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Title: Craziness

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Scripture: [Psalm 111](#)

Text: [Mark 1:21-28](#)

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In various capacities, I have served six churches, two in Texas, and three in California and of course, this church in Indiana. They ranged from suburban to urban. They had a wide variety of architecture and worship experiences. They've been tiny to large. Each has been unique, but they had three consistent characters. Each loved God

and studied scripture. All five congregation gathered in worship around the table. And in every congregation I have served, there have been crazy people. That's right. Even here in this wonderful church, we've got crazy people.

Now that I've named it, you're curious about who I'm talking about. Don't make it obvious but go ahead and look around and see if you can recognize the crazy ones. See if you can figure out who the crazy ones are. But don't point! It's not polite to point and your finger might inadvertently fall on the wrong person. So as hard as it might for some of you not to stand up, point and say, "YOU", let's hold off. I promise to point out the crazy people later on in the sermon.

You may think it is crazy for me to start this way, but it is connected to our lesson from the gospel of Mark. It is about a crazy thing that happened in a worship service when someone points his finger at Jesus. Our lesson begins, "They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue...." (Mark 1:21) There was in fact, a lot implied finger pointing going on for a variety of reasons.

The first reason was Jesus schedule; it's crazy. If Mark's timeline of the start of Jesus ministry is accurate, within a space of 12 verses Jesus is baptized by John, tempted by Satan, travels 70 miles north, starts preaching about the "kingdom of God", calls four disciples and then manages to travel another 15 miles to Capernaum. Mark wants us to understand that things are happening fast, and Jesus is crazy busy. Given the exhausting pace, you could almost sense that Jesus is tired, worn out and needs a break.

Fortunately, the break comes with the Sabbath. I like what is modeled here. It's an image of balance. Jesus, on his whirlwind tour of the holy land, laying the ground work for his mission, calling disciples to join his movement, comes to the Sabbath and takes a break from the craziness. He goes to worship.

One consistent word I hear from many in our congregation is how busy they are. You keep busy lives managing full calendars and it can get crazy. Sometimes the craziness is managing professional schedules while balancing personal priorities. Other times, it is self-inflicted craziness of social obligations. Certainly, this is the case of those who are rearing children managing practices, lessons and school activities. Even our retirees will often mention how busy their calendar is. I'm not asking for a show of hands because you'd be self-identifying that at times, your schedule is hectic if not a little crazy.

If Jesus' initial ministry schedule was crazy as Mark seems to suggest it was, it is of significance to note that the end of those first crazy days, he found himself honoring the Sabbath, finding rest in worship, recharging spiritually. Our lives have a dramatically different rhythm than the ancients, far busier, far more complex. Yet God thought that a day of rest was important, not just to honor Him but to also renew us. If it was important 5000 years ago, it is important today. Jesus models this in his life and we are challenged by his example. If there is craziness in your life, you are crazy not to stop, worship and renew your spirit. Jesus was crazy busy, but he found it essential to keep the Sabbath.

Mark says that once Jesus got to the synagogue in Capernaum, he taught and those there thought he was crazy, crazy good. "They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes." (Mark 1:22) Some background is probably important here. The Sabbath worship in the first century synagogue consisted of prayers and blessings, the reading of the Law and the Prophets accompanied by an interpretation of the lesson. Since there was no ordained clergy at that time, a respected adult male Israelite was invited to speak. The speaker usually had formal training and had earned the respect of a teacher of Israel. What's odd, if not out and out crazy, is Jesus is invited to speak. None of the gospels offer any description of Jesus' formal training or background nor do we have any information on his previous relationship with the synagogue in Capernaum. He just shows up and teaches.

I want you to put that in context with this service. What if some Sunday, we read a passage of scripture and then I offered a microphone to a stranger, not just to you, but to me too. A first-time visitor who just walked in off the

street. You'd think I was crazy and I'd be crazy because I'd have no idea what might come out of this person's mouth. Open mic to a stranger is a crazy way to run a worship service. But that appears to be what happens in Capernaum. Mark says that what came out of Jesus' mouth was astounding. That seems to suggest that their expectation was low. Maybe they knew he was a former carpenter. Maybe he looked tired, disheveled from five-day journey from the south. Whatever the reason, his teaching was astounding, crazy good.

When Jesus was far enough into his teaching that everyone was amazed, "...just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit." (Mark 1: 23) What did he look like? Mark leaves out a description, but I think he looked like everyone else sitting in the place. He wasn't foaming at the mouth. He didn't have a strange tick; he wasn't a wild-eyed mentally deranged outcast that everyone in the community knew was crazy. I know this because if he was any of those things, he would not have been let in the doors. They had rules about that and people with a recognizable "unclean spirit" were ritualistically unclean and as such, weren't allowed to worship. If they had been asked to point out the man sitting among them who was crazy, like I asked you to look around the room and find the crazy person, they likely wouldn't have pointed him out because, he looked just like everyone else in the place. He was sitting there without incident. He might have been a regular attendee just like you, sitting in worship, perhaps week after week, looking normal but sitting there with something hidden that was wrong. He had an "unclean spirit."

Just what was his "unclean spirit?" "The Bible doesn't tell us. A lot of time, the Bible says these people are possessed by a demon. Some have ventured to say that these diseases were first-century attempts to define mental illness, schizophrenia, depression or bi-polar. Others have said that some supernatural power was at work, a demonic possession. We can't possibly know because the knowledge of the world and knowledge of illness is very different today than in the first century. What is fair to assume is that whatever his condition, he is invested in holding to it. He doesn't want to give it up because he says, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us?" (Mark 1: 24) I think it is fair description to say, as the Bible often does, "He was possessed."

Not all possessed people are drooling from the mouth or even present themselves as having an unclean spirit. You don't have to be a raving lunatic to be possessed even if you are a little crazy about what possesses you. In fact, it's my first hand observation of possessed people, some of whom I have the privilege of serving, that there is a great deal of resistance in

letting go those things that have hold of us. Does that connect with anyone you might know?

Again, don't point fingers. Look around if you must or just think about it. Is there anyone here possessed by an addiction, crazy for drink or drugs or food? Do you think there is anyone controlled by their spending habits or maybe unhealthy desires? Do think anyone here is possessed with a desire to wander around the internet in places they shouldn't go or is addicted by the need to gamble? I wonder if anyone possesses uncontrolled anger or unresolved hurt and unrequited grief. There are lots of demons that possess us and as crazy as it might sound to you, none of them wants Jesus to destroy them.

Jesus does any interesting thing with people who are possessed. He never ignores them even when those around him try to pull him away. He's not impatient or frustrated with them because he knows that power these possessions have over the human spirit. What he always does is look them in the eye, speaks the truth and gives them freedom. Jesus says, "Be silent, and come out of him!" And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him." (Mark 1: 25b-26) And everyone in that worship service was astonished, saying "What is this? A new teaching—with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him." (Mark 1: 27) The crazy man was healed, released from whatever possessed simply by the authority of Jesus teaching. "At once his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee." (Mark 1: 28) That's Mark's way of saying Jesus became crazy famous.

You might think this is all a bunch of craziness the way I've looked at this story. If not you might think it now when I do what I promised earlier that I'd do, and that's point out the crazy people among us. You have probably already figured this out, but I'll say it plainly. I think you're all crazy! We are all possessed to some degree or another and Jesus comes to delivers us from our possessions. There are things in your life and mine which hold us back, which bind us, which keep us from being what God hopes and wants for each one of us. Sometimes we aren't even aware of these things; other times, they are clear, to you and even to people around you.

Look over there, someone who is dealing with the craziness of a broken marriage, falling apart because of betrayal of vows. There over here, there is someone who can't let go of her addiction to pain medications. Still there is a wondering where a son is, where a sister has gone, the craziness of a broken family. Still there, another wrestling with the craziness of hospice care as they watch a loved one's life slip away.

If you could stand up in place, what burden would you shout? What possesses you, makes you a little crazy? What load do you carry? There is not one of us that is without some sort of craziness, emotionally, spiritually, physically.

We are the crazies who seek to meet Jesus in worship because like that man in Capernaum, we know deep down inside of us that Jesus won't ignore us or be impatient or be frustrated with us. He'll look us in the eye, speak his truth and give us freedom. But that only happens when you put yourself in his presence and allow his teaching to speak with authority into your lives.

I may be crazy for saying it, but I know this to be true. Church is the place that attracts craziness, the craziness of lives that need attention. We bring our craziness in hope of a face to face encounter with Jesus. What did you bring? What do you need? Then this is the Good News that I hope you'll claim. Jesus is still in the business of freeing us from the powers, problems, and possessions that rob us for the life that God hopes and intends for us to have. You just have to have courage to stand up and point to Jesus, to acknowledge that his teaching will be the authority for your life, that his ways, his truth, his life will be the power to manage if not overcome the craziness of your life.

Let us pray.

O Lord Jesus, you ministered to all who came to you. Look now with compassion upon those gathered here, who are possessed and managing the craziness of life. Restore us you're your unfailing mercy. Remove from us the fears that beset us. Strengthen us in the work of our recovery and give us all patient understanding and persevering love. In your name we pray. Amen.