

Title: ASTONISHED . . . OR AT LEAST ENLIGHTENED, MARK 1:21 – 28
(Chatham, NJ; 1/28/18, AM) [S-P, Topical]

Theme: People who heard Jesus were “astonished” at his teachings, and even today when people listen closely to what Christianity teaches can be surprised and enlightened.

Purpose: To help us help others learn what Jesus really teaches rather than listen to his critics who often distort and lie about what Christians believe.

Introduction:

1. The Word of God is living and active, Hebrews 4:12.
2. Because it delves deep into our souls, we are affected by it.
3. Early in Mark people who heard Jesus teach were “astonished.”
4. His teaching was very different than the scribes and other teachers.
5. Such a reaction can occur today.
6. Listen honestly and go directly to Jesus’ teachings; find out what it says rather than what others say about it.
7. The case of Emily Thomes: see her story: Breakpoint, 1/22/18.

An Astonished Reaction, Mark 1:22

- A. Sensing his authority
 1. His authority presupposes a commission and prophetic authorization from God
 2. Intuitively they perceived that Jesus’ message carried weight
 3. Perhaps it was as simple as how confidently Jesus presented himself
 4. We need not rule out the role of the Holy Spirit and the effect He can have on an audience
 5. Hearing the truths of God’s Word pierced their minds and hearts, Heb. 4:12
 6. Their astonishment carries overtones of alarm
 7. A dramatic contrast to the teaching of the scribes
 8. Hearing what God really says can also be a dramatic contrast to Christianity’s critics
- B. Astonishment and power
 1. His authority over demons only added to the reaction
 2. The demons admitted his authority
 3. When he commanded them, they obeyed
 4. We run into a roadblock here because this part is outside our experience
 5. At the same time, there are other reasons why Jesus’ teachings fail to move us

A Rejected Reaction

- A. Unaware of Christ’s true teachings
 1. Matthew 28:11-15, the false rumor about the resurrection
 2. People spread all manner of lies and distortions about Christianity
 3. Unless and until people look at for themselves, they may believe what is said about it rather than what it actually says
 4. When people demand that you “Judge not,” they are enlisting a defense mechanism
 5. They don’t understand or want to understand that statement in the context of what else Jesus teaches, for example, “Unless you repent, you will all perish.”
 6. Honest seekers will give the Word of God a chance and read it
- B. A darkened heart
 1. Sensuality hardens the heart and darkens the understanding, Ephesians 4:17-19
 2. Corruption comes from deceitful desires
 3. Taking pleasure in unrighteousness prevents us from knowing God’s moral laws
 4. Or should I say it keeps us from wanting to admit them?

5. We just want to keep living in sin
- C. Jesus' teachings threaten an immoral lifestyle
1. Some don't want to know Christ's teachings because they know enough
 2. They know it threatens their immoral behavior
 3. Such people would never admit this, but it is still true
 4. Some avoid any limitations on their behavior

A Renewed Reaction

- A. Read the Word of God
1. No guarantee you'll believe it, but at least you can see it for yourself rather than listen to distortions of it
 2. Be open to it: give the teachings a chance
 3. At the very least, try to understand why Christians believe what they do
 4. You just may find that the Word of God opens us a whole new understanding of your life
- B. Begin with the fear of God
1. Psalm 111:10 – the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom
 2. Once you give up God, God gives you up, Romans 1:23ff.
 3. To impurity, 24
 4. To dishonorable passions, 26
 5. To a debased mind, 28
 6. If you can at least grudgingly admit that there is a higher power, you have a chance

Conclusions:

- Let's shoot for at least an enlightened reaction to the Word of God
- Astonishment and surprise may soon follow
- After that comes belief
- Once you believe, repentance is the next step
- Then comes commitment in baptism and a life of holiness
- Our plea to friends and neighbors is to give the Word of God a chance
- You just might be astonished at its power, beauty, and the hope it provides