrying a former nun – that Rome began to severely enforce celibacy for clergy.

There's actually a group called Married Priests Now! – their name says what is their cause – who say that there are 150,000 married Catholic priests, and many of them live married lives openly, or with a wink and a nod from the bishop. I don't know how much of that I will say from the pulpit, but if Christians don't condemn the teachings and practices of Rome – we should be.

When Muslims made something happen on 9-11, some Muslims even around here cheered. We want them and their clergy to condemn terrorism, but mostly they don't. The local paper – the Quad Cities Times – revels in condemning the pedophile priest, and a broken clock is right twice every day. We need to join the secular press in condemning that and other sins in the Church.

Textual Notes

Unclean Spirit Cast Out

31. Jesus has just been expelled from the synagogue in Nazareth. He goes from that village to “Καφαρναούμ πόλιν τῆς Γαλιλαίας – Capernaum, a city (not a town or village) of Galilee,” a distance of thirty-six miles, an easy trek by foot of a day, maybe two. Capernaum was a fishing town on the northwest coast of the Sea of Galilee, and it is being excavated even as we speak.

As is often the case, “καὶ ἦν διδάσκων αὐτοὺς ἐν τοῖς σάββασιν – He was teaching them on the Sabbath, presumably a week or more since the sabbath in Nazareth. Luke seems to assume that we know that such teaching would be occurring in the Synagogue, but we don't yet find that out for sure for a couple of verses, when He specifically places Him there.

31. When the people heard His teaching, “καὶ ἐξεπλήσσοντο ἐπὶ τῇ διδαχῇ αὐτοῦ - they were astonished at His teaching.” Last week, several verbs were used to describe the reaction of Nazareth to Jesus and His preaching. The verb used here to describe the response of Capernaum to Jesus teaching (“ἐκπλήσσω – astonished”) is not one of those words.

Matthew does use this word (13:54) to describe the Nazarenes at the second recorded visit and rejection in Nazareth. Twelve times altogether in the NT the word is used to describe what people

felt at the teaching of Jesus, and once at the teaching of Paul (Acts 13:12), where the Proconsul is said to be “ἐκπλησσομένοις ἐπὶ τῇ διδαχῇ τοῦ Κυρίου – astonished at the teaching of the Lord.”

It is noteworthy that Luke (Acts 13: 6-12) calls Proconsul Sergius Paulus “ἀνδρὶ συνετῷ - an intelligent man.” It was on Cyprus, and he was apparently being advised by false prophets and magicians Paul and Barnabas blinded Elymas who was a Magician, who had opposed them, and Sergius believed, in utter amazement not at the blinding, but at “the teaching of the Lord.”

That pericope juxtaposes the Word of God from the mouth of Paul with the magic of Elymas, which Paul notes is from Satan. God is on one side and Satan is on the other side, and they are fighting for the eternal soul of the Proconsul. There is no Word of Satan with which the spirit of Satan works to cause a conversion in him. The Word won out, and Sergius became a believer.

Here, the people of Capernaum are astonished at the teaching of Jesus “ὅτι ἐν ἐξουσίᾳ ἦν ὁ λόγος αὐτοῦ - because with authority was His Word.” Whether it’s Jesus or somebody else doing the talking, regardless of the person delivering the Word, the people find the content of the teaching to be the thing that gets their attention; they had never heard anything like that before.

We have heard it before, and perhaps we sometimes may take the tenets of the Christian religion for granted. Compare and contrast our religion to others in terms of things like how you get to heaven, how we talk to God, and how God talks to us. Compare the Natural Man’s knowledge and the result of it to the Spiritual Man’s knowledge that comes by divine revelation.

I have known many people over the years who have come to church, heard the Word, and they want to be baptized. I went to seminary with several men who had been raised other than LCMS, who had church shopped, one in particular told me they were looking for a church that “taught the Word of God like it is in the Bible. That’s the power of the Word of God to do what it does.

33. Now Luke tells us that this took place “ἐν τῇ συναγωγῇ - in the synagogue,” on the Sabbath, during the service, business as usual, and then something unusual happened; an interruption to the service, like the announcements, or a Children’s Sermon, “ἦν ἄνθρωπος ἔχων πνεῦμα δαιμονίου - there was a man, having a spirit of an unclean demon,” and we see a lot of that in the NT.

And He came to talk to Jesus, “ἀκαθάρτου, καὶ ἀνέκραξεν φωνῇ μεγάλῃ – and he cried out in a loud voice,” addressing Jesus. In the Early Church it was not uncommon for listeners to interrupt the preacher with questions or comments. In some churches today, people routinely make comments during the sermon, mostly “amen.” It’s the format for us for Adult Bible Class.

34. The man who had the demon cried out loudly, “Ἐα, τί ἡμῖν καὶ σοί, Ἰησοῦ Ναζαρινέ; ἦλθες ἀπολέσαι ἡμᾶς – Oh! What between us and you, Jesus of Nazareth, come to destroy us.” He

knows who Jesus is, and he knows why Jesus has left heaven to come to earth. Note the numbers of the pronouns; one demon is speaking, but he knows that Jesus has come to destroy all of them.

It was no great shakes that the demon knew that Jesus was from Nazareth; it was never a secret, and by that time everybody knew that about Him. However, not everybody knew what the demon knows; “οἶδά σε τίς εἶ, ὁ Ἅγιος τοῦ Θεοῦ - I know who you are; the Son of God.” Perhaps things like this are what James has in mind when he states that the demons believe, and shudder.

The “between us and you” sounds a lot like the “between me and you” said to Mary at the wedding in Cana. I do not recall us noting that the term has connotations of messianic timing, as in “my time has not yet come.” The clearest example of that connotation is at Gadarenes, where demons ask Him (Mt 8:29) “what’s between us and you,” and if He has come for them “before the time.”

The fact that the demon was aware that Jesus came to destroy them means that the demon was aware that Jesus is Messiah. We ought not to think that people were in the OT willy-nilly casting out great numbers of demons, and up to this point none have been recorded at the hand of Jesus. Not just anybody can cast out demons, but this demon knows his enemy, and his name is Jesus.

35. For His part, Jesus makes quick work of it, “καὶ ἐπετίμησεν αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς λέγων Φιμώθητι καὶ ἔξελθε ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ - and Jesus rebuked him, saying, ‘shut up and come out of him,’” and the demon did just that. He came out of the man, and Luke notes that in exiting, the demon “μηδὲν βλάβαν αὐτόν – did him no injury,” meaning that the demon left no lasting effects on the man.

The verb “rebuked” occurs twenty-nine times in the NT. It seems to have a variety of specific meanings, but the gist of it seems to be that there are two sides who have different, very often opposite ideas that are never going to be able to cohabitate: things like right and wrong, good and evil, and the like. Jesus and the demons are never going to get along. Same for us Christians.

Nor can demons be present for Divine Service. The command to silence – does that mean we can tell somebody to “shut up”? – is in the imperative mode. Inside the walls of that Holy Place, God’s Word is proclaimed, it must not only reign supreme, but it must be exclusive of all other words. It is especially inappropriate for any words from any demon to be heard inside of God’s House.

The second imperative is for the demon to come out of the man, and the demon is powerless to resist or disobey the command. The actual series of events is the demon throws the man “εἰς τὸ μέσον – into the middle” of the congregants, then “ἐξῆλθεν ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ - went out from him,” a preposition of motion out from the man, and no possessed people were hurt in this possession.

36. The response of the crowds to what they had just seen and heard is that they were “θάμβος.” That word occurs only three times in the NT, all at the hand of Luke: here, at the great catch of fish (5:9), and when a lame man is healed (Acts 3:10). The word carries connotations of confusion and difficulty in believing what one is hearing and seeing. I might use the word “gob smacked.”

They say to one another that they are amazed at His ability to command unclean spirits like He had just done, something that was so uncommon as to have been unheard of. If you look at the list of religions that have people doing what Jesus did here, and later on the Apostles and a few others will do, it's an extremely short list; Christ and some Christians can do this, and that's about it.

Jesus does that, and then He passes the ability to do miracles on to the Twelve and also to the Seventy (Luke 10:9). The Twelve lay hands and pass that ability on to others, and that's where the ability to do miraculous thing, like Jesus does – on demand, happens every time, see Paul Maier *The First Christians* for a definitive rendering of how these Christian miracles are unique.

By now my people have added the word “gob smacked” to their vocabulary.

37. It's the kind of thing that word gets around.

Mother-In-Law Healed

38. Like the New Journalists, the writers of the Bible often use shifting scenes to make a good true story more interesting, more compelling, and easier to listen to, and that's a good thing. He leaves the synagogue and enters the house of Simon (Peter). Peter was from there, and the excavators have uncovered the house they believe belonged to him. His wife's mother also lived in that town.

The mother-in-law is said to have “πυρετῷ μεγάλῳ - a great fever.” A fever is a symptom, not an illness, and a doctor like Luke would have easily made that distinction. As is the case today, a fever is an indication several possible types of illnesses or maladies ranging from a bug that will pass in a day or two, or maybe it's the beginning of a disease that will prove fatal. Time will tell.

Nor, at this point, is it recorded by any of the synoptics that Jesus had healed anybody of any disease. The “they” who think Jesus is able to do that must have gotten that idea from the OT, where a plethora of prophets say many times that Messiah will bring healing – among other things – when He arrives. It appears that the people of Capernaum know their OT better than Nazareth.

Matthew quotes from Isaiah, who was one of the prophets who talked about messianic healings.

We are told that “καὶ ἠρώτησαν αὐτὸν περὶ αὐτῆς – they appealed to Him on behalf of her.” The “they” would have been people who knew that she was sick, and who thought that Jesus could cure her illness, family probably. Luke has just told us that word of Jesus casting out the demon has spread like wildfire, and certainly it had made it into this woman's ear, but she is not the asker.

The “they” is certainly not the sick woman, and there is no indication of faith on her part, and how would you feel if your son-in-law had left a successful fishing business behind to follow Jesus' traipsing all around the country, causing commotion, putting himself and her in danger by his very proximity to Jesus, and what about her daughter. What would that mother-in-law think of Jesus?

39. The same word describing His “rebuke” of the demon is used here to tell of His “rebuke” of the fever. Demons and illness are two peas in the same pod; neither were present in paradise, both enter the world after the Fall into sin, neither will be present in heaven, and both do bad and not good to and for people, and are to be opposed on every front, like people “fight” with cancer.

Sickness is caused by things like bacteria and viruses and the like attacking the body, seeking to do it harm. Sickness is bad, and upon rebuke all those things must leave the body God has created. The sickness here went the way of the demon; Jesus rebuked it, and it left quickly and completely. The healing is so complete that she jumps right up and asks what everybody would like to drink.

Many People, Many Ailments, Many Healings

40. He didn’t stop there. After the sun went down, through the night, He labored, and Luke piles on verbiage to communicate to us just how many people were brought to Jesus and how varied were their maladies. As they were brought to Him “δὲ ἐνὶ ἐκάστῳ αὐτῶν τὰς χεῖρας ἐπιτίθεις ἐθεράπευεν αὐτούς – He laid hands on each and every one of them, and he was healing them.”

You’ve heard the term “killing machine.” I might call Jesus a “healing machine.”

41. Then there were the demon-possessed. In the first part of this pericope, Luke goes into some detail to give us a snapshot of what it looks like for Jesus to be confronted with a demon and how He deals with it. Here he tells us that there were many more to come, and you have to think the casting out of one demon would be very similar to the casting out of another; say the Word, gone.

As the demons are being cast out, “πολλῶν, κραυγάζοντα καὶ λέγοντα ὅτι Σὺ εἶ ὁ Υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ - many were crying out and saying that ‘You are the Son of God.’” The crying out is a present participle, and what they now call Him is different from and more specific than what the single demon in the synagogue (who proclaimed Him, “the Holy One of God”) was calling Him.

Once again, “καὶ ἐπιτιμῶν οὐκ εἶα αὐτὰ λαλεῖν, ὅτι ᾔδεισαν τὸν Χριστὸν αὐτὸν εἶναι – and He rebuked them, He did not allow them to speak because they knew Him to be the Christ.” To know Him as the “Son of God” is to know Him as “the Christ,” and the demons knew Him to bear both of those identifying titles. They knew who He was, and said it, and He told them to shut up.

They know who He is, like the one in synagogue had known His identity, and here and there the demons can be said to be acknowledging that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. We might even call that giving praise to God. But whether in synagogue or out of synagogue, it is inappropriate for demons to praise Jesus. It is, however, very appropriate for humans to praise God.

The picture painted here by Luke is that of what must looked something like an assembly line of people with various afflictions coming in the front door, Jesus fixes that affliction, out the back

door, and it went on throughout the night. It's what the Sacrament looks like since we switched from "tables" to continuous line. We did it for The Thing, and it works, and we're keeping it.

We also put the offering plates on a table in the back of the church, and people leave their offering on the way in or on the way out. Sort of like they did with their alms and the like in the Temple. It eliminates the need for Ushers, saves the time it takes to collect, compile the assets in the back, bring them up to the altar, and get the positioning and bowing right, and we're keeping that too.

42. The sun came up, and the all-nighter has left Him tuckered out, and as He was often wont to do, He sought out a place alone, far from the madding crowd. But they would not let Him. They sought Him out, found Him out, and kept Him from leaving them. Luke tells us "κατεῖχον αὐτὸν – they detained Him," an imperfect verb meaning that – whatever it was – they kept it up.

That word can mean anything from friendly verbal persuasion to physically keeping Him from leaving and many things in between. Luke doesn't say that they said anything to keep Him there, but the point is that they wanted Him to stay and not to leave. Contrast that with last week, where the people of Nazareth did sort of want Jesus to leave, and they were adamant about that desire.

43. Luke does record a response from Jesus, and that response seems to be telling them not to be so selfish; telling them "ὅτι Καὶ ταῖς ἑτέραις πόλεσιν εὐαγγελίσασθαι με δεῖ τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ Θεοῦ - that it is necessary for Me also to (go to) the other towns to preach the Gospel; the Kingdom of God." It would have been easy for Him to stay where they were detaining Him, but alas...

It's really too bad that Jesus can't be in more than one place at one time, and His presence with them meant that He could not be present with the others as was "necessary," have to. Later on, He would solve that problem of His presence being localized by instituting the Sacrament of the Altar, where He can be – and where He is – really present in multiple locations at the same time.

He goes "ὅτι ἐπὶ τοῦτο ἀπεστάλην – because for this I was sent," and we note once again that the Christian religion is spread and practiced and learned with words. Not all religions use that to do those things. Pagan religions are about ritual and not words, and the religions that use words that are the wrong words – well, they do more harm than good, don't they.

44. From there we find Him "καὶ ἦν κηρύσσων εἰς τὰς συναγωγὰς τῆς Ἰουδαίας – preaching in the synagogues of Judea." The present participle here means that He did that habitually, like the Pastor is in the habit of doing Divine Service – with a sermon – on Sunday morning. We got a glimpse of synagogue rubrics last week and saw how Jesus took advantage of the open mic to preach.

During the week, He did the same. We find Him variously preaching in open fields, from a boat, and at Temple, to name a few. Paul would follow His lead as he made his way through the mission field, speaking at places like the marketplace, Mars Hill, and the synagogue ("place of prayer"). He also spoke in court, in an amphitheater in Ephesus, and to the guards in prison, to name a few.

These days, people habitually come to church on Sunday mornings, and the pastor preaches the Word. We also go into nursing homes, hospitals and homes. Sometimes we bring the Word via the radio, and these days especially by means of the Internet, taking advantage of all venues to do this very important work of proclaiming the Gospel to a world that desperately needs to hear it.

Hymns

LSB 578 – Thy Strong Word

LSB 849 – Praise the One

LSB 666 – O Little Flock

LSB 716 – I Walk in Danger

LSB 657 – A Mighty Fortress