



## Mark 1:21-45 - "Healing Hassles" - January 24, 2021

### OPEN

Charles Krauthammer wrote an article, "[Will It Be Coffee, Tea, or He?](#)" in which he examined G. K. Chesterton's contention that "*tolerance is the virtue of people who do not believe in anything.*"

Krauthammer commented further, "...in our thoroughly secularized culture, there is one form of religious intolerance that does survive. And that is the disdain bordering on contempt of the culture makers for the deeply religious, i.e., those for whom religion is not a preference but a conviction."

Jesus calls us to a place of conviction! While on this earth Jesus did not say: "consider coming along with Me if you cannot find something else more appetizing from the religious smorgasbord". Quite the opposite, Jesus called humanity to a radical decision concerning who He is and what He has accomplished.

As we read in Mark 1:16:20 and 2:13-14, men like Simon (Peter), Andrew, James, John, and later Levi (Matthew) accepted His invitation to participate in His mission. So far, we have seen the **preparation** (Mark 1:1-8) and the **launch** (Mark 1:9-20) of Jesus' earthly ministry.

Mark's writing style is concise and selective. Mark's purpose was to proclaim the mission and message of Jesus, not only to give a biography of Jesus' activities. Mark used "**immediately**" or "**straight away**" forty times. Mark 1:10 is the first occasion – notice that in the NIV "As" is actually "*And immediately*" in the original Greek. The author [A. W. Pink](#) suggests that this term highlights the servanthood of Jesus and the sense of urgency within Mark's Gospel.

This is reflected in Jesus early healing ministry in Galilee. You would think that His healing power would compel many to follow. But these healings brought hassles, in the form of inappropriate motivations for following Jesus.

In three selective scenes Mark helps us see hindrances or dangers which actually cause us to follow Jesus incorrectly.

### DIG

#### ONE: The danger of sensationalism - vv. 21-28

This passage began with Jesus teaching in the synagogue at Capernaum (v.21). The people were profoundly **amazed** at His authority. Jesus taught as the Source of truth, not as the rabbis of the day who grasped after truth. They leaned on various Rabbinic sources, who were **pettifoggers**, at best ("one given to quibbling over trifles" see [Merriam-Webster](#)).

What happened next? **Immediately** (v.23) Jesus was confronted by an evil spirit, which clearly understood the true nature of Jesus – "the Holy One of God" (v.24). Jesus silenced (literally, "muzzled") the demon and sent it out of the man. But this was not without some sensational effect – shaking and shrieking ensued (v.26)! It is not the presence of sensation or emotion that becomes a problem in our walk with Jesus – it is our pursuit of sensational experience that causes us to drift spiritually.

It is important that we learn from the response of the people. Mark never indicated whether this man became a follower of Jesus. But Mark indicates in verse 28 that the astonishment of the people caused the fame of Jesus to spread throughout the Galilean region. Bear in mind, Jesus was not just looking to "wow" the crowd. Jesus was not trying to produce astonishment but obedient followers.

In 2018 a report called "[Renegotiating Faith: The Delay in Young Adult Identity Formation and What It Means for the Church in Canada](#)" was produced by the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. Among the spiritual dangers identified, the report highlighted a phobia: **FNBA = the Fear of Not Being Amazing**.

Is this really a new phobia? Even in Jesus' day the people were longing after sensational spiritual experiences. Consider carefully what Mark has documented about Jesus' exorcism in the synagogue. We read about people who were emotionally responsive. They were fascinated but not followers. They were seekers of the sensational – wondering without believing.

#### TWO: The danger of activism - vv. 29-39

In the next scene we discover a dramatic contrast. In verses 29-31 Mark recorded another healing miracle. Jesus healed Simon's mother-in-law of a fever. What was the result? According to verses 32-34, the "**whole town**" of Capernaum came to Jesus with their needs! Jesus was being pressured into a ministry of activism.

Gordon McDonald wrote **Ordering Your Private World** (Oliver-Nelson, 1985) which resonated with many who feel pressured to perform spiritually. What is a driven person like?



Here are some characteristics of a driven person...

- A driven person is most often gratified only by accomplishment
- A driven person is preoccupied with the symbols of accomplishment
- A driven person is usually caught in the uncontrolled pursuit of expansion
- Driven people tend to have a limited regard for integrity
- Driven people often possess limited or undeveloped people skills
- Driven people tend to be highly competitive
- A driven person often possesses a volcanic force of anger
- Driven people are usually abnormally busy

This describes well the danger zone Jesus faced. Even His followers (v.36) joined the crowds (v.37) in pressuring Him to perform more tasks. This does not mean Jesus activity in healing was wrong! Mark recorded that Jesus was **active** in healing and driving out demons (v.34). However, instead of becoming completely absorbed in mere activism, Jesus modeled two essential practices for His followers.

- **Jesus remained rooted** - v. 35 - Jesus nurtured a deep relationship with the Father. This kept Him resourced, renewed, even refreshed despite the demands all around Him.
- **Jesus maintained mission** - vv. 38-39 - Knowing His calling Jesus remained focused on His mission to proclaim the Kingdom of God and call people to repentance.

**telophobia** is the fear of not being good enough (from Greek “imperfect” and “fear”). Mere activism for Jesus is as dangerous as merely being astonished at Him! Spiritual atelophobia is addressed by the truth of the believer’s core identity in Christ.

### THREE: The danger of pragmatism - vv. 40-45

The third scene [introduced only by “and”] described Jesus’ compassionate healing of a leper. Jesus dismissed him (v.43) “**at once** (ευϋου) **with a strong warning**” (originally meant to “snort like a horse”). Rather than advertise the miracle, Jesus instructed him to appear before the priest and make sacrifice (v.44; Leviticus 14:1-32). Had he done so, the religious establishment would have faced the authority and legitimacy of Jesus’ mission. But the man “*talked freely, spreading the news*” which portrayed Jesus as a “miracle worker” and hindered His ministry in the nearby towns (v.45).

God’s work is not accomplished by pragmatism...which elevates the gift above the Giver. People may be drawn to Jesus for a specific need – but Jesus is not the “make a wish foundation”! He is the divine Redeemer. Today, religious pragmatism is rampant.

*“Modernization brought broad prosperity, relatively safe social systems, and a grand feeling of self-sufficiency. God became dispensable. People found that they could live very comfortable without Him, so that’s what many of them did...it really didn’t matter what you believed as long as it helped you get through the day.”* (**Lifestyle Discipleship: The Challenge Of Following Jesus In Today’s World**, by Jim Petersen, NavPress, 1994, 16)

#### REFLECT

In Mark 8:34-35 we read these words of Jesus: “*If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow me. If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake and for the sake of the Good News, you will save it.*”

It seems counterintuitive doesn’t it? That is because we soaked in societal norms like “you earned it” or “you deserve it” or “look out for number one”. We must make a **personal** commitment of ourselves to follow Jesus.

If you are a follower of Jesus, take some time to reflect upon your core identity in Christ, read **Colossians 2:9-10** and **Galatians 2:20!**

But following Jesus is not individual – it is best done in **community!** You are encouraged to be part of a [Home Group](#). This week our Home Groups will revisit Mark 1:29-39 to think about the danger of spiritual activism vs a life that is rooted in Christ and on mission with Him.

Here is a *YouVersion* [reading plan for Mark](#). Perhaps this could be your devotional reading for the next weeks.