Spirituality
Pencil Preaching



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“What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth?” (Mark 1:23).

Heb 2:5-12; Mk 1:21-28

The presence of Jesus, God incarnate in the world, is the first glimpse of the renewal of creation. He is what a human being is meant to be, and wherever he goes, the new reality radiates from his being.

Entering the synagogue in Capernaum, Jesus sets off alarms in the unclean spirits in the possessed man. They know that real authority is about to expel them. Something new and decisive has occurred in the order of things, and they are the first to realize that God's Spirit is taking back the world.

Yet it is *how* this is to be accomplished that makes up the rest of the Gospel story. Jesus has come to win back the hearts of sinners by love, not by possession or force. His ministry will be one of healing and forgiveness, not threat or regimentation.

By openness and by example, Jesus will invite people to reclaim the image and likeness of God, their true selves, and the right relationships that establish peace and justice in their families and communities. All his preaching, parables, miracles and even his way of dealing with resistance will respect human freedom to come willingly to God's plan.

How could it be otherwise? God could have restored the world to perfection by a single command that enforced obedience and reordered every relationship to its intended design and purpose. But the result would have been a world incapable of genuine love, which must be voluntary for it to be mutual and collaborative. Love manifests itself in friendship instead of servitude.

Mark's gospel will unfold the mystery of the humble messiah, the suffering servant who reveals God's mercy by absorbing in himself the brokenness of human sin, the chaos of violence and competition that had so damaged the original creation.

The good news Jesus reveals is hidden in his unconditional love, which takes him to the cross. Only eyes of faith will see in his self-sacrifice the revelation of God's ultimate mercy. From the cross, Jesus will reject human rejection and pour out his Spirit in the risen life offered to anyone who trusts in him and in the power of love.

The liturgical themes unfolding in this new calendar year will retell the story of this profound paradox. Jesus is both teacher and model for our own transformation. To know him is to become like him, and this is the journey the assigned readings take up now.