

The Fourth Sunday After the Epiphany of Our Lord
(2021)

Mark 1

Mark 1:21–28 And they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath [Jesus] 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.

In the Name of Jesus.

Christ our Lord taught with authority—NOT like the most Bible-ly of Bible experts of His day. And He is risen from the dead! And He KEEPS teaching: NOT-LIKE those who turn the Bah-bull into codes and legislations and the dark abode of demons. The Holy Spirit now teaches what Jesus taught: the Gospel!

‘Shush!’ to A...N...Y... other SPIRIT! They are ALL unclean: except The ONE Spirit, the Holy One, Who ALWAYS rejoices to fill our mouths with the praises of the One Who cried out in a loud voice on the cross and then breathed His last.

Therefore, the Small Catechism of Doctor Martin Luther is the Holy Spirit’s authoritative teaching. Read with me, my dear ones, the First Two of four questions about our Baptism into Christ and the Spirit’s teaching with authority:

Holy Baptism - First

What is Holy Baptism?

Holy Baptism is not just plain water, but it is the water included in God’s command and combined with God’s word.

Which is that word of God?

Christ our Lord says in the last chapter of Matthew:
 “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations,
 baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the
 Son and of the Holy Spirit.” (Matthew 28:19)

Holy Baptism - Second

What benefits does Holy Baptism give?

It works forgiveness of sins, rescues from death and
 the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who
 believe this, as the words and promises of God
 declare.

Which are these words and promises of God?

Christ our Lord says in the last chapter of Mark:
 “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but
 whoever does not believe will be condemned.” (Mark
 16:16)

What’s the saying? ‘When all the shouting’s over!’?

There is actually a bit of shouting in the Gospel
 according to Saint Mark, screaming even, screeching.

From the unclean spirit about HIS bath day, to the Legion in that fellow aspiring to be pigs. To this loud sound—and, yes, there is something most frightening going on here:

³³ And when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour.
³⁴ And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?” which means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” ³⁵ And some of the bystanders hearing it said, “Behold, he is calling Elijah.” ³⁶ And someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink, saying, “Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down.” ³⁷ And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last.¹

That’s TWO of the same we read on the day that that unclean spirit suddenly appeared in church. ‘In a loud voice; screaming; screeching.’ And Jesus too. Hallelujah. Praise the Lord.

If your poor pastor has a goal in life as a pastor it is

¹ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (Mk 15:33–37). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

to preach with authority, NOT as a Bible trivia expert. I call on y'all to repent of your sins and believe the Good News that announces the coming of the kingdom of God: HERE! NOW! Among us.

So, 'YOU...FIRST, pastor! Confess YOUR weakness!'

I'm glad you demanded the this morning.

I—even I! The Grinch himself!—even I read about the unclean spirit and was immediately possessed, like every other Bible teacher in the world. Possessed, I found a startling picture of Jesus waving His magical wand or arms—or something—and this scary lookin' thang screeching out of a man.

And then, this week, the Holy Spirit blew on in, when I was making my daily memorial of MY Baptism faith. 'Why, pastor Paul, do you want to preach like everybody else—about UNCLEAN spirits!—rather than about Me?'

My dear disciples of Jesus, Christ your Lord jumped right into our obsessions and possessions and all the screaming and noise. But He **STARTED** as the Holy Spirit bids **YOU** to start the day, **FILL** the day, **END** the day, your life. After all the shouting is done:

⁹ In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰ And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. ¹¹ And a voice came from heaven, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”

¹² The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. ¹³ And he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. And he was with the wild animals, and the angels were ministering to him.

2

‘Shush!’ you say, my dear ones: when ANY screechin’ preechin’ goes ON and ON about YOU—and YOU—and how to avoid destruction by a great big change about YOU! ‘Oh, shush! What about

² [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (Mk 1:9–13). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

Jesus when He was baptized and moved on lived like all the rest of us, the sinners?’

‘Shush!’ you learn to dismiss with your Lord, every voice—especially the unclean spirit inside you, me!—who would look for something FINAL, something the SETTLES things in the great struggle over US, which is not waged by US at all, but by the spirits of noise and the Spirit Who comes as a Dove.

Oh, and ‘Shush!’ you say to the next poor man, who is sullied by the teachers of laws, and by spirits of THIS place, and by guilt...

‘Shush!’ you tell him, when he is afraid and doubting about HIS place with God. ‘Shush!’ you tell him. ‘Christ the Lord is with us all the way! And now, His Holy Spirit is with us, with YOU, all the way, in your everyday ordinariness and sin and uncleanness. Let HIM worry about cleaning this world, cleaning us!’

Together, let us eat the Bread Christ our Lord calls His Body, and drink the Wine Christ our Lord calls His Blood. And let Christ our Lord ‘Shush!’ for good

every voice that would move the final word from heaven about us, **AWAY...FROM...US!** In the Name of Jesus. Amen.