

Mark 1:21-28 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. 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. 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 evil spirits and they obey him." News about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee.

NOT YOUR ORDINARY TEACHER

Mark 1:21-28

A police officer stopped a motorist who was speeding down Main Street.

"But officer," the man began, "I can explain."

"Just be quiet," snapped the officer. "I'm going to let you cool your heels in jail until the chief gets back."

"But, officer, I just wanted to say,"

"And I said to keep quiet! You're going to jail!"

A few hours later the officer looked in on his prisoner and said, "Lucky for you that the chief's at his daughter's wedding... He'll be in a good mood when he gets back."

"Don't count on it," answered the fellow in the cell. "I'm the groom."

Authority. Authority. Is that the kind of authority that comes to mind when we think of the word – one who wields a badge, holds himself with a certain flair, tells you what to do? One who has power, exudes self-confidence, and barks commands?

Authority. It says in our text that “people were amazed at Jesus teaching because he taught as one who had authority.” What do you think this meant? Was Jesus an intimidating person who spoke with a commanding presence so that people were taken aback? Frankly, I don’t think so. But I do think an understanding of Jesus’ “authority” says a lot to us today about who Jesus is and why he came. So let’s consider this word “authority.” What did it mean, as it refers to Jesus?

1) AUTHORITY MEANS HE SPOKE AS THOUGH HE WAS GOD. When Jesus spoke He didn’t just discuss God in an academic sense, as “the deity, far off.” I think it meant his preaching was characterized by the intimate relationship with the Father that was His, as the Son of God. He spoke as one who knew God -- personally. He spoke as one who WAS God -- in the flesh. So, He wasn’t running around quoting the theologians of His day or citing religious precedent from the religious tomes. He wasn’t spouting out the rules of the religious collections

like a lawyer in a courtroom citing Baker vs. the State of Nebraska or some other ecclesiastical laws and rules of His day. No. He spoke about His Father in a personal way -- and His role as the Savior who was part of the team -- one person of the Trinity.

Who, out there, is a Packers fan? Raise your hands. I am too. (Although this year, once our starting quarterback went down, I spent as much time watching my Philadelphia Eagles as I did the Packers) But I love the Packers. I enjoy getting out to a game once a year.

It was a pleasure, a few years ago, to work side-by-side with Wayne Larivee on a Habitat for Humanity house. You know Wayne, he the announcer for the Packers on WTMJ radio. He's an interesting guy. He knows the players and can talk about them with some measure of insight into their character. By the way, he almost cut his thumb off that day – Great sportcaster, not as great a carpenter.

But imagine if I was working not just with Wayne Larivee, with Aaron Rodgers and Jordy Nelson themselves and they started talking about what it's like to play on the field! Wow! So much better than those who talk about the Packers. These men ARE Packers.

Jesus didn't just talk ABOUT God. Jesus WAS the Messiah. And as He spoke to them in the synagogue with the intimacy of being One with the Father, people couldn't help but notice. When Jesus discussed the great Father Abraham and said, "Before Abraham was, I am." And tongues were wagging. When Jesus reads Old Testament prophecy and says, "Today, while you are listening, this prophecy is fulfilled," the place was abuzz. Who says such a thing?

2) AUTHORITY MEANS HE BACKS UP HIS WORDS WITH ACTIONS OF POWER. Jesus takes things a step further and begins to do some things only one who IS God could do. Take our text for today. There is a man in the community who is well-known as a demoniac. More than likely he was known for shouting out radically ungodly things, maybe displaying some type of superhuman abilities that evidenced a power beyond himself, out-of-control." He was deemed a hopeless case, avoided by the masses, and, no doubt, used by the religious leaders as an example of what can happen to one who yields to sin.

But enter Jesus, who not only cares about this man, but is able, as God's Son, to cast out the demon with just a few words. The demon shrieks and cries out, identifying Jesus as the Holy One. It shakes the man violently. And then it is gone. Can you imagine the hush that came

over the crowd as the man returns to sanity and begins to have a conversation with Jesus? “Who is this?” the crowd murmurs. “Even the demons obey Him?” They have never seen any teacher like this. The Rabbis and teachers of the law never did such things. And, while those leaders might be critical of Jesus claims to be Messiah, it’s hard for them to deny that Jesus is doing things that make Him appear to be more than just another human.

3) AUTHORITY MEANS HE BACKS UP HIS WORDS WITH ACTIONS OF COMPASSION. Immediately after Jesus finishes His teaching and exorcises the demon, He goes right to the home of Peter’s mother-in-law and brings healing to this sick relative of His disciple. The text from Luke says, “He rebuked the fever, and it left her. Again, just a few words, and the sickness is driven away.

And soon, as night approaches, the crowds bring more and more people to Jesus -- with sickness, with disabilities, with pains, and with demons. And, laying His hands on them, He healed them all -- one by One -- some who had been disabled for many years, and others who had been sick for just a short time. And it becomes clear to the masses, that Jesus not only has authority over the Tempter, but also over every manner of malady -- from leprosy to blindness -- to cancers and psychoses.

4) AUTHORITY MEANS HE BACKS UP HIS WORDS WITH MIRACLES. Later on, as the Gospel writers continue to declare the story of Jesus, we learn of an astounding miracle. Jesus enables those fishermen who have been listening to Him, after a night of fishing failure, to drop their nets into waters that have seemed empty, and have them bursting to the seams with fish. Simon Peter’s reaction to the miracle is to fall on his knees and declare, “Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!” He clearly recognizes Jesus’ authority over all of Creation, and knows he is unworthy to be in the presence of God. And yet, Jesus instead says, “Follow me, for I will make you fishers of men.”

5) Which takes us to the last point I want to make about authority. AUTHORITY MEANS THAT JESUS ACCOMPLISHES HIS ROLE EVEN THOUGH IT MEANS SERVANTHOOD. In the coming years of Jesus ministry He will proclaim that though He is the Son of God and has authority over all things, that He chooses to exercise His authority to win back His fallen creation -- that He will ultimately humble Himself and become obedient unto death -- even death on the cross so that His beloved might have the free gift of eternal life.

For the Pharisees and teachers of the Law, the humbling of God was an absurdity, a non-sequitur, a crazy concept. God is a judge, God is a lawgiver, God is a being so high above us that we cannot even speak His name.

But Jesus proclaims His authority to submit to the Father, to lay down His life, and to rise again.

Authority. He spoke as God. He backed up His words with actions of power, actions of mercy, actions as King of Creation, and the jaw-dropping, unbelievable servant act of becoming one with fallen humanity and paying the price for all sin.

This, my friends, is an Authority worth following. This, my friends, is an authority worth worshipping.

And that's why we're here, isn't it? Because the same Jesus who spoke with authority in 30 AD also speaks today to you and me. And when He speaks, He speaks as One who knows us, who loves us, who is committed to us, and who made it possible for us to live forever with Him.

Think of all the authorities out there: politicians, court justices, policemen, military personnel, CEO's, church administrators, angels, demons and so on and so on. But the Authority of All Authorities walked in our shoes, took on the burden of our sins, was crucified for us and lives and reigns to all eternity. Is there any other who can make such a claim?

And that's why we are ready, as His people, to let Him be our guardian and our guide -- to listen to His word, to trust His actions on our behalf, to believe that, even when the chips might seem stacked against Him, that He is worthy of our faith, our allegiance, and our future.

May God be praised in us. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.