

## The amazing words of Jesus.

Text: Mark 1:21-28 for 1/28/2018 by Pastor Bolwerk

What is something that you find amazing? Are you amazed at the slight of hand tricks of an illusionist? Are you amazed at incredible athletic skill? Are you amazed at how new life comes into this world? The problem with our English word “amazing” is that it has become overused and watered down. Like the word “love” people today use the word “amazed” or “amazing” to describe just about anything that seems a little better or different to them. We may claim to be amazed when they see the sunshine after weeks of clouds and snow. We can find ourselves using the word “amazing” to describe things like, flowers, our children’s grades or behavior, or even a slice of Silver Beach pizza.

In this portion of Mark’s Gospel, the people at the synagogue at Capernaum were “amazed” by Jesus. But the Greek word that our English Bible translates as “amazed” means so much more. That Greek word means to be absolutely astonished. The people’s response to Jesus was jaw-dropping, mind-blowing amazement. So, what brought about this completely astonished response from the people?

Theme: The amazing words of Jesus.

1. Words with amazing power.
2. Words with amazing authority.

What made Jesus’ words so amazing? Jesus’ words were amazing because what he preached was the opposite of what the people normally heard in the synagogue. Normally, what the people heard was law. The Rabbis and teachers of the law had taken God’s Ten Commandments and turned them into over 600 laws, rules, and regulations. Then these men taught the people those laws. They taught that if people kept all of their laws, then people could cover over their sins because they would be keeping God’s law. The Rabbis loaded people up with laws they couldn’t keep, which then loaded people down with guilt, the guilt of not keeping God’s law.

So how was Jesus’ teaching different? Jesus proclaimed: **“The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news”** (Mark 1:15)! In contrast to the Rabbis, Jesus preached: “Don’t hide your sins from God. Instead, repentant! Confess your sins to God. Admit you are not able to keep his law, and then ask him to forgive you. And the LORD will forgive you. Why? Because God has sent His Messiah to win your salvation. The time has come. Your salvation is here. Repent and believe the good news!” This was amazingly powerful preaching!

But the real power of Jesus’ word is seen in the ability of his words to drive out evil. Mark writes: **Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an evil 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!” “Be quiet!” said Jesus sternly. “Come out of him!” The evil spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek** (vs. 23-26).

Did you ever wonder what this evil spirit is doing in a place of worship? Why would a demon be in a place where God’s word was being proclaimed? That evil spirit was working to stop the people from hearing the gospel. Satan and his evil angels don’t want anyone to enter heaven. That means they work extra hard on the people who are believers. Evil spirits will do whatever it takes to keep people from believing God’s plan of salvation.

Yet the demon that possessed that man in the synagogue was faced with something rather unexpected: the power of Jesus’ gospel message. Tormented by forgiveness that this demon knew it could never have, it tries to distract people from truth by getting them to focus on who Jesus is – the Holy One of God – instead of focusing on what Jesus is saying. That is when Jesus displays the incredible power of his word. With just a few words Jesus drives out the evil

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spirit that is controlling this man. By the power of his words Jesus freed that man from his demonic prison. Jesus powerful words drive the evil from that man's life.

Thankfully, since I have been here, we have not had to deal with people in our church who are demon possessed. Yet Satan knows there are other ways he can enslave souls to his will. Don't think the devil and his evil angels are not hard at work here at our Sunday morning worship services. Satan and his evil followers use the same techniques on us as that evil spirit did in Capernaum: they distract, disrupt, and try to get us to focus on all the wrong things. We think about what other people are wearing. We think about who is or isn't in church, or we get distracted by people who come into church after the service has started. Those evil spirits are constantly trying to lead our minds to think about anything other than what God is saying to us through his word. And if that doesn't work they start throwing other things at us. They hit us with guilt of our past sins or tempt us with lustful or greedy thoughts. Or they may simply get us to "self-absorb" focusing us on everything that is happening in our own little worlds. The devil and his followers are always working to turn people away from hearing and trusting God's good promises. Sadly, we have all fallen for their tactics.

That is when our Lord comes and displays the amazing power of his word among us. Jesus' words drive out the evil that also plagues our hearts and minds. It only took one little sentence to drive that demon out of the man in the synagogue. **"Come out of him"** was all it took. The demon was driven out. And this little victory in Capernaum's synagogue was a picture of the victory that was to come. Jesus won that victory in a rather unlikely place just outside the walls of Jerusalem. On a hill called Golgotha, Jesus worked to drive out the evil of sin by speaking one more little sentence, **"It is finished"** (John 19:30). With those words his work of salvation was complete. Our hell has been suffered. All the sins that Satan and his evil followers lead us into, the distractions, the guilt, the self-centeredness has all been forgiven. Our guilt totally paid for. Our old evil foe defeated. With that one little sentence Jesus reestablished our relationship with his heavenly Father. But that wasn't the end of God's amazing words. Three days later, God sent his angel to proclaim another little sentence: **"He has risen"** (Matthew 28:6)! Christ is risen indeed! And because he lives, we will live with him forever. He is risen, and he has returned to his heavenly glory to prepare a place for us! These truths are ours because of the amazingly powerful words of Jesus.

Yet it wasn't just the power of Jesus' words that caught the attention of the people in the synagogue that day. Mark tells us that: **The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, "What is this? A new teaching—and with authority"** (v. 27)! The people were amazed at the words and teachings of Jesus. Words with amazing authority.

What did the people mean by saying Jesus' teaching had authority? To answer that question we need to first answer another question: What is authority? According to Webster's dictionary, authority is: *power to influence or command thought, opinion, or behavior*<sup>1</sup>.

In what the Gospel writer Mark records we certainly see that Jesus' words have the power to influence thoughts, opinions, and behaviors. Jesus words even had authority over the behavior of an evil spirit.

But Jesus' words not just back up with some frail, human authority. Christ's words are backed up by authority of God. This is the same authoritative word that, when spoken by God,

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<sup>1</sup>Merriam-Webster, I. (1996, c1993). *Merriam-Webster's collegiate dictionary*. Includes index. (10th ed.). Springfield, Mass., U.S.A.: Merriam-Webster.

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created the world and everything in it. Jesus' words are words that are authorized by God to create, and to make changes in this world.

Jesus' authoritative words of gospel bring about something new. His words have the authority to change the way we think about sin. The words of Christ help us see how sin enslaves us and holds us captive. His words change our minds to hate sin. And his words fill us with the desire to follow God's will. Jesus' words move us to repent.

Then the authority of Christ's word creates new life in our spiritually dead souls. The gospel has the God's authority to create and sustain faith. This faith, this new life that Jesus creates in us, wants to thank and praise Jesus for his forgiveness as our faith works to carry out God's will in our lives.

As we grow in faith, Jesus words have the authority to influence our thoughts and behaviors.

His word turns the eyes of our hearts off of our own little worlds of self-importance. Christ's words turn our attention off of our needs, which God has provided for, and he helps us turn our hearts to the needs to others.

Jesus also uses the authority of his amazing word to influence our lips and lives to proclaim his saving work. We see this happen with the people who were in the synagogue. Mark tells us, "**News about [Jesus] spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee**" (v. 28). The people in the synagogue were so amazed at Jesus that they couldn't stop talking about him. That same amazement over Jesus power and authority prompts our faith to talk about Jesus. Christ has not only saved our souls from eternal suffering in hell, but Jesus has changed our lives, granting us the forgiveness of our sins and giving us peace with God the Father. Jesus has lifted the burden of guilt off our shoulders. He has freed us from the devil's power and influence. Having the knowledge our Lord's salvation moves our hearts to share our Savior all over the whole region where we live. We want to share with others the amazing life- saving words of Jesus.

Even though our English word "amazing" doesn't seem to have quite the same punch that it use to have, it still seems to be the most appropriate word to describe the words of Christ. Our Savior's words truly are amazing in both their power and their authority. May you daily bask in the amazing words of Jesus as you wait for him to call you home so that you can bask in the amazing glory of his heaven. Amen.