



**Building Community
Changing Lives
Bringing Hope**

SUMMIT
C H U R C H

Being Jesus Christ to the World

***Theme: Good, Good News!
“Good News Spreads Quickly”***

Sermon preached by Jeff Huber

January 30-31, 2021

Weekly Memory Verse:

***⁶ But for us,
There is one God, the Father,
by whom all things were created,
and for whom we live.
And there is one Lord, Jesus Christ,
through whom all things were created,
and through whom we live. –1 Corinthians 8:6***

Scripture Readings:

1 Corinthians 8:1-13 and Mark 1:21-28

VIDEO Sermon Bumper

SLIDE “Good News Spreads Quickly”

My name is Jeff Huber and I’m Lead Pastor at Summit Church and we are so glad you have joined us for this time of worship. Today we continue in a series of sermons on the good, Good News. We believe as

followers of Jesus that he came to offer Good News, but it can feel elusive in today's world as we watch world and life events unfold. This series is about looking at Jesus with some fresh eyes to discover the power of the Good News he proclaimed and lived so we, "might have life and have it to the full."

One of the things talked about in this series is that many people are asking today not if the Gospel or the stories of Jesus are true, but if the Good News that he came to proclaim is really good. It can often feel like the Good News of Jesus Christ, that God came into the world to love us and be with us, is something we must earn instead of free gift to which we simply must respond. What we want to do in this series of sermons is remind ourselves of the Good, Good News that God made us to love us and came as this infant, young man, Lord and Savior Jesus to show us that love in a very tangible way.

I heard this TRUE STORY about a devout Christian couple who wanted a trained Christian dog? They got him from a special breeder and were so proud of him. One night they invited all their friends over to witness this new dog and the great Christian things he could do. With everyone gathered around, the husband looked at the dog and said, "Luke, Chapter 12, verse 10."

Quickly, the dog went to the other room and returned with a Bible held softly in his mouth. He set down the Bible and used his paw to open it to the exact page of Luke 12, verse 10.

After finding several scriptures, one of their friends asked if the dog knew any normal dog commands. The couple wasn't sure, so they looked at their dog and said, "SIT." The dog simply stood there. "LAY DOWN!" Again, the dog stood there, tilting his head to the side.

Finally, the husband said, "HEEL!" Quickly, the dog jumped in the man's lap and placed his paws on the man's forehead and began to howl...

As we continue to talk about the good, Good News Jesus came to deliver, we focusing today on, guess what? Healing! Let's jump right in and look at this story in Mark 1. As we have noted the past few weeks, Mark's gospel does not begin with the Christmas story, or the birth of Jesus, but rather with the baptism and temptation of Jesus, and then the calling of the disciples. The author of Mark is thought to be John Mark, one of the followers of the disciple Peter. Mark's focus is clearly on the disciples, and those who followed Jesus AND how Jesus prepared them to be carry on his mission of sharing the good, Good News after he was gone.

It is worth noting that the very first thing Jesus does in Mark is not give a sermon or tell a parable. Jesus is active and does stuff. We learned the last couple weeks that Jesus was baptized, and he borrowed people's boats. We learn a lot about being a follower of Jesus and sharing his good, Good News by seeing what he does. One of the first things Jesus does in Mark's gospel is what? Jesus performs a miracle and the first one is a dozy! Turn to the first chapter of Mark with me, verse 21.

BIBLE

²¹ Jesus and his companions went to the town of Capernaum. When the Sabbath day came, he went into the synagogue and began to teach. ²² The people were amazed at his teaching, for he taught with real authority—quite unlike the teachers of religious law.

Let's stop for a minute and remember where this is taking place. This is the Holy Land from Google Earth and you can see the Sea of Galilee up top and the Dead Sea below, with the Jordan River where Jesus was baptized connecting the two.

GRAPHIC **Google Earth Holy Land**

GRAPHIC **Google Earth Sea of Galilee**

As we zoom in, we learned last week the Sea of Galilee is 8 miles across and 13 miles long. The deepest point is 450 feet. It roughly would fit in the Animas River Valley.

GRAPHIC Google Earth North Shore Sea of Galilee

The majority of Jesus public ministry happens here, on the North Shore of the Sea of Galilee, with Bethsaida, the city which means, “house of fish,” on the northeast shore, and Capernaum, the home base of Jesus on the northwest shore.

GRAPHIC Capernaum Aerial

GRAPHIC Capernaum Synagogue from air

GRAPHIC Capernaum Synagogue

In these photos, we see the town of Capernaum on the edge of the Sea of Galilee. We believe on the top is the photo is the remains of Peter’s house which now has a church built on top. This is where Jesus lived for the three years of his public ministry. At the bottom of the photo is the ruins of the synagogue where we believed this story happened.

BIBLE (use Capernaum Synagogue graphic as background for this)

23 Suddenly, a man in the synagogue who was possessed by an evil spirit cried out, 24 “Why are you interfering with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!”

25 But Jesus reprimanded him. “Be quiet! Come out of the man,” he ordered. 26 At that, the evil spirit screamed, threw the man into a convulsion, and then came out of him.

Let’s stop here and recognize something profound and powerful which is good, Good News for all.

SLIDE Jesus interferes with evil.

One of the things that happens all the time as we read about Jesus is his ability to overcome evil with good, overcome darkness with light. I have visited with numerous people who have been struggling with dark and difficult moments in life, and when they pray for Jesus to intervene, there has been a shift that happens. Sometimes that interference comes from doctors, nurses, medication, or therapists. Sometimes that interference comes from friends, family or being in AA or some other support group. Sometimes that interference comes from prayer and the work of the Holy Spirit.

It's important to remember that this casting out of a demon is the FIRST miracle in Mark's gospel. Jesus says to the demon, "Come out of him!" Immediately, the man shook, and the evil spirit left him. This scene is meant to capture us and shake us. It is an amazing gift of Good News Jesus is giving to this man AND this community. Remember, in the first century, anything people could not understand was named a demon. This man would have been treated much differently today, and could have had options for different kinds of healing. But, in Jesus' day, Jesus was his ONLY OPTION!

Let me ask you a question. Why do you suppose Jesus' first miracle is this one, driving out a demon? I believe this miracle is a microcosm for Jesus' entire ministry and in many ways captures the Good News. Jesus has come to drive away the demons and bring health.

SLIDE Jesus has come to clean house.

The church in Jesus' day has gotten stuck and possessed. Remember that this event happens IN THE SYNAGOGUE. The religious leaders in charge of the synagogue seem to have forgotten why they exist, and WHO they exist to worship. They were comfortable and Jesus came to clean out all the different kinds of demon possessions and get people unstuck and on fire for God.

SLIDE**Can we get stuck today?**

Do you think we can get stuck today? Does that ever happen to us? Sure, it does. Many have felt stuck and paralyzed and possessed by the current pandemic. Many years ago, I remember reading a book by Leonard Sweet, a noted author and speaker, who talked about how easy it is for the church to become “wimpy.” I was a bit offended at first, when he talked about how, over the last 40 years or so we have seen the “wimpification” of the church. He argued that we have gotten a bit soft. We’ve come to believe we are members of a club, instead of disciples called to serve. We have forgot the power of the Good News Jesus came to declare and live. Don’t believe me? Then why is the Religion news in the paper now found in the Leisure section!

Sweet used to say, “We’ve gotten soft!” We’ve become like the Chicago Bears before head coach Mike Ditka showed up in the early ‘80’s. Do you remember ‘Da Bears! Coach Ditka was famous for saying this to his team in his first year, “We have a drug problem. We’re getting drug all over the field!” At one of his first practices, Coach Ditka brought in a snapping turtle. He let the turtle bite his hand and he held up his hand with this turtle on the end, blood dripping from his hand. Ditka asked, “Now which one of you is up for this!” The Fridge, William Perry, said, “I’ll do it coach, hold up your other hand and I’ll bite it for ya!”

As followers of Jesus, we must have the courage to help the world get unstuck and out of the muck. Today’s demons convince us that we, and our problems, cannot be solved. That God cannot drive them out. But God can, and will, and the Gospel of Mark compels us to listen and know what Jesus can and will do. Mark continues to tell us that Jesus heals many and casts out lots of demons. Soon, word of Jesus spreads, and why not! Who wouldn’t people want to know about a man who heals the sick, casts out demons, makes the lame to walk, and the blind to see?

BIBLE

27 Amazement gripped the audience, and they began to discuss what had happened. “What sort of new teaching is this?” they asked excitedly. “It has such authority! Even evil spirits obey his orders!” 28 The news about Jesus spread quickly throughout the entire region of Galilee.

Good news spreads quickly when lives are transformed, changed, but the power of the Holy Spirit and God at work interfering with our problems. What I love most about Jesus is that his ministry and Good News is not just about what he does while he is with the crowds. The Good News is also something we internalize by spending time with God. I often say, “We can’t give what we don’t have.” The only way we can help others know the power of Jesus to dispel our demons, is when we spend time with God allowing God to speak into our hearts; giving us power to deal with our own inner demons that we feel we have no power over.

Shortly after Jesus casts out this demon, we read this in verse 35.

BIBLE (Use “GRAPHIC Sunrise over Galilee from above Capernaum” behind this)

35 Before daybreak the next morning, Jesus got up and went out to an isolated place to pray. 36 Later Simon and the others went out to find him. 37 When they found him, they said, “Everyone is looking for you.”

GRAPHIC Sunrise over Galilee from above Capernaum

I imagine this as the place Jesus goes to pray, a mount above Capernaum. Jesus goes off by himself to pray in a solitary place. I love this part of Mark, because here for the first time, we see how silly the disciples can be. It makes me feel much better about myself when I read about the disciples in Mark, because they do funny things. Right

here we find the disciples playing hide and seek with Jesus. I don't know about you, but often I feel like I'm playing hide and seek with Jesus. Sometimes I feel like I can't find him anywhere. But here we learn something important about being a follower of Jesus.

SLIDE Actively searching for Jesus

Followers of Jesus are actively looking for Jesus. We don't just sit around and wait for him to show up. We must work at it and go do some digging around. We find this all throughout the gospels. Jesus goes off by himself, and the disciples go looking for him. It is our responsibility to help the Kingdom of God come and help the world be changed...to look for what Jesus is doing and then participate in that healing and saving work.

Henri Nouwen, a noted Christian writer puts it this way:

As a Christian it is hard to bear with people who stand still along the way, lose heart, and seek their happiness in little pleasures which they cling to. It irritates you to see things established and settled, and you feel sad about all that self-indulgence and self-satisfaction, for you know with an indestructible certainty that something greater is coming, and you've already seen the first rays of light. As a Christian, you not only maintain that this world will pass, but that it must pass to allow a new world to be born, and that there will never be a moment in this life when you can rest assured that there is nothing more to do.

I don't know about you, but I find it easy to give up on Jesus some days and stop looking for him. These stories of Jesus remind us that being a follower takes patience AND work. We can't just sit around and expect good things to happen and the Kingdom of God to build itself. We have a job to do as followers of Jesus Christ. Mainly, that is to follow and to search. To seek him and know that we will be found in the looking. Especially after we have said "YES" to follow Jesus, we must be willing to work a little. When we have said we will follow Jesus, it's then up to us to pay attention and to look

for Jesus and see what he is doing in the world.

SLIDE Acts of Piety and Acts of Charity

John Wesley, the founder of Methodist movement in the 1700's talked about this as a balance between acts of piety and acts of charity. Simply put, Jesus said it's about Loving God and Loving Others, as we Love Ourselves.

Sometimes, when we become members of the church, we start what I call American Express thinking: "Membership has its privileges." Well, I got news for us, membership in Jesus's club has its responsibilities, not just privileges. The first one is to keep active in our faith and keep looking for Jesus. What gives us the ability to do God's work, to experience and live the Good News, is time with Jesus which then leads to living out God's love in action. Jesus puts in this way in verse 38.

BIBLE

Jesus replied "Let's go somewhere else-to the nearby villages-so I can preach and heal there also. That is why I have come."

We read later that *people still came to him from everywhere*. Would you agree that people will come from everywhere if we are reaching out and healing lives? If we are going to be followers of the healer, the one who came to heal us inside and out, then we too must allow Jesus to interfere with our lives, actively search for Jesus, and actively spread that Good News. We can't just sit around and be wimps! Jesus asks us to seek him actively and do what he does, which is to reach out to others.

One of the persons who went out to spread this Good News was the Apostle Paul. You may remember his story as he was first Saul, a Roman Jew who persecuted Christians until he experienced the Good News of Jesus first-hand. Saul was transformed in Paul and he became the missionary to the Roman world. One of the places he took this Good News was to the Greco-

Roman city of Corinth, one of the most diverse communities in the world at the time. If you look at Corinth on this map, you can see it's strategic location in the Mediterranean, located on an isthmus connecting Europe to parts of Asia and Africa.

GRAPHIC Corinth Canal (Map)

In Paul's day, ships were put on logs and rolled across the isthmus in a process that would take days or weeks. Workers, merchants, and sailors called this port home, and we have two letters from Paul to the diverse churches he started in this area. Most scholars are sure there were more letters which were not saved. If you go there today, you find this modern-day canal, and some extreme followers of Jesus come here for bungee baptisms several times a year. No, that is not me jumping!

GRAPHIC Corinth Canal with Ship

GRAPHIC Bungee Jumping Corinth Canal

GRAPHIC Ancient and Acro-Corinth

GRAPHIC Corinth and the Acropolis

GRAPHIC Acropolis and Temple of Apollo

Tradition says that Paul often preached to the Christians in Corinth in this commons area, complete with a palace to the Greek God Apollo. You can see the Acropolis in this photo, which is on top of that mountain and housed 1000 Temple Prostitutes. Paul would have had this final view of both the Acropolis and the Temple of Apollo as he preached, where meat was offered daily as sacrifice.

One of the understandable issues in Corinth was whether people who had become followers of Jesus could eat the meat sacrificed to idols in these places. We read about that 1 Corinthians 8, where we also find our scripture

memory verse for this week. This is an important text which reveals to us how the Good News Jesus came to proclaim spread so quickly in places like Corinth, and eventually throughout the Roman world.

BIBLE

1 Now regarding your question about food that has been offered to idols. Yes, we know that “we all have knowledge” about this issue. But while knowledge makes us feel important, it is love that strengthens the church. 2 Anyone who claims to know all the answers doesn’t really know very much. 3 But the person who loves God is the one whom God recognizes.

Once again, we see this connection of the inner and outer life of a follower of Jesus. It’s not enough to know ABOUT God, be we must learn to love God if we are going to experience healing and deal with our demons. And it is love which strengthens the church and makes it appealing to those watching us as followers of Jesus.

BIBLE

4 So, what about eating meat that has been offered to idols? Well, we all know that an idol is not really a god and that there is only one God. 5 There may be so-called gods both in heaven and on earth, and some people actually worship many gods and many lords. 6 But for us,

***There is one God, the Father,
by whom all things were created,
and for whom we live.***

***And there is one Lord, Jesus Christ,
through whom all things were created,
and through whom we live.***

Remember the demon possessed man, and how it shrieked when it came face to face with the real God? Paul is reminding us, as he did the people in Corinth, it is easy for some things to become our god or our lord, but there is only One Lord, One God, and that God has power and interferes with all the other gods and lords we sometimes worship. Paul goes on...

BIBLE

⁷ However, not all believers know this. Some are accustomed to thinking of idols as being real, so when they eat food that has been offered to idols, they think of it as the worship of real gods, and their weak consciences are violated. ⁸ It's true that we can't win God's approval by what we eat. We don't lose anything if we don't eat it, and we don't gain anything if we do.

Paul is reminding us that we can't earn God's love or God's grace. It is a free gift, and what meat we eat doesn't matter. Up at the Acropolis, the main goddess worshipped is this one. I bought this little replica in Corinth and have it in my office. It's the goddess of Lydia, or Diana, and Artemis Ephesia because she is found all over in Ephesus.

GRAPHIC Goddess of Lydia, Diana, and Artemis Ephesia

You can see why this is an issue for followers of Jesus in Corinth as there were multiple temples to multiple gods all throughout the city and region. Our culture today, if we are honest, is filled with things we worship, other gods if you will. There are gods of technology, transportation, money, pornography, alcohol and other drugs that get a hold of us. These were the demons of Jesus day, the gods of the Paul's day, and we have our own versions of them today. The Good News is that these gods do not have the final word! This Good News spread quickly in Corinth, partly because of the way Paul encouraged those in the church to act towards those who were struggling with the gods of the Greco-Roman world.

BIBLE

⁹ But you must be careful so that your freedom does not cause others with a weaker conscience to stumble. ¹⁰ For if others see you—with your “superior knowledge”—eating in the temple of an idol, won’t they be encouraged to violate their conscience by eating food that has been offered to an idol? ¹¹ So because of your superior knowledge, a weak believer for whom Christ died will be destroyed. ¹² And when you sin against other believers by encouraging them to do something they believe is wrong, you are sinning against Christ. ¹³ So if what I eat causes another believer to sin, I will never eat meat again as long as I live—for I don’t want to cause another believer to stumble.

Here’s the big idea from Paul in Corinth and Jesus in Mark’s gospel. The good, Good News spreads quickly when we pay attention to what is going on inside AND live transformed lives on the outside. We invite Jesus into our hearts to change us and give us the power to do what we cannot do on our own, interfering with the demons that we carry, and allowing to live as people who were made by God to be love by God. When we are able to love God with our heart, soul, mind, and strength, then we have the power to love others and ourselves.

We then recognize that we are part of a community and that how we live our lives matters and can be a witness to others. We let God interfere with our addictions, attitudes and even our politics so we don’t cause others to stumble. I was thinking this week about how often I see members of our church stumble on social media, saying things we never would say to someone’s face, vilifying the other side and calling people we don’t even know names because we don’t like their political persuasion. I believe this is what Paul is calling us to as people of faith, and when we are willing to do

that, the good, Good News spreads quickly instead of being stomped out.

We do need Jesus to interfere and bring healing that is physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual. We need Jesus the healer, helping us to understand that our healing, and the healing of the world depends on us seeking God, remembering it is love which strengthens church, through One God and One Lord, Jesus Christ. I pray you will discover that and be the presence of Jesus Christ in the world in a way that spreads the good, Good News quickly!

Let's pray.

SLIDE Prayer

I want to invite you to simply be silent, and listen for Jesus and how he might want to interfere in the lives of any demons, gods or idols you have found yourself worshipping...

Gracious God, interfere in our hearts so our demons and idols become uncomfortable. Then, help us to hear Your voice so our hearts might be settled and find peace. You have made us to love us, as you have made the people around us. Help us to receive that love and then live it out so it strengthens your church. May we spread the good, Good News in ways that keep our brothers and sisters from stumbling, inviting each person into a life-giving relationship with you. In the name of your Son Jesus, we pray. Amen