

“About 3 Powers” Mark 1:21-28

“And they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath he entered the synagogue and was teaching. And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes. And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, “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.” But Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be silent, and come out of him!” And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying out with a loud voice, came out of him. And they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, “What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.” And at once his fame spread everywhere throughout all the surrounding region of Galilee.”

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!

The Jesus that Mark portrays to us is so full of energy. Overflowing with energy and power. He walks and He sees Peter and Andrew fishing, and immediately He calls them, and they immediately follow. Same with James and John, sons of Zebedee.

And immediately He goes to Capernaum and to the synagogue, and He speaks, and everyone listens, and they are astonished. And the unclean spirit challenges Him, and boom-boom, Jesus rebukes him: “Shut up, get out!” Everyone is thunderstruck...

“What is this? Who is this? New teaching? Such authority, such might!” And immediately Jesus’ fame goes to all the surrounding regions. Such power, so attractive, so appealing... people are drawn to Him.

Authority or power seems to be quite central in this event. Let’s reflect today on **three powers. On all power, on our power and on God’s power for us.** All power, our power and God’s power for us.

First, **about all power.** We could say that the event we read about is both a bit funny and alarming. Jesus, this young rabbi speaks, the address is powerful and engaging, different from how their religious leaders usually taught them. His listeners are astounded. They like it.

Then comes the episode with the unclean spirit. Jesus commands with power and the spirit leaves. Boom! And those who witnessed it go away spreading the word of what they had seen. Why are they so impressed? Is it the speech or the exorcism?

This is kind of alarming. This is what the fallen humanity is like. We can easily get impressed and carried away by some expressions of power, some mysteries, some miracles, as if that was something worth our admiration. We crave that power.

But at the same time, we can be completely uninterested in the most powerful Being, the Triune God. By the way, that's how the anti-Christ will deceive so many according to Paul: "[By] power and false signs and wonders..." (2 Thes 2:9)

Even today people may be curious about Jesus as a teacher or miracle worker, yes, sure, but not about Jesus for who He truly is. Who is this Jesus? Remember how Paul the apostle wrote about Him:

"For by Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible... all things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together." (Col 1:16-17) That's it!

He is God. He is the Creator. And that's why this event is a bit funny. What a big deal to rebuke and cast out an unclean spirit? Why be so amazed by it? Jesus is the One about whom the book of Daniel speaks:

"Behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man... And to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom... His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away." (Dan 7:13-14)

He is the One who says to His disciples: **"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."** (Mt 28:18) He is the One whom John sees in His vision of heavenly realities and to whom are given the keys to the world's history.

So, of course, it is understandable that He speaks and acts with authority. He is all powerful. We have no idea... yes, everything is under His authority – invisible world, good and evil, visible world, this abundant creation and all the countless galaxies that there are. Also, time and space and even life and death.

All powerful... However, there is something where all this power still falls short, something where power alone is not sufficient. Can you guess what it may be? This is where we get to our **second point. Our power.** Yes, there is something that even an all-powerful God can't do.

With all His power He can't make our hearts of ice to be warm towards Him. To fear, love and trust Him above all things. Nope! Surely, He could command absolute obedience. Nothing could be easier. He is fully in control, but... He is not controlling. He respects you. He wants us to fear, love and trust Him not by force, but by choice.

And so, we have this frightening power. We can reject Him. We can push Him away. We can ignore His voice continually calling us, we can shut our eyes and ears and go on about our lives as if He didn't exist. We can. And we do. Yes, we all do it.

And we do it believing that we are self-sufficient, independent, masters and commanders of our own lives and fates. Autonomous and powerful. But what we resist today, what we reject is actually not God's power, it is His grace. His love.

We reject Him when He comes to us as a loving bridegroom to His beloved bride. We are not strong, we are stupid. We are not self-sufficient, we are foolish. Still... He has, indeed, granted us this power, this freedom. To reject His grace. For now...

And what do we do with this power? How does it shape our lives? How do we benefit from rejecting God's grace? Are we more at peace about our future without Him? Are we more joyful and hopeful? Are we more generous with what is given to us? Are we more forgiving and caring? No! Instead, we become much more selfish.

We have deceived ourselves into believing that we are in charge of our lives, that material things will keep us safe and make us happy, that we can make a name for ourselves, choose our own purpose and meaning, be our own makers, etc.

Yes, we have the power to do all these foolish things. But only because... our God still gives us life, He gives us every heart beat every second, because He holds and protects us every day, because He walks with us and provides for us our daily bread, all that we need to continue our foolish rebellion. He sustains us.

What incredible patience! What incredible respect He shows to us! And how do we respond? How highly He values us, how significant we are in His eyes that He is so patient with us, so long suffering, so gracious, so forgiving?! For now...

But then, one day, and it may not be too far in future, He will come in His full glory with all the myriads of fearsome angels, and no one will be able to withstand that summoning, the dead will be raised and nothing will be forgotten.

We all will have to give an account for our lives. No one will get away with anything. We could summarize this saying that all that our power to resist does is lead us to God's judgement. Which brings us to our final point.

How to get away on that terrifying day? How to stand in that judgment? And this is about **God's power for us. God's power for you.** That day surely is coming. But before it is here, the Triune God has chosen to engage with us differently.

Sure, He can overpower us. One word would suffice. He is the Creator; we are His creatures. Our very existence is His gift to us. As the psalmist said: "[**All creatures look to you**] when **You open your hand, they are filled with good things. When You take away their breath, they die and return to their dust.**" (Ps 104:28-29)

But in dealing with us, this all-powerful God has chosen to surrender His power. He has chosen to surprise us. He has chosen to become one of us. As Paul the apostle wrote: "[**He**] **emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men... And being found in human form, He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.**" (Phil 2)

The all-powerful God wants to overpower you. That is His plan and hope. Sure. He is open about it. He wants to disarm our resistance; He wants to squash our rebellion. But He wants to do it with His love, with His commitment to you.

When you learn that He has made arrangements for that last day. That Holy God has counted all your sins and judged you deserving His wrath and punishment. But then... He has chosen to take your place, the Son of God Himself has stepped into your place, He has drunk the cup of God's wrath, your punishment has been laid on His shoulders. It's done. It's finished. Everything is forgiven. You are forgiven.

He overpowers you when you are captured by His loving kindness. When you experience the beauty of His self-sacrificial grace and goodness towards you. When you hear His voice declaring to you: "I forgive you all your sins!"

When you hear of His unceasing love while being fed the very medicine of eternal life, Jesus body and blood, surrounded by His people in His congregation. When He fills you with heart-warming hope and gives you a bright glimpse of what blessed and joy-filled life He has prepared for you in the age to come. New Creation...

His grace, the presence of His Spirit with you is what overpowers you, when you hear this Good News. When He comes to you, and when experiencing His affection plays on the strings of your hearts that melody that you have always longed to hear. And you feel at home. With your God. For that is where you belong.

So yes, our Triune God, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit is indeed holy and all-powerful. He is. And that is His power and care that provides for us this incredible place to live, our bountiful planet.

But He also has created us for very special personal relationships. Yes, you! He wants to have free and genuine relationships with you. Even if it means to give us power to hurt Him by our hard-heartedness and our rejection of His love.

He created you, He has redeemed you, and now He desires that you would learn and be reminded of what He has done for you on that cross and what He daily does for you, so that you would freely respond to His love and commitment.

This is my prayer for us all. That the Spirit of God would keep overpowering us, would keep melting our hearts of ice, would keep filling us with life and affection to the One who uses all His power and authority for our sake.

So that the day when Jesus comes with all His power and glory revealed would be the best day in your lives, the day when you will be invited to share God's power and authority and to reign with Him forever: "My child, I have been waiting for you, come and receive the kingdom prepared for you! Come and reign with me!"

To our gracious God be the power and the glory forever and ever! Amen.

The peace of God that surpasses all our understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Jesus Christ!

Amen.