

4th Sunday after the Epiphany January 28, 2018

Year B – the Gospel of Mark

LUTHERAN LIVING THE ^ LECTIONARY

***A weekly study of the Scriptures for the coming Sunday since May 4, 2014.
An opportunity to make Sunday worship more meaningful and to make the
rhythms of the readings part of the rhythms of your life.***

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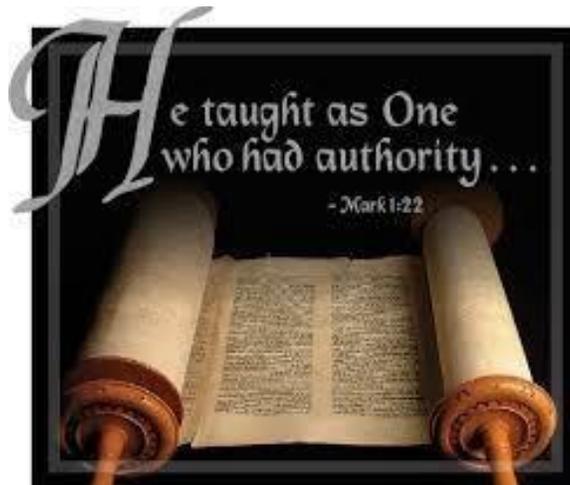
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“Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Parma” or “Harold Weseloh”**

January 25, 2018 (Thursdays at 10:00 AM)

Bethlehem Lutheran Church, 7500 State Road, Parma, OH 44134

Presented as a part of the bible study/worship at a weekday service (currently on Fridays at 7:00pm) in a house church setting, bi-weekly at an assisted living site, St. Philip Lutheran Church, Cleveland (First Sunday of the month at 11:00am) and used by Lutherans in Africa. Contact puritaspastor@hotmail.com for details.



<http://www.historicstpauls.ca/media/sermons/2012/01-29-confidence-in-jesus> Historic St. Paul's Lutheran Church is an active congregation of Lutheran Church–Canada located in the heart of Downtown Kitchener in Ontario, Canada. Taking its name from the great first century apostle Paul, this congregation has been dedicated to the proclamation of the Gospel since 1835.

Hymn of the Day

Lutheran Service Book (LSB) 842 The Lutheran Hymnal (TLH) Not listed “Son of God, eternal Savior”

Other hymns written by Somerset Corry Lowry include:

1. **Behold, Lord! how the nations rage**, [*In Time of War.*] Written "For Use during the War between Russia and Japan," in 1904...
2. **Lord, while afar our brothers fight**. [*In Time of War.*] Written at Holmwood, Surrey, in 1899, after the reverse of Colenso, and extensively used during the S. African War...
3. **O Saviour, once again the ebbing year**. [*For a Memorial Service.*] Written at Holmwood, in 1898, for Queen Victoria's annual Service in memory of the Prince Consort....
4. **O Son of God, enthroned above**. [*Advent*] Written at Holmwood, in 1892, and given in M. Woodward's *Children's Service Book*, 1897.
5. **Pressing forward**. [*Processional.*] Also in Woodward's *Children's Service Book*, 1897. Written at Bournemouth, in 1888.
6. **Son of God, Eternal Saviour**. [*For Unity.*] Written at Holmwood, in 1893 ; printed in Goodwill, Feb. 1894, and included in the 1904 ed. of *Hymns Ancient & Modern*.
7. **We meet as we have never met before**. [*Burial.*] Written for use after a Child's Funeral, Holmwood, 1892, and given in Woodward's *Children's Service Book*, 1897. --John Julian, *Dictionary of Hymnology, New Supplement* (1907)" https://hymnary.org/person/Lowry_S

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3P0VtRh-Xqc> With an introduction about the hymn.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ar36liv12lo> One in Christ: Hymns of the Month, Concordia Publishing House. Sung by 8th grade students. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f7M9yL0Jdy0> To a different melody, “Everton”. Played on a tracker organ. Notice were the keyboard is in relation to the pipes.

Commentaries have been chosen because the author has written in a way that compliments the reading. Not all of the commentaries are from Lutheran sources. They have been edited for length and in some cases for additional content that is not in keeping with a Lutheran understanding of Scripture. Links are provided for those who wish to read the entire commentary.

The Holy Bible, [English Standard Version \(ESV\)](#) Copyright © 2001 by [Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.](#)

Deuteronomy 18:15-20; Revised Common Lectionary (RCL), the same reading (*Next Week: Isaiah 40:21-31; RCL, the same reading*)

“For the last two Sundays, the Hebrew lectionary texts have featured prophets, first Samuel, then Jonah -- young persons and reluctant messengers.

We had to discern their effectiveness by what they said and did. We learned that as Samuel grew, “the LORD was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground,” the writer’s way of telling us that he was completely accurate (1 Samuel 3:19). From Jonah, we watched the fruit of his actions, as the people of

Nineveh repented and God relented from destroying them. Thus, the prophet's words make the difference (Jonah 3:10). According to these words in Deuteronomy, then, both Samuel and Jonah were "true prophets." That's easy enough to see.

As Moses describes the kind of prophet (one like him) that God sanctions, he anticipates their question: "You may say to yourself, 'How can we recognize a word that the LORD has not spoken?'..."

http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=3560

[Valerie Bridgeman](#), Interim Academic Dean; Associate Professor of Homiletics and Hebrew Bible, Methodist Theological School in Ohio, Delaware, Ohio [You may find the rest of her commentary to be interesting.](#)

A New Prophet like Moses (boldface added)

¹⁵ "The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen—¹⁶ just as you desired of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly, when you said, 'Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God or see this great fire any more, lest I die.'

¹⁷ And **the LORD said to me**, 'They are right in what they have spoken. ¹⁸ **I will raise up** for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And **I will put my words in his mouth**, and he shall speak to them all that **I command him**.¹⁹ And whoever will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, **I myself will require it** of him. ²⁰ But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in my name that **I have not commanded** him to speak, or^[a] who speaks in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die.'

a. [Deuteronomy 18:20](#) Or and

"How can you tell a true prophet from a false prophet?"

Spending my sabbatical year teaching at the Mekane Yesus Seminary in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, I encountered questions that I've never encountered in an American seminary classroom. Prophets? In my experience, prophets are people like Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel -- strange, charismatic figures whose words continue to inspire and convict us, but who are safely confined to the biblical era. We might speak of exceptional people like Martin Luther King, Jr. as prophets, but such people are few and far between.

But for my Ethiopian students, the question was a real and urgent one. There are many people who claim to be prophets in the Ethiopian churches, and those around them need to know whether they are trustworthy or not.

One student, a middle-aged, wise pastor, said that when he was young, a self-proclaimed prophet told him and a certain young woman that God wanted them to marry one another and that if they didn't, they would die. "We looked at each other," he went on, "and we said, 'No, we're not going to get married.' We married other people and both of us are still alive." The whole class laughed...

Still, if we take the larger witness of the Old Testament prophets seriously, there are some other things we can say (and this is what I said to my Ethiopian students).

- **The true prophet does not seek to be a prophet...**

- The true prophet seeks neither self-promotion nor riches...
- The true prophet speaks God's word, not his or her own...
- The true prophet bears a "family resemblance" to what has come before...
- The true prophet (and the false prophet) is known by his or her "fruit"...

http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=2353

[Kathryn M.](#)

[Schifferdecker](#) Associate Professor of Old Testament Luther Seminary Saint Paul, Minn.

Psalm 111; RCL, the same reading (Psalm 147:1-11; RCL, Psalm 147:1-11, 20c)

"Songs of Adoration and Wisdom (Psalms 107-119)...

The thirteen psalms in this section of the book help us develop a healthy appreciation for the Lord and give us some incredible insight into the power of God's Word in our lives. Prepare to learn more about God's faithfulness – and prepare to engage in some moving personal worship as you express your feelings of trust and love to the great God we know and serve..." (continued after the reading)

Great Are the LORD's Works (boldface added)

111 ^[a] Praise the LORD!

I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart, in the company of the upright, in the congregation.

² Great are the works of the LORD, studied by all who delight in them. ³ Full of splendor and majesty is **his work**, and **his righteousness** endures forever.

⁴ **He has caused** his wondrous works to be remembered; the LORD is gracious and merciful. ⁵ **He provides** food for those who fear **him**; **he remembers his covenant** forever.

⁶ **He has shown his people** the power of **his works**, in giving them the inheritance of the nations. ⁷ The works of **his hands** are faithful and just; all **his precepts** are trustworthy; ⁸ they are established forever and ever, to be performed with faithfulness and uprightness.

⁹ **He sent redemption to his people**; **he has commanded his covenant forever**.

Holy and awesome is **his name**!

¹⁰ The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding. **His praise** endures forever!

- a. [Psalm 111:1](#) This psalm is an acrostic poem, each line beginning with the successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet

“...We are surrounded by God’s works. Outside us and inside us, we sense God is at work. The writers of the Bible focus on four great deeds as the best of the best. They keep going back to these four events as the clearest expressions of God’s grace and power.

- **Creation** is certainly in the top four works of God in the Bible...
- **Israel’s exodus** from slavery in Egypt was the number one miracle in the Old Testament...
 - **Israel’s return** from exile in Babylon ranked right at the top ...
- Top billing in the miracle department, however, goes to **the death and resurrection of Jesus**. It overshadows every other work of God...

What a list. The writer of Psalm 111 doesn’t want us to forget that list. He invites us to spend some time thinking about God’s great deeds – to study them, to reflect on them, to be prompted to praise God for what He has done...” **SELAH!**

The Book of Psalms, the Smart Guide to the Bible, Douglas Connell, Larry Richards; Thomas Nelson, 2008 pages 259, 270-271

1 Corinthians 8:1-13; RCL, the same reading (*1 Corinthians 9:16-27; RCL, 1 Corinthians 9:16-23*)

“Washington State allows motorists to make a right turn when the traffic signal is red—if the way is clear. This gives drivers liberty and keeps traffic moving. At some intersections, however, signs read, “No turn on red.” These corners are exceptions because they are potential danger spots. By turning on red at one of these intersections, a motorist could cause a serious accident.

Similarly, in the Christian life we have been given great freedom, yet there are certain potential danger spots that can cause a serious accident between brothers and sisters in Christ. In [1 Corinthians 8](#), we have a dangerous intersection concerning meat offered to idols.¹ Paul had perfect freedom to eat meat offered to idols.² He knew that there was only one true God and that idols were nothing. Eating meat offered to them was neither right nor wrong. But not all believers felt that way. A person who had a weak conscience believed that the meat was defiled by the idol, and therefore it was off limits. Paul recognized the need to take special care, lest by eating he would influence such a person to eat, thus violating his conscience. Concern for weaker believers kept him from exercising his liberty...” <https://bible.org/seriespage/19-more-meats-eye-1-corinthians-81-13> “Keith (Krell) is the senior pastor of Fourth Memorial Church in Spokane, WA and associate professor of biblical exposition at Moody Bible Institute–Spokane...”

Food Offered to Idols

8 Now concerning^[a] food offered to idols: we know that “all of us possess knowledge.” This “knowledge” puffs up, but love builds up. ² If anyone imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know. ³ But if anyone loves God, he is known by God.^[b]

⁴ Therefore, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that “an idol has no real existence,” and that “there is no God but one.” ⁵ For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as indeed there are many “gods” and many “lords”—⁶ yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.

⁷ However, not all possess this knowledge. But some, through former association with idols, eat food as really offered to an idol, and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. ⁸ Food will not commend us to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do. ⁹ But take care that this right of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. ¹⁰ For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating^[c] in an idol's temple, will he not be encouraged,^[d] if his conscience is weak, to eat food offered to idols? ¹¹ And so by your knowledge this weak person is destroyed, the brother for whom Christ died. ¹² Thus, sinning against your brothers^[e] and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. ¹³ Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble.

- a. [1 Corinthians 8:1](#) The expression *Now concerning* introduces a reply to a question in the Corinthians' letter; see [7:1](#)
- b. [1 Corinthians 8:3](#) Greek *him*
- c. [1 Corinthians 8:10](#) Greek *reclining at table*
- d. [1 Corinthians 8:10](#) Or *fortified*; Greek *built up*
- e. [1 Corinthians 8:12](#) Or *brothers and sisters*

“At first glance, this might seem like a good text to pass over as the basis of a sermon.

How does one bring out the contemporary relevance of an ancient debate over whether to eat food offered to idols? However, the other passages offer their own challenges -- from Mark (casting out an unclean spirit) and Deuteronomy (prophets who speak on behalf of other gods shall die -- an observation or a command?). All three passages call on us to get at the heart of the gospel and at the heart of a community of faith. So, what about this question over meat offered to idols?

For many people in the US, the primary questions raised about meat are "Do I want chicken, beef, or pork tonight?" "Is this beef grass-fed or grain-fed?" "Do I want regular bacon, lowsodium bacon, or turkey bacon?" Or, there is the contemporary continuum along the lines of vegan, vegetarian, lacto-ovo vegetarian, to those omnivores who eat and enjoy anything, including Spam, potted meat, and haggis. People at various points on that continuum engage in debates that

typically start along ethical or environmental lines and might get to theological considerations of whether meat is right or wrong to eat. That is not the arena of Paul's debate here.

Paul focuses on how we might gauge the impact of our actions on the lives of others and how we might use that impact as a reason to restrict our own behavior. A closer parallel to our own day would be debates over "political correctness," for example, whether to use gendered language for God or the people of God in worship. No one debates whether the words "father," "mother," "he," or "she" are, in themselves, good or bad. They're just words. But in various contexts, those words take on additional layers of meaning...

Paul says that, objectively speaking, and in actual fact in the eyes of God, people who oppose eating meat offered to idols are wrong. Nonetheless, people stand at different points in their understanding and in the strength of their relationship to God. So, for their sake and out of respect for their relationship to God, I'll act as if they're right. At least for now and in this case. And, he takes that approach not out of condescension or self-righteousness but out of his recognition that on a scale of one to a hundred, when we compare our understanding and love to the understanding and love of God, we all stand, at best, at, maybe a two, or on our best days, a five...
https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=1197 **Frank L. Crouch**
 Dean and Vice President, Moravian Theological Seminary, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania

THE MARK CHALLENGE – LECTIONARY YEAR B 2017-18 Ready
 for Chapter Four?

“The Holy Gospel according to St. Mark, the 1st Chapter”

Mark 1:21-28; RCL, the same reading (*Mark 1: 29-39; RCL, the same reading*)

“Possessed by the Holy Spirit, fresh from successfully confronting Satan in the wilderness, preaching the reign of God, and now in the company of at least four followers, it’s time for Jesus’ public ministry to gather momentum.

It’s time for a fight scene... (continued after the reading)

“...Mark begins his account of Jesus’ public ministry with a confrontation.

First events give insight into the larger themes and, particularly, a distinct understanding of Jesus’ mission and character in each of the Gospels. In Matthew, Jesus is a teacher and (new) lawgiver like Moses. In John, he creates unexpected and unimaginable abundance. In Luke, he is the one who releases those held captive, heals the ill and infirm, and proclaims good news to the poor and the Lord’s favor to all. And in Mark...he picks a fight with an unclean spirit...”

<http://www.davidlose.net/2015/01/epiphany-4-b/>

“David J. Lose was called as senior pastor of Mount Olivet Lutheran Church in Minneapolis in 2017. From July 2014 to June 2017, he served as president of Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia.”

<https://www.workingpreacher.org/profile/default.aspx?uid=b7cc0fec827096b2504c5164ecc9831028ee1cfc87caab27e817dcd7c6ba6255>

Jesus Heals a Man with an Unclean Spirit

Jesus Drives Out an Impure Spirit (NIV) **Same reading, different perspective.**

²¹ And they went into Capernaum, and **immediately** on the Sabbath he entered the synagogue and was teaching. ²² And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes.* ²³ And **immediately** there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, ²⁴ “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.” ²⁵ But Jesus rebuked him, saying, “**Be silent, and come out of him!**” ²⁶ And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying out with a loud voice, came out of him. ²⁷ 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.” ²⁸ And at once his fame spread everywhere throughout all the surrounding region of Galilee.

“This is the Gospel of the Lord” “Praise to You, O Christ”

“Jesus never used the prophetic formula “thus says the Lord,” In contrast to the scribes, whose authority derived from the teachings they received from their forefathers, Jesus spoke as one uniquely authorized by His Father in heaven” [The Lutheran Study Bible](#), pages 1656-7

“The scene in a Capernaum synagogue -- a setting of prayer, teaching, worship, and community gathering -- centers around questions of Jesus’ *authority*. Why does he do what he does? For whom does he speak and act? Who has *authorized* his ministry?

The answers to those questions emerge through fights -- contests and controversies, really -- beginning here and extending into Mark 3. They will recur later in Mark, too. Mark wants us to know, here at the outset of Jesus’ public ministry -- that Jesus’ authority will be a contested authority. Jesus’ presence, words, and deeds threaten other forces that claim authority over people’s lives. These other authorities have something to lose.

The authorized exorcist

The man with the unclean spirit finds Jesus, initiating the exchange. His opening question, asked by the spirit that possesses him, is idiomatic and therefore difficult to translate. It conveys a sense of “Why are you picking this fight?” or “Couldn’t you have just left things as they were between us?” (see similar constructions in the LXX versions of Judges 11:12; 1 Kings 17:18; 2 Kings 3:13). Jesus, by his sheer presence in this synagogue, has upset the order. He has crossed an established boundary.

The contest does not last long, for this is not the fairest of fights in terms of the strength of the combatants. We can’t be sure whether the spirit’s next question (“Have you come to destroy us [unclean spirits]?”) is a fearful acknowledgement that his doom is sealed or an arrogant

but miscalculated boast. In any case, the spirit is soon gone, expelled from the man with a few words from Jesus. No prayers. No formulas. No props. Just commands.

Mark gives no information about what happens to the spirit, which appears to become disembodied, not destroyed. As Loren Stuckenbruck notes, the New Testament is somewhat unique among ancient Jewish literature in its attention to demonic *possession* (as opposed to demonic *attacks*). When Jesus strips the spirits of the ability to inhabit their human hosts, perhaps the gospels' authors claim that Jesus denies the unclean spirits' capability to have a settled place or entrenched influence in the world.² Losing opportunities to win over people's bodies and minds, they lose the authority they were thought to have. This exorcism, then, does not eliminate evil and oppression; it denies those kinds of forces the authority or power to hold ultimate sway over people's lives.³

The authorized teacher

The crowd's amazement about the exorcism resonates with its reaction to Jesus' teaching at the beginning of this passage. That Jesus was permitted to teach in a synagogue is not remarkable in itself; what captures attention is the manner of his teaching.

Mark says Jesus teaches "as one having authority" and takes a dig at the credentialed Jewish legal experts, the scribes, in the process. This doesn't instigate a full-fledged fight, but it issues a challenge. Apparently Jesus' teaching style is more declarative than deliberative. That is, he interprets the law and speaks on behalf of God without engaging in much dialogue about traditions, as the scribes were known to do. This seems in line with other places in Mark where Jesus speaks about newness (e.g., 2:21-22) and where he claims the authority to make assertions about the way things are (e.g., 2:28; 10:5).

The teaching and the exorcism are connected, then, since both result in amazement and acclamations about Jesus' authority. Teaching and exorcism both have immediate effects, and both issue claims about who Jesus is. Inquiries into Jesus' authority are inquiries into his identity. Mark is just getting warmed up, for these kinds of questions will resurface (e.g., 2:5-12; 3:15, 19b-22; 4:41; 6:2-3, 7; 8:11). Eventually, the question of Jesus' authority -- is he really sent by God? -- will figure into his death, beginning with the question put to him in 11:28 and continuing through his sham trial before the high priest and then Pilate. Who is this teaching exorcist? He will finally be identified as king of the Jews.

Authority and the reign of God

Preachers who plan to spend much time in Mark's Gospel during the current church year should consider using this Sunday to underscore the importance of the authority question. For Mark, the question does not lead to answers of theological precision. This gospel doesn't devote energy toward establishing a clear Christology, an understanding of Jesus' nature(s). Instead, Mark depicts Jesus as the one uniquely authorized, commissioned, or empowered to declare and institute the reign of God. Through Jesus, then, we glimpse characteristics of this reign. It is intrusive, breaking old boundaries that benefited another kind of rule. It is about liberating people from the powers that afflict them and keep all creation -- including human bodies and human

societies -- from flourishing. It is about articulating God's intentions for the world, defying or reconfiguring some traditions to do so, if need be..."

http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=2343 **Matt Skinner**

Professor of New Testament, Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minn.



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THE MARK CHALLENGE – LECTIONARY YEAR B 2017-18

It's not too late to start!

End of Chapter 3

Jesus' Mother and Brothers

³¹ And his mother and his brothers came, and standing outside they sent to him and called him. ³² And a crowd was sitting around him, and they said to him, "Your mother and your brothers^[e] are outside, seeking you." ³³ And he answered them, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" ³⁴ And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers!" ³⁵ For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother."

Beginning of Chapter 4

The Parable of the Sower

⁴ Again he began to teach beside the sea. And a very large crowd gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat in it on the sea, and the whole crowd was beside the sea on the land. ² And he was teaching them many things in parables, and in his teaching he said to them: ³ "Listen! Behold, a sower went out to sow. ⁴ And as he sowed, some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured it. ⁵ Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and immediately it sprang up, since it had no depth of soil. ⁶ And when the sun rose, it was scorched, and since it had no root, it withered away. ⁷ Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain. ⁸ And other seeds fell into good soil and produced grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold." ⁹ And he said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

“He who has a hand to write, let him write”?