

Preaching and Healing with Authority

Luke 4:31-44

Trinity Lutheran – Kearney, Missouri

January 31, 2016 – Fourth Sunday After The Epiphany



In the name of the Father, and of † the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. At the Baptism of Our Lord Jesus, He was anointed by the Holy Spirit as the Christ – the beloved Son of God come in human flesh to bear the sin of the world and be our Savior. After His Baptism He next went to the Synagogue in His home town of Nazareth to proclaim God’s Word in fulfillment of the Old Testament promise that when Messiah came, He would proclaim and accomplish the liberation of His people from their captivity to sin, death and the devil. And later Christ’s rejection by the people and synagogue of Nazareth – not to mention their numerous foiled attempts to kill Him – would anticipate His coming Cross and Passion which we will soon be remembering during the penitential season of Lent.

Today, however, St. Luke records for us a summary and description of the preaching and healing which characterized Jesus’ Ministry. This is the same preaching, healing ministry which would continue through the work of the Apostles, which continues also here in this place – yes, wherever the Word of God is purely preached and taught and the Sacraments are rightly administered according to Christ’s institution. Concerning this preaching and healing of Jesus, our Lord reveals for us three points of particular importance as we consider what it is we’re doing as we gather together to hear God’s Word and receive from this Altar the soothing, healing medicine of immortality which is given and poured out for us to eat and drink in the Sacrament of Holy Communion – the very body and blood of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

The first thing we need to look at is the Divine *necessity* of the preaching and healing ministry of Jesus. What I mean by that is that it was just as necessary for our Lord to preach and to heal as it was for Him to go to the cross, suffer, die and rise from the dead. This fact was emphasized by Jesus Himself on the day of His Ascension when He commissioned His Apostles to go out into all the world to make disciples – first by Baptizing, and then by teaching everything Jesus Himself had taught. And this was not done for God’s benefit, but rather for us men and for our salvation – so that you and I might receive the forgiveness of our sins and be delivered from sin, death and the devil. All this was done according to the good and gracious will of God, for apart from this salvation – apart from this preaching

and healing of Jesus – you and I would be lost forever in our sin, subject to eternal death, and doomed to spend an eternity in hell.

Indeed, this dire predicament would befall and afflict even those within the Church were it not for the preaching and healing of Jesus. And is this not precisely what we see in the example of the man in this morning’s Gospel lesson, who, even though he was there in the synagogue purportedly to worship God, still found himself possessed by an unclean spirit? And what about Simon Peter’s mother-in-law, who was possessed by a fever threatening to take her life? Would we not consider her to be a member of the Church because of her connection to Peter and Jesus? Is there anything in Holy Scripture to suggest she wasn’t already a believer?

Hence the same is true for you. Not only was it necessary for our Lord Christ to purchase and obtain the gift of salvation for you by His sacrificial death on the cross, but it was just as necessary that He wrap up that gift and actually present it to you – which He does by means of His Gospel-Word and Sacraments. Thus what Christ Jesus accomplished in His own flesh, He now bestows upon His creation through His creaturely means of grace so that He might make you to be a new creation in His Resurrection from the dead – a gift freely given to you by the preaching of Jesus and the healing power of His body and blood.

Now, if you were to ask the crowds here in this Gospel: “What is this Word,” and: “How can this be?” – not unlike the “What Does This Mean” questions we’re used to seeing in the Catechism – that would bring us to the second point we want to examine: the Divine *authority* of the preaching and healing of Jesus. In the first place, we could say Jesus has that authority by Divine right as the almighty, eternal Son of the living God. To be sure, even the demons recognize and acknowledge this with fear and trembling. Yet here is where we catch a glimpse of the “Messianic secret” – that it’s apparently not ever appropriate for our Lord Jesus to be identified as the Son of God apart from His Cross. For apart from His Cross, His Divine *authority* would have to bring upon us all the full weight of His Law, wrath and hot condemnation – all without forgiveness, salvation, or any hope at all!

But thanks be to God for the Divine *authority* Jesus has been given as the Son of Man – as the one true God who became true Man for us men and our salvation – who voluntarily took upon Himself the past, present and future sins of the entire world and bore them in His own body to the Cross – who was vindicated in His Resurrection from the dead and appointed Judge of all – but at the same time was also endowed by our Heavenly Father with the prerogative and authority to grant sinners the forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

It is with that Divine *authority* to forgive sins and bestow on sinners the gift of life and salvation that Jesus preaches the Gospel, heals people, forgives their sin so that it doesn't destroy them, and drives out both demons and fevers alike. And what's even more important – lest you think this authority of Jesus is limited to Him alone – is that it's with this *very same authority* He received from His Father that Jesus sent His holy Apostles and continues to this very day calling and sending His ministers out into this world to carry out His saving work.

And that brings us to the third point I want to address this morning, the Divine, saving *content* of the preaching and healing of Jesus. According to our Lord Himself – perhaps in contrast to what many in our modern-day world might teach – the Divine *content* of Jesus' preaching and healing is the Gospel of the Kingdom of God – the benevolent rule by grace through faith of our gracious Lord and Savior, who has rescued us from the tyranny of the devil, made us citizens of His heavenly Kingdom, and enabled to call Him "Lord," "Savior," and "Christ."

The preaching and healing of Jesus is what bestows this Kingdom of God upon sinners, because these very things contain and convey Christ Himself, along with all His gifts and benefits. This is where Christ Jesus enters in and Satan is cast out – where God's good creation is once and for all resurrected, restored and renewed. This great life and salvation Christ bestows not only as Creator, but also as the One who bore in His own body the curse of our sin, who made atonement for it by His sacrificial death, and who raised and restored His creation to the perfect goodness it had before the fall.

All this, dear Christian, all this is what He gives you and me by means of His Word – by the preaching, proc-

lamation, and hearing of His Word – even as all things in the beginning were brought into being. And all this He does so that both your body and soul might be healed by the touch of His divine, life-giving flesh which comes to you not only by hearing, but also through water, bread and wine – even as the Scriptures teach in so many different places. Thus, by the Ministry of His Gospel-Word and Sacraments here in this place – and wherever God ordains it – He heals you and all people of their sins, and bestows eternal life and salvation just as He did in this morning's Gospel text.

Dear friends, it's that *very same* Gospel Ministry – the preaching and healing of Jesus – which continues here and now in this New Testament "synagogue" of the Christian Church – and on this holy "Sabbath Day" of the Divine Service. As hard as it might be for you to understand, Kearney, Missouri is one of those "other cities" to which Jesus was also divinely sent to preach the Kingdom of God when the Holy Spirit called Dirk van der Linde to be your first pastor, and then later called me, so that here Jesus might come to you through pastors sent in His name and by His stead – so that by Christ's Divine *authority* the Gospel might be preached into your ears and heart, and you might thereby be healed of the diseases of your soul with the precious medicine of immortality received here on your knees at this Altar.

God grant that by His grace, by His Holy, precious Word, and by the working of the Holy Spirit, that you, too, would have the same zeal to hear and receive Christ's preaching and healing as the crowds in this morning's Gospel – that you would cling to Jesus by faith in these means of grace, and never let Him get away from you. And by the same token, may this report of Him as our only Lord, Savior and Redeemer be spread far and wide from this place by means of your mouths, "into every locality in this surrounding district," so that all who are sick with sin and death might also be brought to Him who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit, ever one God, now and forever. Amen.

And now that peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and minds in that one true faith in Christ Jesus, unto life everlasting. Amen.