

The Compassionate Command

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Mark 1: 21-28

Jesus and his disciples went to Capernaum; and when the sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught. They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. Just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, and 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." But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!" And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him. They 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." At once his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee.

What a powerful, relevant story this is.

The man with an unclean spirit, and unclean here, means that which corrupts, defiles the holiness in a human being. The sacred live in the human being the unclean spirit inhabits.

What have you to do with us? say the spirits. You are the holy one of God!

They know him, they know what will destroy them and they push back against Jesus moving into their territory: What have you to do with us?

But whenever does corrupting, abusive, unholy power easily submit?

Jesus does not hesitate, doesn't stay quiet in that holy place, but speaks a word directly to the powers that have overtaken the humanity in the man before him powers that suppress his holiness:

BE SILENT, he says, *Leave him!*

And the people are startled at the authority of his speech and his disruptive word that rids the man of that which was destroying him. And transforms him back to himself

All this happens in a synagogue. The people aren't used to their leaders calling out evil spirits in holy space.

We, too, as people of the church wrestle with that which pervasively harms us, distorts God's intention in us.

And I wonder, does God give even us power to speak a disruptive, transformative word to that which defiles the holiness of human beings? Does God give us the charge to disarm the powers by speaking their name so healing can begin?

It must be so, and surely, we must learn both to speak and to listen for that powerful word that will disrupt our silence, transform our hearts, and make us whole.

We have stories to tell about such a word.

Let us now listen to our brother, Duane Casares, about the word that came to him.