

Epiphany 4
January 28, 2018

Mark 1:21-28
353-395-356-321

What's Your Reaction...

- I. As Jesus speaks with authority?
- II. As Jesus acts with authority?

Dear Christian friends,

We're just getting to it in the day school confirmation class – Jesus' THREE OFFICES or **jobs**. Do you remember them? Jesus is our Prophet – Priest – and King.

This week's readings focus us on Jesus as our **Prophet**. In the OT reading we heard God's promise of Jesus as THE PROPHET. ***"I will raise up a prophet for them from among their brothers, like you, and I will put My words in His mouth, and He will speak to them everything that I command Him."*** God also clearly spelled out that HE EXPECTED His people to listen to His prophet. ***"Anyone who will not listen to My words that the prophet speaks in My name, I Myself will call him to account."***

We see that promise fulfilled in this gospel reading. It was a Saturday in Capernaum – the **OT Sabbath** – time for worship. We could say that Jesus was the GUEST PREACHER that day. We're not told what Jesus preached on but we are told the EFFECT Jesus' teaching had on the people. ***"They were amazed at His teaching, because He was teaching them as one who has authority and not as the experts in the law."*** Then after Jesus had drive that demon out, ***"Everyone was so amazed that they began to discuss this with each other. 'What is this? A new teaching with authority! He even commands the unclean spirits, and they obey Him!'"***

As we look at these verses – WHAT'S YOUR REACTION – 1) as Jesus speaks ***"with authority"*** and 2) as Jesus acts ***"with authority"***?

I. As Jesus speaks with authority?

Let's briefly review the JOB DESCRIPTION of **God's** prophets. Perhaps the best explanation is God's call to Jeremiah, ***"You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you."*** Or as we heard in the OT reading, ***"I will put My words in His mouth, and He will speak to them everything that I command Him."*** A faithful prophet preaches ONLY WHAT GOD tells him to say. Jesus Himself actually emphasized that very point. ***"I have not spoken on My own, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a command regarding what I am to say. So the things I speak are exactly what the Father told Me to speak."***

Jesus' teaching left the people in Capernaum ***"amazed"*** and DUMB-STRUCK. It's not simply that Jesus was an INTERESTING – easy-to-listen to speaker. What got the people's ATTENTION was that Jesus ***"was teaching them as one who has authority."*** Jesus' teaching was not a matter of "I THINK – I suppose – this is how I see it – what do you think?" Jesus ***"taught with authority"*** – the authority of GOD'S Word. God is, after all, the HIGHEST – the FINAL authority. There is no appealing to someone HIGHER than God – no one with the **authority** to OVERRULE God. Not only that – Jesus ***"taught with authority"*** AS THE SON of God Himself. God's OT prophets faithfully proclaimed, ***"This is what the LORD says."*** Jesus taught ***"with the authority"*** of ***"Amen. Amen. I tell you."***

The people at this synagogue weren't used to hearing that kind of teaching. ***"He was teaching them as one who has authority and not as the experts in the law."*** In the past they had HEARD God's Word read but then it was PRETTY MUCH LOST and **hidden** with ***"the tradition of the elders"*** – man-made rules and opinions – "RABBI so-and-so said this – I read **such-and-such**." They had heard all kinds of LAW – **God's** and **man's** – but they hadn't heard CLEAR GOSPEL – God's promise of the **coming Savior**. They heard rules about the **Sabbath** – "DON'T WALK **too far** on the Sabbath" – but they didn't hear about the SAVIOR COMING to bring rest to their **weary souls**.

What do YOU COME to hear at **church** and in **Bible class**? What do you want your children taught at **school** and in **Sunday School**? Do you want a clear – AUTHORITATIVE – **“this is what the LORD says”** – or a WISHY-WASHY “I think – I suppose – others are **saying/doing**”? One of the signs of the last days is that **“people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn away from the truth and turn aside to myths.”**

Jesus taught **“with authority”** that **“amazed”** people but it also TURNED OFF many others. They didn't like what Jesus had to say – it OFFENDED them. **Since Jesus wouldn't change** His message to **suit them** they stopped listening to Him. That STILL happens today.

What's YOUR REACTION to Jesus **“teaching with authority”**? The ONLY God-pleasing response is to **“listen.”** Moses commanded the Israelites, **“Listen to Him.”** At Jesus' transfiguration God the Father said, **“This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased. Listen to Him.”** **“Listen”** – HEAR – believe – obey. DON'T JUST be **“amazed”** and impressed - **whatever** Jesus says take it PERSONALLY and take it TO HEART. Don't shrug it off or let it go IN ONE EAR and out the other.

The people recognized **“the authority”** IN Jesus' **teaching**. Then they visibly saw that **“authority”** IN ACTION. What's YOUR REACTION...

II. As Jesus acts with authority?

“Just then there was a man with an unclean spirit in their synagogue. It cried out, ‘What do we have to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are — the Holy One of God!’”

There are some big lessons for us here about the **devil** and his **demons**. #1 – They're REAL – real spiritual beings. Jesus spoke directly to this demon AS A PERSON. Jesus wasn't talking to an EVIL INFLUENCE or **power** but an evil **“spirit”** – PERSON. The devil and demons are **“unclean”** – there is absolutely nothing good about them. They are mean and VICIOUS. They are our enemies **although** they will act like they're our FRIENDS. They ONLY WANT to hurt and destroy us but they will promise us FUN and a **good time**. The devil is **“the father of lies”** but he tries to convince us that GOD IS the liar – that we can't trust God – that God doesn't know what He's talking about. Oh – and DON'T MISS this **truth** – the devil and his demons don't mind going to church and right there causing all kinds of trouble.

All that is SCARY enough but don't overlook that this demon had **actually taken physical control** of this man's body. This demon used the **man's mouth** to talk and **“cry out with a loud voice.”** He **“threw the man into convulsions.”** SEE that and see also that all who are NOT FILLED with and CONTROLLED by God the Holy Spirit they are **all spiritually controlled** by the devil. I'll BE BLUNT. If God is NOT IN CONTROL of a person's life – if a person is not living his life FOR GOD and according to God's Word and will – then **that person** is actually living for and being CONTROLLED BY the devil. Those people **may be thinking**, “I'LL DO whatever I want – NEITHER GOD nor the devil can control me!” – but in fact the devil has FOOLED that person into thinking and doing EXACTLY AS the **devil wants** him to.

The people's REACTION? **“Everyone was so amazed that they began to discuss this with each other. “What is this? A new teaching with authority! He even commands the unclean spirits, and they obey Him!”** They're impressed. They're asking, “WHAT is this?” **Unfortunately** they failed to ask, “WHO is this?”

What's OUR REACTION to Jesus acting **“with authority”**? Yes, be impressed and **“amazed”** – and ask both “WHAT is this?” and “WHO is this?”

Jesus' action's answer our "WHO is this?" question. The man Jesus of Nazareth is none other than the ALMIGHTY SON of God Himself born one of us. ONLY GOD can order the devil to do something and the devil MUST DO it. The devil is stronger than us but ONLY GOD is almighty.

Jesus' actions answer our "WHAT is this?" question too. This is the "**good news**" of Jesus come to rescue us from the **devil's power** and control. This was another skirmish in the BATTLE BETWEEN Jesus and Satan – between "**the serpent and the woman's Seed.**" Jesus took the place of **all people** under God's law and as our Substitute He was BUSY LIVING for us that life of perfect love and obedience that we owed God but never could live. The devil came at Jesus time and again TRYING to get Jesus to fail in His mission. But the Bible assures that though "**Jesus was tempted in every way just as we are – yet He was without sin.**" Jesus NEVER FELL ONCE for the devil's lies and **empty promises**. Jesus always put His heavenly FATHER FIRST in His life.

That battle between Jesus and the devil reached its climax at Calvary's cross. **There** the **sinless Lord** Jesus willingly took the BLAME and PUNISHMENT for the sins of the whole world. Standing at the cross **how** could we ever think that sin is only a POOR CHOICE or **no big deal**? **There on the cross** Jesus endured the hell and "**God-forsakenness**" that we HAD COMING. There Jesus shed His precious blood and sacrificed His perfect life to PERSONALLY PAY for **all** our sins **in full**. AT FIRST it looked as if the **devil had won** – Jesus was dead. But Easter proves Jesus REALLY WON. Jesus came out of His grave ALIVE and TRIUMPHANT over sin and guilt – death – the devil – and hell. Oh, what a victory **Jesus won** – FOR US!

Jesus shares that victory with us THROUGH the gospel in Word and Sacraments. **Through the gospel** the Holy Spirit brings us to faith in Jesus as our Savior – makes us Christians - children of God – **heirs** of heaven. Trusting in Jesus as our Savior WE HAVE God's forgiveness of all our sins – have peace with God – we are going straight to heaven when we die. **Through the gospel** God motivates us to live GOD-CENTERED – God-**pleasing** lives. **Through the gospel** God keeps our "**attention focused on Jesus**" as we heard in the epistle reading.

ALL THAT **through the gospel**. That's why the devil is **constantly trying** to KNOCK GOD'S WORD out of our **hearts** and **daily lives**. IF he can get us away from God's Word – get us to ignore what God says – push God off to the side in our lives -THEN he can reassert his control over our lives. When we don't have time for God and His Word we're just inviting the devil **back into** our lives.

So just what is YOUR REACTION to what you've just heard from **God's Word**? Amen.

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