

JANUARY 31, 2021
FOURTH SUNDAY
AFTER EPIPHANY



Jesus casts out unclean spirits.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

These passages are related to the Lectionary texts for this Sunday.

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| Sunday | Mark 1:21-28 | Jesus teaches in the synagogue |
| Monday | Deuteronomy 18:15-20 | A new prophet like Moses |
| Tuesday | 1 Corinthians 8:1-13 | Love builds up others |
| Wednesday | Acts 16:16-40 | Paul and Silas in prison |
| Thursday | Exodus 15:22-27 | Bitter water made sweet |
| Friday | 1 John 4:1-6 | Testing the spirits |
| Saturday | Psalms 111 | Praise for God's wonderful works |
| Sunday | Mark 1:29-39 | Jesus heals many people |

SCRIPTURE VERSE FOR THIS WEEK

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." **Mark 1:27 (NRSV)**

PRAYERS AND BLESSING

A Prayer for the Week:

Dear God, lead us to trust in your reign of justice and mercy that heals the wounded and lifts up the lowly through Jesus Christ, the Holy One of God. Amen.

Mealtime Prayer:

Loving God, help us to be mindful of your goodness, including this gift of food. Amen.

A Blessing to Give:

May the Holy One of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, give you faith, hope, and love.



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HYMN OF THE WEEK

God, Whose Almighty Word



WEEKLY MILESTONES

Take a moment to tell or think about a recent mountain high and/or valley low in your life.

CARING CONVERSATIONS

Discuss in your home, small group, or use for personal reflections:

- Think or tell about a time you were jealous.
- How is the feeling of jealousy harmful to you and others?
- What difference does it make that Jesus has power over unclean spirits (like jealousy) in our lives?

DEVOTIONS

Read: Mark 1:21-28.

In the Gospel of Mark, this is Jesus' first recorded act in public ministry. It sets the direction and tone for Mark, and it is a doozy. In our modern world where data and verifiable research is relied on more than speaking about spirits—unclean or not—the narrative can lead to many understandable questions. However, the conclusion is clear: Jesus speaks and acts with an authority not experienced by the people in the Capernaum synagogue. All the people were amazed. The unclean spirits know who Jesus is, the Holy One of God. In Jesus' kingdom, such knowledge is not enough. He silences the unclean spirits. Jesus will be gathering followers like Simon Peter, Andrew, James and John (vv. 14-20) who will worship, serve, and place their trust in Jesus. He comes with the message and authority of God. Jesus presents the reign of God that breaks down barriers. He brings God's purity and holiness to people and places not reached before. It's the ministry and the message that will not be silenced. Jesus brought life-changing experiences to the people. What life-changing experience have you had?

Pray: **Almighty God, help us to witness to and be followers of your reign of love, reconciliation, and healing through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

SERVICE

In 1 Corinthians 8, it was not good enough that people had the right information, even the right understanding of the Christian faith. They needed to act out of love because "Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up." Think of someone with whom you have differing opinions. Pray that you may be able to see beyond your differences and reach out to the other person with a spirit of love and a listening ear.

RITUALS AND TRADITIONS

February 2 is the Church festival day for the "Presentation of the Lord." The festival recalls that forty days after his birth, Jesus was presented at the temple in Jerusalem. This festival is also known as "Candlemas" because of the tradition of blessing candles for use throughout the coming year. This is associated with Simeon's words about Jesus being "a light to reveal God to the nations." Choose a new candle to light and use this year as part of your devotions.

Then end with this prayer: **Lord God, thank you for giving us Jesus as a bright light in our lives. Bless us as we gather around this candle this year. May it remind us that Jesus is with us. Amen.**



In addition to *Taking Faith Home*, celebrate milestones in your daily life as an effective faith formation tool. Go to: www.milestonesministry.org