

JANUARY 28, 2024
FOURTH SUNDAY
AFTER EPIPHANY



Jesus shows his power over evil.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

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

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 10:34-43	Gentiles hear the good news
Thursday	Luke 4:31-37	The man with the unclean spirit
Friday	Matthew 4:1-11	The temptation of Jesus
Saturday	Psalms 111	Praise for God's wonderful works
Sunday	Mark 1:29-39	Jesus heals many people

SCRIPTURE VERSE FOR THIS WEEK

They [worshippers] 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:

God of power and might, we thank you for being with us in the challenges of life; help us to live lives of praise to you through Jesus Christ, the Holy One of God. Amen.

Mealtime Prayer:

Dear God, in your grace and mercy you remember us and feed us. We thank you for this meal and your faithfulness to all. In Jesus' name, amen. (Psalm 111:4-7)

A Blessing to Give:

May the power of God protect you through Jesus.



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HYMN OF THE WEEK

*God of Grace and
God of Glory*



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 talk about a time you felt your life was out of control.
- Do you turn to God when life feels out of control? Explain.

DEVOTIONS

Read: Mark 1:21-28.

It is revealing that in this reading in Mark, the first act of Jesus beyond teaching is an exorcism. What is doubly revealing is that in the Gospel of John, there are no exorcisms. For Mark, this act of Jesus is critical. A man with an unclean spirit was helpless in the face of powers he could not control. Sin, the human condition of brokenness and alienation from God, is the fundamental power that we cannot control. Whatever form it takes, an unclean spirit taps into a life that needs redemption. The unclean spirits of murder, adultery, false witness, racism, and more are examples of our readiness to thoughts and actions that destroy instead of give life. Jesus came to redeem us so that we may live lives of praise to God and love for all others. It is quite fitting that Jesus' first act is an exorcism. Jesus will do battle with myriad forms of human brokenness and win. This is Mark's way of describing the "beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (Mark 1:1).

Discuss: How would you describe the good news of Jesus for us?

Pray: **Almighty and merciful God, we give you praise for your power that conquers evil for the sake of all that you have created through Jesus Christ, our Redeemer and Lord. Amen.**

SERVICE

Jesus calls us to serve our neighbor in love. Based on the Daily Bible Readings and theme for this week, how can you help someone who feels powerless over a specific situation?

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." (Luke 2:32) Light a new candle to use this year as part of your devotions and pray: **Lord God, thank you for giving us Jesus as a bright light in our lives. Bless us as we gather around this candle. 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