

“Just the Facts”

Mark 1:21-28

29 January 2006

the Rev. Todd R. Goddard, pastor

[Zion West Walworth United Methodist Church](#)

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²¹They went to Capernaum; and when the Sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught. ²²They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. ²³Just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, ²⁴and 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.”

²⁵But Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be silent, and come out of him!”

²⁶And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him. ²⁷They were all amazed, and they kept on asking one another, “What is this? A new teaching—with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.” ²⁸At once his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee.

Prayer.

Just the facts,
Joe Friday would ask the
witness.
Just give me the facts.

The sleepy, seaside town
Known as Capernaum
Came together for
Friday evening Sabbath
To hear and see the latest
sensation
To come out of Nazareth.
Crowds gathered to hear him
teach.
People were drawn from the
surrounding countryside

To experience a new authority
A refreshing breath of Good
News
That was blowing in the land,
Unlike the stale and tired
The old news that was strict and
unbending
Recited by talking heads
Of religious authority.
The new authority would
become identified
Not with the Law or Covenant of
old
But with the grace and love of a
gentle God
Yearning for the repentance and
love
of His children.
Fact: Jesus taught with

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authority. He is compared with the scribes, the keepers of the text, who lacked such authority.

Authority is more than the ability to be,
It is the ability to become
Based on understanding,
Not just caretaking,
Knowing,
Not just believing,
Fulfilling
All that God is calling you to become.

Human nature has remained remarkably unchanged in two-thousand years.
When people gather for prayer, worship, and insight, the demons we bear come right along with us.
The sins we struggle with
Are wheeled right into the midst of the sacred
Only to have us get out our pitchfork
And start cleaning out the stall
Of human depravity and sin,
Slopping it right onto the altar of our God.
We would like to think that a house of worship
Would be free
Of sin, suffering, and sedition
But then, whenever people are gathered
We are nothing more than a community of sinners
Yearning to be transformed into a community of Saints.

Fact: People with demons know who Jesus is.
They know him by name and reputation
and, likewise, they know his disciples.
Whether we are the demon possessed ones
Or we are nothing more than just an innocent bystander
We are drawn in by the struggle.
We are splattered by the mud;
Hoping above all hope
That we are not sin's unintentional victims.
But all too often, we are the stewards of sin
Born perfect in every way,
Yet exposed to evil and
Succumbing to the lure of temptation's persuasive ways.

The evil one knows who we are, too.
We are on his radar.
Like an evil mass marketer
Spewing spam and phishing for unsuspecting causalities
The evil one is in a fight for his very life
In a cosmic battle with our God, over the final disposition of our souls.
This fight is God's fight.
This fight is also our fight.

In a crime more hideous than identity theft
Sin driven hunger
drives even the most

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unsuspecting people
to commit the most outrageous
sins
Against God and fellowman or
woman.
Be forewarned, "there but by
the grace of God,"
That demon filled, sin oozing
person can sometimes be you or
me.
Human pride and ego,
Weakness to temptation
And tendencies towards sin
Sometimes makes the most holy
Saints
Become nothing more than
snakes,
Demon possessed handmaidens
of the devil himself.

Fact: People with demons are
attracted to Jesus.
Is it because darkness seeks out
it's adversary?
Is it because sin is looking for a
fight?
Or perhaps
Sin comes a knocking
Knowing that the only solution
- The only solution it has -
Is the grace that Jesus has to
offer:
True repentance
Complete forgiveness
And the hope of eternal life.

Fact: People with demons
expect that Jesus desires to
destroy them, and the evil they
carry.
The perspective of evil
Comes from looking through

glasses
Colored by sin,
Constructed to be evil.
The demon knows death and
destruction.
That is where it lives.
Yet death and destruction
Are limited in their scope;
Are confined to only a small
corner
Of the world's reality.

Jesus surprises the devil.
Instead of seeking his
destruction
He seeks his exorcism.
Jesus seeks his conversion.
Jesus seeks to save the person's
life.
Fact: Jesus doesn't seek to
destroy people.
Rather, Jesus seeks to cast the
evil out, all the while salvaging
and saving the person
To live another day.
There are no "throw away"
people in God's kingdom.
All of us are rehabilitated with
repentance
Recycled into a state of grace.
It is the yearning of a loving
parent
That we come with repentance
written upon our lips and hearts.
Yet, our Gospel for today tells us
That the authority of Christ is
capable
Of overcoming even the
possessed and unrepentant.

This is truly Good News.
This is good news for those

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mucking around in sin's tar pit.
This is good news for you and
me, too.
For each of us have a time in
the bottom of the barrel.
And no amount of human
endeavor
Seems capable of removing the
stain of sin.

And saves our soul.

The Word of the Lord, as it has
come to me. Thanks be to God.
Amen.

The Good News of this day is
that

Jesus is the only solution:

All other solutions kill both the
body and the soul.

Jesus is the only solution:

Who is capable of exercising sin
with the precision of a surgeon's
scalpel, saving the patient's life.

Jesus is the only solution:

Jesus is the only one with
sufficient authority to cleanse us
from our demons, from our
possession, from our sins.

Jesus is the only one with grace
sufficient

To rehab and restore this sin
sick soul of ours.

Jesus is the only one who is
interested in saving your life and
mine, all the while, making us
pure and perfect once again.

One story

Of Jesus and a demon
possessed adversary.

One story

Yielding many facts, but one
essential truth:

Jesus is our solution

Our only solution

That restores our body

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