

Mark: 1:23–31

From Catena Aurea:

23. And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out,

24. Saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God.

25. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him.

26. And when the unclean spirit had torn him, and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him.

27. And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? what new doctrine is this? for with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him.

28. And immediately his fame spread abroad throughout all the region round about Galilee.

AUGUSTINE. (de Civ. Dei, ix. 21) Moreover, how great is the power which the lowliness of God, appearing in the form of a servant, has over the pride of devils, the devils themselves know so well, that they express it to the same Lord clothed in the weakness of flesh. For there follows, And he cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus of Nazareth, &c. For it is evident in these words that there was in them knowledge, but there was not charity; and the reason was, that they feared their punishment from Him, and loved not the righteousness in Him.

THEOPHYLACT. For to come out of man the devil considers as his own perdition; for devils are ruthless, thinking that they suffer some evil, so long as they are not troubling men. There follows, I know that thou art the Holy One of God.

AUGUSTINE. (ubi sup.) For He was known to them in that degree in which He wished to be known; and He wished as much as was fitting. He was not known to them as to the holy Angels, who enjoy Him by partaking of His eternity according as He is the Word of God; but as He was to be made known in terror, to those beings from whose tyrannical power He was about to free the predestinate. He was known

therefore to the devils, not in that He is eternal Life, but by some temporal effects of His Power, which might be more clear to the angelic senses of even bad spirits than to the weakness of men.

THEOPHYLACT. That they might know, when they saw it, from how great an evil the man was freed, and on account of the miracle might believe.

GLOSS. (non occ.) For those things which men wonder at they soon divulge, for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. (Mat. 12:24)

1:29–31

29. And forthwith, when they were come out of the synagogue, they entered into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John.

30. But Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever, and anon they tell him of her.

31. And he came and took her by the hand, and lifted her up; and immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them.

THEOPHYLACT. He retired then as the custom was on the sabbath-day about evening to eat in His disciples' house. But she who ought to have ministered was prevented by a fever. Wherefore it goes on, But Simon's wife's mother was lying sick of a fever.

THEOPHYLACT. By this it is signified, that God will heal a sick man, if he ministers to the Saints, through love to Christ.

THEOPHYLACT. But he has a fever who is angry, and in the unruliness of his anger stretches forth his hands to do hurt; but if reason restrains his hands, he will arise, and so serve reason.

From Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture:

1:24a What Have You to Do with Us, Jesus of Nazareth?

1:24b Have You Come to Destroy Us?

Toward Hasty Destruction.

Augustine: Unclean spirits knew that Jesus Christ would come. They had heard it from the angels, they had heard it from the prophets, so they were expecting him to come. For if not, why did they cry out, “What have we to do with you? Have you come to destroy us before the time? We know who you are, the holy one of God.” Tractate on John 7.6.2.

1:24c I Know Who You are, the Holy One of God

Demonic Recognition.

Irenaeus: Even the demons cried out, on beholding the Son: “I know who you are, the Holy One of God.” Later the devil looking at him and tempting him, would say: “If you are the Son of God.” All of these thus recognized the Son and the Father, yet without believing. So it was fitting that the truth should receive testimony from all, and should become a means of judgment for the salvation not only of those who believe, but also for the condemnation of those who do not believe. The result is that all should be fairly judged, and that the faith in the Father and Son should be a matter of decision for all, so that one means of salvation should be established for all, receiving testimony from all, both from those belonging to it who were its friends, and by those having no connection with it who were its enemies. For that evidence is most trustworthy and true which elicits even from its adversaries striking testimonies on its behalf. Against Heresies 4.6.6–7.

Forced Notice.

Chrysostom: Does no demon call upon God’s name? Did not the demons say, “We know who you are, O Holy One of God?” Did they not say to Paul: “these men are the servants of the Most High God?” They did, but only upon scourging, only upon compulsion, never of their own will, never without being trounced. Homilies on First Corinthians 29.3.

Unwilling Testimony.

Ambrose: I do not accept the devil's testimony but his confession. The devil spoke unwillingly, being compelled and tormented. Letter 22, To His Sister.

How the Demons' Confession Differed from Peter's.

Augustine: Call to mind with me the time when Peter was praised and called blessed. Was it because he merely said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God"? No, he who pronounced him blessed regarded not merely the sound of his words, but the affections of his heart. Compare that with the words of the demons who said almost the same thing: "We know who you are, the Son of God," just as Peter had confessed him as "Son of God." So what is the difference? Peter spoke in love, but the demons in fear... So tell us how faith is to be defined, if even the devils can believe and tremble? Only the faith that works by love is faith. Sermons on New Testament Lessons 40.8.

Knowing Without Loving.

Augustine: Those words show clearly that the demons had much knowledge, but entirely lacked love. They dreaded receiving their punishment from him. They did not love the righteousness that was in him. He made himself known to them to the extent he willed; and he willed to be made known to the extent that was fitting. But he was not made known to them as he is known to the holy angels, who enjoy participation in his eternity, in that he is the Word of God. To the demons he is known as he had to be made known, by striking terror into them, for his purpose was to free from their tyrannical power all who were predestined for his kingdom and glory, which is eternally true and truly eternal. Therefore, he did not make himself known to the demons as the life eternal, and the unchangeable light which illuminates his true worshipers, whose hearts are purified by faith in him so that they see that light. He was known to the demons through certain temporal effects of his power, the signs of his hidden presence, which could be more evident to their senses, even those of malignant spirits, than to the weak perception of human beings. City of God 9.21.

The Confession That Lacked Love.

Augustine: Faith is mighty, but without love it profits nothing. The devils confessed Christ, but lacking charity it availed nothing. They said, "What have we to do with you?" They confessed a sort of faith, but

without love. Hence they were devils. Do not boast of that faith that puts you on the same level with the devils. Tractate on John 6.21.

1:25 Be Silent!

Bridling the Mouth.

Athanasius: He put a bridle in the mouths of the demons that cried after him from the tombs. For although what they said was true, and they did not lie when they said, "You are the Son of God" and "the Holy One of God," yet he did not wish that the truth should proceed from an unclean mouth, and especially from such as those who under pretense of truth might mingle with it their own malicious devices. To the Bishops of Egypt 1.3.

1:30 Now Simon's Mother-in-Law Lay Sick with a Fever

The Rotten Odor of Sin Becomes the Perfume of Repentance.

Jerome: Can you imagine Jesus standing before your bed and you continue sleeping? It is absurd that you would remain in bed in his presence. Where is Jesus? He is already here offering himself to us. "In the middle," he says, "among you he stands, whom you do not recognize." "The kingdom of God is in your midst." Faith beholds Jesus among us. If we are unable to seize his hand, let us prostrate ourselves at his feet. If we are unable to reach his head, let us wash his feet with our tears. Our repentance is the perfume of the Savior. See how costly is the compassion of the Savior. Our sins give off a terrible odor; they are rottenness. Nevertheless, if we repent of our sins, they will be transformed into perfume by the Lord. Therefore, let us ask the Lord to grasp our hand. "And at once," he says, "the fever left her." Immediately as her hand is grasped, the fever flees. Tractate on Mark's Gospel 2.