

Series: Bon Voyage

September 25, 2016

Title: Know Your Captain

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Text: Mark 1:21-28

The Captain

Luck of the draw?

So you've signed up for that dream cruise to the Caribbean. You arrived in Miami a day early so you wouldn't miss the boat. Now you're standing in line at the terminal waiting to board. This is going to be awesome!

Then an official-looking person comes out on deck with a bullhorn and makes a startling announcement. It turns out that while *you* and 4500 other passengers are on time for the cruise, the captain is not. He's been detained; no explanation given.

But "No problem!" the uniformed figure on the deck above you says.

"We're conducting a raffle to choose a new person to captain the ship for the next 7 days. Just drop your name in the bucket the crew will be passing around, and if your name is drawn, you're in charge! You get to wear the captain's uniform. You sleep in the captain's cabin. You sit at the captain's table for dinner. You get the run of the bridge. Your cruise is on us. We'll even pay for your spouse and family."

And you thought Wave Season special deals were good. Imagine being able to run the whole show: 1500 crew members at your beck and call. 4500 passengers lining up to have their pictures taken with you. You even get a crisp white captain's uniform!

What's a captain do?

If you're like me, an announcement like that would send me running for the exits, demanding my money back. The last thing I would ever do is board a ship that was going to be run from stem to stern by someone who had absolutely no idea of what he or she was doing!

When you're the captain, you are – to put it bluntly – in charge of *everything*.

- You are responsible for getting everyone on and off the ship.
- You are responsible for getting everyone's stuff on and off the ship.
- You are responsible for transporting everyone safely from one port to another – no matter what the weather is like.
- You are responsible for the navigation of the ship.
- You make sure that all 6000 people follow all marine protocols and safety regulations.
- You are responsible for maintaining everything from the engines to the plumbing.
- You are responsible for security; that means dealing with everything from stowaways and refugees to hijackers, pirates and terrorists.

You are the final authority for everyone on board.

So who do you want doing a job like that?

If you think it's a big deal making sure you have a qualified captain for a 7 day cruise to the Caribbean, what about choosing a Captain for your Life Journey?

Isn't it strange how we would never commit ourselves to boarding a ship that didn't have a qualified captain, yet we somehow think that no one is more qualified to captain our Life Journey than ourselves! And we've never taken this journey before. It's a one-time trip for all of us, with no navigational aids, no charts, not even a compass!

Enter King Jesus:

No wonder, then, that God sent a qualified Captain to lead the way! Mark tells us that when Jesus came on the scene it immediately became apparent that a new captain, a new leader had arrived:

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Mark 1:21-22 NIV

They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. The people were amazed at his teaching,

because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law.

The key word here is “authority.” Rabbinical teaching at that time meant fine-tuning longstanding tradition. You never colored outside the lines. Everything from the questions to the answers were already in the script.

Teaching the law was like an endless campaign to clean up the cruise ship: wash the decks just right; make the beds with fresh linens; cook the food according to the highest standards; fiddle with the engines; practice lowering the lifeboats. Nothing would ever happen until the ship and its crew were perfect. And that moment never came.

And now here came Captain Jesus saying, “All aboard! The ship is leaving momentarily. The engines are already up and running. The course is in the computer. It’s now or never!”

Kingdom in Action

Trouble on the main deck:

Mark tells us that no sooner did Jesus assert His authority than there was trouble on the main deck:

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Mark 1:23-24 NIV

Just then a man in the synagogue who was possessed by an impure spirit cried out, “What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are – the Holy One of God!”

It turns out that there was a reason why the ship had been stuck at the pier for so long. It had been hijacked.

You see, right there in a synagogue service sat a man who was possessed by an impure spirit. I wonder how long he had been there, “doing church,” while the reality was that he was not his own master. He was not able to reflect God into the world. He was not on a true faith journey into God’s wonderful New Creation.

And nothing would have changed except that on that Saturday morning the real Captain showed up.

Just a word from the captain:

It didn't take Captain Jesus long to assess the situation. Then, with just a word, He took control:

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Mark 1:25-26 NIV

"Be quiet!" said Jesus sternly. "Come out of him!"

The impure spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek.

Jesus' command was literally: "Be muzzled!" He addressed the spirit as the subhuman thing it was – an emissary of Satan come to destroy a human being made in God's image and all of those whose lives touched his.

But there was no place for this imposter spirit on Jesus' ship. Jesus pitched the spirit overboard. The spirit tried to put up a fight but was no match for the Captain. It was all over in an instant.

A voyage into the New Creation:

So what kind of impression did the new Captain make on the passengers and crew?

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Mark 1:27-28 NIV

The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, "What is this? A new teaching – and with authority! He even gives orders to impure spirits and they obey him!"

News about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee.

Good news travels fast! And the good news was summed up in the word "New." God was at last doing the new thing that He had promised. He had come to take back control and ownership of His Creation. He had come to set people and all of creation free. He had come to make all things new!

Now, the New Creation had begun. The long-awaited King, the Captain of the ship, was here. And He was in command!

Know Your Captain!

Who's the better captain?

So, back to the question: would you volunteer to be the captain on a cruise ship? Five minutes in the uniform would be more than enough to convince me that I was in way over my head!

And that is why it is so important that we recognize just how foolish it is to think that we can be our own captain on our Life Journey. Think of it: are you really able to:

- Navigate life's shoals and hidden reefs? Much less chart a course across decades of the unknown?
- Keep everything running smoothly in both body and spirit?
- Keep your relationships healthy and strong all on your own?
- Keep you and your loved ones safe from all harm?
- Take charge of the hidden spiritual attacks that would hijack you and your journey?

King David – himself the leader of a nation – wrote:

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Psalm 37:5-6 NIV

Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him and he will do this:

He will make your righteous reward shine like the dawn, your vindication like the noonday sun.

King Jesus told us to pray:

"Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

Savior and Lord:

Every one of us has been hijacked in one way or another. Every one of us needs the true Captain to come and take control! Jesus came to be both Savior and Lord.

But for that to happen we must recognize that we alone can never be the captain of our Life Voyage. Only the One who created us is worthy of that position. We alone can never write the rules for the journey. Only He knows

how the world works. Only He knows the way through the dangers around us. Only He knows how to find the harbor of Eternal Life.

The first Christians made a daring and dangerous proclamation when they said the words: "Jesus is Lord." Calling Jesus "Lord" meant that Caesar was not Lord – even though Caesar demanded that every person in his realm say he was. Those Christians understood that the world only has one Lord; there is only one Captain for the journey.

Know your Captain!

So what does it mean for you to truly recognize Jesus as Lord?

- First, it means to recognize His unique and total authority over His world and in our lives.
- Second, it means that we see His commands as life-giving. They are meant to protect us from ruin. They set us on the path of life.
- Third, it means that we submit ourselves to Him and obey Him, even when every instinct within us cries out for us to take control.
- Finally, it means that because Jesus is Lord, nothing else can be the final authority in our lives. It doesn't matter how often the powers around us change the rules. We have committed our lives and our journey to the world's one true Lord.

When Jesus is Captain we can join in David's song:

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Psalms 19:7-11 NIV

The law of the LORD is perfect, refreshing the soul.

The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple.

The precepts of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes.

The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever.

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The decrees of the LORD are firm, and all of them are righteous.

They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; than honey from the honeycomb.

By them your servant is warned; in keeping them there is great reward.

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LIFE Group Notes for Session Two:

Getting Started:

- Greet group members and thank them for coming.
- Open with prayer.

Ice Breaker:

- Who was the school teacher or coach who made the most positive impression on your life?
- **(My example)** "One of the most important teachers in my life was a grumpy English Literature professor at the University of Southern Maine. He was gruff and even rude at times. No coddling the precious students in his class! But he was passionate about the things he taught, and he challenged us to think and grow. When I was close to graduation he asked me to come to his office. It was the one and only personal conversation I can remember with him. All he said was: 'Go to graduate school.' I did." **You should offer your own example.**
- What did you learn from him or her?
- What made him or her so special to you?

Lesson:

- In the Lord's Prayer the second thing Jesus tells us to pray is: "*Your kingdom come, Your will be done, in earth as it is in heaven.*" God's 'Kingdom' means God's rule and authority. So when we pray this part of the prayer we are asking God to come and rule as King in our earthly lives. We are putting ourselves under His authority.
- On the Exodus journey this meant that Israel was no longer subject to a cruel pharaoh, but was now under the rule of the Creator – the LORD. This relationship was formalized as a covenant or treaty between King and subjects. We find this treaty spelled out in Exodus 20 and other parts of the Pentateuch/Torah:
 - **Preamble:** names of the parties introduced (Exodus 20:2a)
 - **Historical Prologue:** Reason for the King's authority (Exodus 20:2b)
 - **Stipulations:** Terms and laws of the treaty (Exodus 20:3ff, the 10 Commandments, etc.)

- **Deposition of the Text:** Treaty to be placed in the sanctuary where God dwelt (Exodus 25:160)
 - **Witnesses:** Treaty to be ratified by both parties (Exodus 24:4)
 - **Blessings and Curses:** Consequences for keeping or breaking the treaty (Leviticus 26:3ff, 14ff)
- When Jesus came, He established a new treaty or New Covenant based upon His giving of Himself for us and His victory over death.
 - You can think of this as a covenant or treaty between you and God Himself.
 - Think about your *personal history* with the Lord. What has He done for you that no one else could ever do? Write down 4 or 5 of these parts of your story with God.
 - Identify areas in your life where Jesus needs to be Lord in a new way.

LIFE Group Session Two:

- Ask group members to share some of the key things from their personal history with God. In what ways is God alone uniquely qualified to be their Captain and Lord?
- Ask them what are the biggest challenges in their lives when it comes to actually putting God and His rule first in their lives.
- Have them turn to 2 Corinthians 3:2-3

2 Corinthians 3:3 NIV

You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone, but on tablets of human hearts.

- What does that say about where the New Covenant is “stored” and how it is witnessed in our lives?
- Finally, take a few moments to reflect on the incredible blessing of being God’s Temple or dwelling:

2 Corinthians 3:17-18 NIV

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, who with unveiled faces reflect/contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

Prayer time:

- Ask if there are any praise reports or answers to prayer since last week.
- Encourage them to pray for each other in areas where it is challenging to allow Jesus to be Captain and Lord.
- Encourage them to pray for other needs.
- Have group members pray for each other and agree to pray throughout the coming week.
- Thank them, once again, for being a part of your LIFE Group.

And thank you for leading them!