

Jesus the Exorcist (4th Sunday of Ordinary Time, Year B)

Deuteronomy 18:15-20—The Prophet Like Moses

1. New Moses: God will raise up “a prophet *like me*” (Deut 18:15)
2. Word of God: “I will put my words in his mouth”
3. False Prophets: if a “prophet” presumes to speak falsely “in my name,” he shall die

Psalm 95—If Today You Hear His Voice, Harden Not Your Hearts

1. Soft Hearts: “O that today you would hearken to his voice! Harden not your hearts...”
2. Wilderness Generation: “your fathers tested me” though they had “seen my work”
 - a. Massah (Hebrew “testing”): water from rock (Exod 17:1-7)
 - b. Meribah (Hebrew “contention”); water from the rock (Numbers 20:1-13)

1 Corinthians 7:32-35—Celibacy and Freedom from Anxiety

1. Unmarried Man: anxious about “the affairs of the Lord” (1 Cor 7:32)
2. Married Man: anxious about “worldly affairs,” “how to please his wife” (1 Cor 7:33)
3. Virgin: anxious about “the affairs of the Lord,” and “how to be holy” (1 Cor 7:34)
4. Married Woman: “worldly affairs,” how “to please her husband” (1 Cor 7:34)

Mark 1:21-28—the Man with the Unclean Spirit

1. Sabbath: Saturday, the day of rest and worship
2. Synagogue: local “assembly” (Greek *synagōgē*); place of worship and teaching
 - a. Different than the Temple
 - b. Local vs. Universal
 - c. Lay-lead vs. Priestly led (e.g., Jesus is a layman, but he preaches and teaches)
3. Teaching of Jesus: as one with “authority” (Greek *exousia*), “not like the scribes”
4. Man with the Unclean Spirit:
 - a. “Unclean Spirit” (Greek) = a demon
 - b. Spiritual Warfare: “Have you come to destroy us?” (cf. Genesis 3:15)
 - c. Secret of Jesus’ Identity: “*I know who you are...*”
5. The Holy One of God: “holy one of the LORD” = the high priest (Psalm 106:16)
6. Jesus the Exorcist:
 - a. Exorcism: Jesus rebuked him, saying “be silent, and come out of him!”
 - b. “With authority (Greek *exousia*) he commands even the unclean spirits...”

The Catechism on the Exorcisms of Jesus

The coming of God’s kingdom means the defeat of Satan’s: “If it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.” [Matt 12:26] Jesus’ *exorcisms* free some individuals from the domination of demons. *They anticipate Jesus’ great victory over “the ruler of this world.”* [John 12:31] The kingdom of God will be definitively established through Christ’s cross: “God reigned from the wood.” (CCC 550)

Questions for Discussion and Reflection (4th Sunday Ordinary Time, Year B)

1. What is the connection between the figure of Moses and the miracles of Jesus? How does Psalm 95—which focuses on the miracles Moses performed at Massah and Meribah—form a bridge between the Old and New Testament readings today?

2. Why do you think Jesus began his ministry in the Synagogues and on the Sabbath day? Why didn't he just go about preaching on the street corners?

3. What do the people mean when they say that Jesus has a “new teaching with authority”? What exactly is the nature of Jesus’ “authority,” and how is it different from the Jewish scribes?

For Further Study

1. Mary Healy. *The Gospel of Mark* (Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008).