

February 1, 2015
Sermon for the Fourth Sunday after Epiphany
St Peter Lutheran Church
Bowie, TX
Larry Knobloch, Pastor
Mark 1:21–28

J.J.- Jesu Juva—Help me, Jesus

Mark 1:21–28 (ESV)

²¹ And they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath he entered the synagogue and was teaching. ²² And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes. ²³ And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, ²⁴ “What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God.” ²⁵ But Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be silent, and come out of him!” ²⁶ And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying out with a loud voice, came out of him. ²⁷ And they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, “What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.” ²⁸ And at once his fame spread everywhere throughout all the surrounding region of Galilee.

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Amen

When you mention the word “authority,” it’s likely you’ll have to qualify what you mean. Depending on who you are talking too—and where you are at—“authority” may have a very negative connotation. It may bring to mind oppression by a micro managing boss or an abusive parent.

In that setting, an “authority” is a ruler—a ruler who uses you for his or her own advantage.

But there are good authorities as well—ones who use their authority for the benefit of others instead of themselves. This use of authority is seen as beneficial and orderly for society. Good parents, good teachers, good bosses—ones who develop trust in the people of their charge.

Jesus exercised good authority. Like other good authority figures, Jesus didn’t seek authority; it was given to Him (Mt 28:18). In His state of humiliation, Jesus submitted Himself to the will of the Father, using His Father’s authority for the good—for the salvation—of all mankind.

In today’s Gospel reading, Jesus shows his active work toward that salvation. We see that Jesus’ Authority Is Shown by His Teaching and His Power over Demons.

What was so special about Jesus’ teaching (Mk 1:21–22)? He taught as one who had authority—not like the teaching they’d been hearing from the scribes.

The scribes were quick to cite high-sounding rabbinic names. They used these remote authorities to give their words more credence.

But in fact, they weren't interested in creeds at all, but deeds.

They were only interested in the endless duties of the Law.

From the general Law of the Torah, they extracted rules and regulations for almost any situation. Generation after generation of scribes passed down this oral law, which was committed to memory. Since they were the experts of this unwritten code, they were also the ones passing judgment on individual cases.

But while the scribes were extracting and deducing, being "quick to quote," Jesus was "cutting to the quick"—as He did in last week's lesson—boldly preaching contrition and faith, the full counsel of God.

He simply told them how it is—on no less authority than God Himself.

And so, what a startling contrast this teaching of Jesus was!

The difference was so great that our text says the people were "amazed"—literally in the Greek, "dumbfounded."

This refers, first, to the content of His teaching—to what Jesus taught.

He wasn't preaching about endless circumstances for choosing the right behavior, but sin and grace.

His message wasn't "What should I do?" but rather "What has God done for me—because of what I've done and left undone?"

This wasn't some new teaching that was "all the rage" of Capernaum, but a "dusting off" of timeless teaching found in God's Word.

It was a teaching that man is not capable of keeping God's Law.

It was a teaching that through the coming and the work of the Messiah, forgiveness would be won for helpless man.

Christianity would need to be about Christ, not the Christian.

There was also the manner in which Jesus taught.

There was no gap—no seam—between message and messenger.

When Jesus taught, he was presenting simultaneously the person and work of Jesus Christ.

The Son taught—directly—the message and intent of the Father (Mt 11:27; Jn 10:30).

But this refreshing message of good news isn't always received with joy and "amazement," is it?

Often we see, even in very different settings, the rejection of the "good."

What rashness—what boldness, does the devil have

How often the evil one just barges in—acting like he owns the place:

Mk 1:23–24: *"And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit. And he cried out,²⁴ "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God."*

Notice his words: "What do you want with us?" It's like saying, "What are you doing here?" Obviously, the demon had quite enjoyed having the place to himself.

"Everyone here was perfectly content—until you came along. You've come to destroy, I know who you are—the Holy One of God!"

But Jesus wouldn't take any more. Even though what the demon said was true, it certainly was no endorsement.

So Jesus shuts him up. Literally in the Greek, he "muzzles him." Jesus says three little Greek words—that's all it took to vanquish the wicked one.

No magic show—no long incantation—just three words: *phimōthēti kai exelthe*—
be silent and come out! Be gone!

Mk 1:26–27: *“And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying out with a loud voice, came out of him. ²⁷ And they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, “What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.”*

This is what Satan and his angels most despise: to be put in their place, to be reminded that they never had, and never will have, ultimate authority. They can never be God. Christ Jesus is God.

As Luther once said, God’s powerful and efficacious Word acts as a “fumigant.”

It makes the “flea,”—F-L-E-A—that is, Satan, our constant nemesis and pest, “flee.”—F-L-E-E, run fast and far.

For where God’s Word is applied, Satan cannot be. So, three little words—words from the mouth of God—did fell him.

And that’s all it takes for us too—three little words from the mouth of God.

God’s Word has His own final authority.

But in our case, they’re words with the authority to restore. Three words, “I forgive you,” from the mouth of God, dispel all gloom and sadness and bring on joy and gladness.

And those words are spoken of you, they are for you!

You are forgiven, in Jesus name.

Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria – To God alone be the glory

Sermon Outline

Three Little Words

Mark 1:21-28

1. Jesus' authority is shown by His teaching
2. Jesus' authority is shown by His power over demons.
3. Jesus' authority is practiced in His love for you.