



## A JESUS KIND OF DAY

*Jeff Peabody  
New Day Church  
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I just want to start out this morning by saying that if I see any of you playing with your cell phones during my sermon, I'm going to know you're checking to see if the Hawks have scored, so you better be prepared to share any news with the rest of us. I know for some of you it was a real sacrifice to miss that game this morning, so thanks for being here. We should have you home in time for the second half.

For me, missing it isn't such a big deal. I have no trouble giving up football for God. But I'm glad we don't have church tonight, because then I'd have a little more of an internal struggle. There would be some conflict in my soul. Some of you know tonight is the season premiere of the show 24, and I have to admit I'm pretty much hooked. If you've never watched it, the whole premise of the series is that it all takes place in one day. Every episode is the next hour in real time. You wouldn't believe how much can happen in a 24 hour period and how urgent every decision is.

It's a pretty creative concept for television, but the producers weren't as original as they thought. Mark gave us his own version of 24 in the second half of chapter 1, because he stays with Jesus through an entire day. And you wouldn't believe how much can happen in a 24 hour period and how urgent every decision is.

This is classic Mark style. We said last week that he has a fast and furious approach, where he presents Jesus as a man of action. He takes us from one event to the next, helping us see what Jesus was all about. And this particular sequence establishes a great deal about what Jesus is planning to do during his time on earth. We'll pick up the story in verse 14

### **Mark 1:14-39**

*After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"*

*As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." At once they left their nets and followed him.*

*When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.*

*They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law. Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an evil spirit cried out, "What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are-the Holy One of God!"*

*"Be quiet!" said Jesus sternly. "Come out of him!" The evil spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek.*

*The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, "What is this? A new teaching-and with authority! He even gives orders to evil spirits and they obey him." News about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee.*

*As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew. Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told Jesus about her. So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them.*

*That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. The whole town gathered at the door, and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was.*

*Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. Simon and his companions went to look for him, and when they found him, they exclaimed: "Everyone is looking for you!"*

*Jesus replied, "Let us go somewhere else-to the nearby villages-so I can preach there also. That is why I have come." So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.*

It was a busy day. It was a Jesus kind of day, full of all the things Jesus would do throughout his ministry on earth.

For those of you who like to have a sense of geography, here's a map showing Capernaum in relation to Jerusalem and the Mediterranean. It was on the northwest side of the Sea of Galilee, far from the political and religious centers. The Sea of Galilee is really a lake, and it is about 7 miles wide and 13 miles long. Capernaum has been a very rich archeological site, and they have found all kinds of remains dating back to Jesus' time. In that day, the city had a harbor with a 2500 foot long promenade. It had 100 ft. piers that extended out into the lake for boats to dock at. Scientists have actually discovered a boat in the Sea of Galilee that's from the first century, that shows us the type

Simon and Andrew and James and John would have used. They've found the synagogue in Capernaum. Part of it was built later, but a portion of it is from the very same one Jesus taught in.

They've even found Peter's house, where Jesus stayed and healed people. You can see and touch the stones and walk over some of the same spots Jesus would have walked on that day.

I say all this to help ground these stories in a place and time. When there's such a cultural gap, it's not always easy to picture it as being real. And it's important to stay connected with the fact that everything we're reading about happened in actual places with actual people who were just like us. One of the things Mark does very well is capture the humanity of Jesus and to point out that he had our emotions and physical limitations. He got tired. He needed his alone time. It's almost shocking sometimes just how human Mark's portrayal of Jesus can be. We tend to spiritualize him, to the point where we disconnect him from any context. We forget how earthy and real Jesus was. He didn't look different from anybody else walking around the streets of Capernaum that day.

But he was different. He definitely caught people's attention. So what made him stand out? If he didn't have any distinguishing physical features, what was it that could make people drop whatever they were doing and follow him?

It could have been what you call "star power." Judges in talent competitions are always looking for someone with that extra something. Maybe Jesus had that kind of charisma. Or maybe people thought he could grant their wishes like a magic genie. Or it could have been that it was just the fascination that people have with anything or anyone new. Jesus was a novelty.

It could have been any of those things. But Mark says it was something different. He says the quality that drew people to Jesus was one word, and that word was "authority."

That's hardly a word we find appealing. We don't trust authority figures. We associate authority with oppression and a heavy hand.

But not all authority is the same. There are different kinds and different ways of getting it. You can inherit authority, like Queen Elizabeth, who was born into a royal family. You can have authority delegated to you, like a CEO that serves at the will of the board of a company. You can also earn authority, by studying a subject carefully. A professor who has studied nuclear physics for years has authority in that area because of his knowledge.

The common thread for all of those is that the authority comes from something outside the person. A royal family tree, a board of directors and the subject of nuclear physics are the sources, and the people themselves only have authority because of those sources.

Those are the kinds of authority people are familiar with, and all of them can be doubted and questioned. “How did she get to be queen? She’s nothing special.” “I hope the board fires him for making that decision.” “That professor doesn’t have a clue what he’s talking about.”

Then Jesus walks on the scene, demonstrating something entirely different. He puts the author in authority. He conveys this confident leadership that is based on nothing outside himself and God that Father. No one else before or since has had the ability to lead in that way. It was fresh and compelling and powerful in and of itself.

As I read through this passage, it was easy to see Jesus exercising that authority in several different places, and as I looked at Mark’s description of this day, I thought of the words of Jesus from the book of John.

### **John 14:6-7**

*Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him."*

You can hear in those words the absolute confidence Jesus has that he can speak for his Father. But beyond that, Jesus makes three distinct statements about his authority: I am the way. I am the truth. I am the life. And as I looked at this passage from Mark, I could see those three statements in action. Jesus was living out his own words.

If we break down the text, you’ll see what I mean. First, Jesus’ authority as

### **The Way**

Jesus is the path, the road or the direction. We find Jesus literally out for a walk at the beginning of the story, making his way along the waterfront. Simon (or Peter) and Andrew are at work. It wasn’t easy work, either. To catch fish in the Sea of Galilee, fishermen would take a large, weighted net and throw it with a circular motion into the water. The net would slowly sink toward the bottom, catching fish on its way. Then someone would dive down to the bottom and haul the net up and back to shore.

When you’re in the middle of something at work, and you’re trying to concentrate, or you’re on deadline, and someone interrupts your train of thought, what’s your reaction? “Can I call you back later?” “Give me another minute.” So imagine what it would be like to be Peter and Andrew. You’ve just let go of your net and you’re watching it to mark its spot and see if you’ll be able to feed your family this week. Then some guy comes along and asks you to leave it and follow him. Normally, you’d say, “Get lost.” But something in Jesus’ voice conveyed that authority we’re talking about. Here was someone who knew what he was all about and where he was going.

The authority of Jesus always commands a response from us. And in the context of him being the Way, what he is laying out is a **calling**. “Come follow me.” Walk in this way of mine.

The invitation is out there on the table. Peter and Andrew couldn’t just ignore it – they had to make a decision about it. Would they walk away from all they knew, everything that provided any sense of security in their lives?

The same invitation went out to James and John, who were not only fishing – they were fishing with their dad. They were part of the family business. They had relationships to consider as well as their income. They had employees to think about as well. There were special circumstances and conditions that would normally require additional thought.

But all four of these men did the same thing. They dropped whatever they were doing and followed Jesus. I picture it being like Forrest Gump. There’s that scene in the movie where he’s out on his shrimp boat, and he sees his friend, Lieutenant Dan, sitting on the dock. Forrest doesn’t even care that no one is driving the boat – he just dives in the water and swims to shore. That relationship overrode everything else.

Somehow, Peter, Andrew, James and John all knew that this relationship with Jesus would override everything else they thought was important in life.

In the original Greek, Mark uses one word over and over again. it means “immediately” or “right away,” and Mark uses it six times:

*Right away* Simon and Andrew left their nets and followed Jesus.

*Right away* Jesus called James and John, and they left their father and servants.

*Right away* when they got to Capernaum Jesus entered the synagogue.

*Right away* there was a man with an unclean spirit there.

*Right away* the news about Jesus spread.

*Right away* they told Jesus about Peter’s mother in law.

When Christ calls, it is always with urgency. When we hear him put out an invitation, we can’t wait until it’s more convenient or when the timing would be better. His authority compels us to respond now. David McKenna once wrote, “Every sermon that is preached and every witness that is given must carry the tone of an urgent call. Our life and God’s patience are short when it comes to the decision about His Son.”

That’s really what it is – a decision about Christ himself. When Jesus called those first disciples, he gave them no specifics of what he was calling them to do. There was no special mission or assignment or quest. The call was to himself, to go after him personally – whatever that meant.

On Friday, I ran into a guy at Starbucks that I hadn’t seen for several years. He was a salesman who used to call on me at my old job. Fortunately, I remembered his name and struck up a conversation. When I told him what I was doing now, he opened up about

how God has been dealing with him lately. He said, “I realized, I’m 53 years old, and my job is my life. It’s who I am. I have this great family and I’m a Christian, but my work has become an idol, and God has been showing me that I’ve got to change. I don’t know what that’s going to look like. But I can’t believe it’s taken me this long to reach this point.”

I said, “How did you recognize what was going on?” He said, “Anxiety attacks. Big anxiety attacks. And I realized it was a lack of really believing God would do what he said he could do” He knew that God was speaking to him through that, just like Peter could here Christ calling to him. “Forget what you think is important. Forget what you think you need. Follow me. Make me your goal instead of your job. Make me your goal instead of success.”

How are you responding to Christ’s authority in your life? What is he calling you to drop? Where is he calling you to go? There is an urgency to Christ being the way, and he asks us to not let the moment pass without making our way to him, whatever the cost.

Second, just as Jesus said he was the way, he also claimed to be

### **The Truth**

As the story unfolds, we see that side of Jesus revealed when he goes into the synagogue and starts teaching. He speaks truth, explains truth and unpacks truth for the people. And Mark tells us they had never heard anything like it.

*The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law.*

This is where Mark first uses that word authority, and he uses it to draw a contrast with the teachers the people were used to hearing. He’s not so much trying to slam the other teachers as he is trying to point out that Jesus was in a completely different league.

A good point of reference would be our modern day judges. They are experts in legal matters and it is their job to uphold the Constitution. Everything is interpreted in light of the Constitution. The judges themselves have authority, but in a somewhat restricted sense because they are living under the greater authority of the Constitution.

That was how it was with the teachers of the law in Capernaum. They had studied God’s law and became experts at interpreting it for people. Everything for them revolved around upholding God’s law. But they were speaking from under the law. They were bound by it

Jesus approached teaching from a completely different vantage point. He was the higher authority. He wasn’t an expert on the law – he was the law giver. He didn’t gain his knowledge through study, he had it in his very being as the source of the law.

The word for authority that Mark uses not only has the idea of power in it, but also the idea of “freedom to do as one chooses.” I think that describes Jesus very well. There was a freedom about him and in his words that was unbelievably refreshing to his listeners. He was the one who said that the truth will set us free, and he showed that in the way he lived.

If the authority of Jesus as The Way led to a calling, Jesus’ authority as The Truth leads to a **cleansing**. There’s a purging effect that truth produces.

In Mark’s account, it was the evil spirits who first responded to Christ as truth, and it was a negative reaction. They knew there was no place for them when he was around.

*Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an evil spirit cried out, "What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are-the Holy One of God!"*

*"Be quiet!" said Jesus sternly. "Come out of him!" The evil spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek.*

A dramatic moment. That feels far removed from our experience. Most of us haven’t witnessed an exorcism, except maybe in a movie. But Mark’s word for evil spirit is broader than just demons. The word is really, “unclean spirit,” meaning a spirit out of character with God. Think of it being an unholy or unhealthy spirit. I may not know what it’s like to be possessed by a demon, but I know what it’s like to have a spirit of bitterness in me. I might not have ever channeled the voice of a devil, but I’ve spoken plenty of times in a spirit of fear or anger.

Whatever those spirits are, they are based on lies and misunderstandings that are threatened by the Truth. Truth and a lie can’t live side by side. One or the other has to go.

Dorothy Thompson once said,

*Fear grows in darkness; if you think there's a bogeyman around, turn on the light.*

I love that imagery of grabbing a flashlight to dispel the darkness. When a spirit of fear is creeping in, grab the Scriptures and read some truth to stand against it. When the devil is whispering lies about your own worth and value to God, reach for what God has said about the way he values you. Truth has authority over untruth.

Those attitudes inside us react the same way to Jesus that the man with the unclean spirit did. Truth has a purging quality that wants to cleanse me of the lies that I live with, the unclean spirits that clutter my mind.

And that’s the question: What untruth have I been living with that needs to be cleansed? What have I allowed to remain outside of Christ’s authority as the Truth? We can ask his

Spirit to point that out to us, because we all have those areas that resist what Jesus is saying to us.

In addition to being the way and the truth, Jesus said he is also

### **The Life**

After Jesus taught in the synagogue, we're told he went to stay at Peter's house. Peter was married, and his mother-in-law was ill with a fever. Peter tells Jesus about her, and this is what happened:

*So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them.*

It was a very simple act. Jesus didn't have to say a word. Even his touch had life in it that could cause disease to disappear. The fact that he is the Life gives him complete authority over everything that eats away at life. And the fact that he is Life gives unmeasured **comfort**. In another synagogue Jesus taught at, he claimed these words from Isaiah to be about himself.

### **Isaiah 61:1-3**

*The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me,  
because the LORD has anointed me  
to preach good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,  
to proclaim freedom for the captives  
and release from darkness for the prisoners,  
2 to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor  
and the day of vengeance of our God,  
to comfort all who mourn,  
3 and provide for those who grieve in Zion —  
to bestow on them a crown of beauty  
instead of ashes,  
the oil of gladness  
instead of mourning,  
and a garment of praise  
instead of a spirit of despair.*

It was his mission to bring comfort in the form of new life, and that's what he begins to show in his healing ministry.

Jesus will go on to cure much more threatening illnesses than a fever. He will give sight to the blind. He will cure people with leprosy. He'll stop internal bleeding. He'll even raise a young man from the dead. So why would Mark include this fairly insignificant fact that Jesus made a fever go away?

To begin with, these are Peter's recollections, and while it may not seem like all that big of deal to us, it had meant a great deal to Peter. Peter had just given up so much for Jesus in a bold, quick decision to follow him. He may have been second guessing himself, wondering, "What did I just do?"

Jesus honors Peter's choice by bringing health and life and strength to his family. Already, choosing Jesus begins to make a difference.

For us, it shows that we can bring all our concerns to Jesus' attention. We might think something is too small to bother with or that he has so many other more important things to deal with that our needs don't matter. But Jesus is Life, and when we involve him in every aspect of our world, he touches it and lifts it up.

We are physical beings as well as spiritual, and Christ cares about every dimension of our health. He knows that our bodies and minds affect our spiritual life. And he is still actively involved in healing people physically, mentally and emotionally -- binding up the brokenhearted, freeing captives, proclaiming the year of the Lord's favor, spreading life where ever he goes.

What emotional or physical pain have you been living with that you can bring to Jesus? Let him take your hand and lift you up. Sometimes that may come in the form of physical healing. We have people in our congregation who can testify to that. Sometimes it will come in a deeper kind of healing and the physical need still remains. But Jesus is Life and his mission is one of comfort.

Jesus walking, Jesus teaching, Jesus healing – way, truth and life. We see and feel his authority at every turn. That generates in us a sense of calling, the need for cleansing and a true comfort.

Make today a Jesus kind of day. Whatever business you have to do with him – today is the day to get it done. Drop the next and run after him. Come to him and experience the power and the freedom of this man who walks and speaks and heals with all authority.