



CHRISTIAN CRUSADERS

7401 UNIVERSITY AVE., CEDAR FALLS, IOWA 50613

(319) 277-0924

INFO@CHRISTIANCRUSADERS.ORG

WWW.CHRISTIANCRUSADERS.ORG

Jesus Is...The Voice of Authority

February 7, 2021

Rev. Steve Kramer

TEXT: Mark 1:21-28 (NRSV)

They went to Capernaum; and when the sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught. They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. Just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, and he cried out, "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." But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!" And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him. They were all amazed, and they kept on asking one another, "What is this? A new teaching—with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him." At once his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee.

Dear friends,

I recently watched a television interview with Dr. Michael Osterholm. He was introduced by the host of the show as the world's foremost authority on pandemics. He's a renowned and respected expert. So I carefully listen to what he had to say about how dangerous this pandemic is that we're in and how to play it safe during this time. I'm taking him seriously and applying his wisdom in my daily routines. Fortunately, I'm happy to report I've been able to avoid getting this virus so far. I sure am grateful for this voice of authority during this time. I was driving down the freeway recently and I saw a state patrol car parked on the median watching traffic. I immediately touched my brakes, even though I was keeping the speed limit – an automatic reflex, I guess. That state patrol car, you see, and the person in it represent an authority that is

there to protect us and keep us driving safely and following the laws. We do need them. A while back, my doctor discovered that I had fairly high cholesterol. He told me I needed to take a statin pill. I griped about it at first, but I started taking them. And guess what? My cholesterol count went down to where it should be. You know, as much as we sometimes struggle and chafe at authority in our lives at times, have you ever stopped to think where we would be without it? Things would be a chaotic mess. This world, our society, would be a more dangerous and unpleasant place for us to live.

Now, in our passage for today, we see people talking about the authority of Jesus. Not once, but twice, we're told they're astounded and amazed; first in a puzzled sort of way as they hear him teach and then in a God fearing sort of way as he sets a demon-possessed man free of his demons. First, we're told that Jesus taught as one having authority and not as the scribes, meaning he did not quote other experts on Old Testament scripture. He didn't refer to the Jewish traditions about scripture known as the Talmud or Mishnah. He speaks as if He is the author Himself of God's Word, as He's teaching in that synagogue. He speaks with "author-ity," so to speak. Mark doesn't tell us specifically what He said, but I imagine it was the announcement of the nearness of the Kingdom of God and pointing to Himself and telling people to repent, turn around, and believe in Him and enter the Kingdom of God for salvation. So His listeners were absolutely spellbound and astonished by this new teacher. They'd never heard anything like this before. And they wondered, "Who is this?"

Now, we also see him displaying His authority in a confrontation with a demon. That's the power of evil that had possessed a man who ran into the worship service shrieking at Jesus, "Why are you interfering with us, Jesus? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are: the only one of God." And Jesus firmly commanded this evil power, "Be silent, come out of him." And guess what: the demon came out violently, dramatically. It was quite a sight. Whenever I read this story, I'm reminded of a verse in Martin Luther's hymn, *A Mighty Fortress*: "And one little word shall fell him." Well Jesus felled him with a word. Jesus stopped the nightmare this person was experiencing by just speaking. He rescued him from the destructive forces that were enslaving him. That's what Jesus came to do, by the way: to rescue. And we hear that the crowd was amazed; they kept asking one another, "What is this, a new teaching with authority? And He commands even the unclean spirits and they obey Him." And His fame spread.

So we see Jesus striking people with this unprecedented authority, both in what He says and in what He does. I mean, He speaks and things happen. Someone new and powerful has arrived on the scene, and even the demons are subject to Him. He doesn't argue with the people's observations, by the way. He even claims He's got authority – authority to forgive sins, for instance, as we'll see in the next chapter of Mark.

As we look further ahead in the story of Jesus, we also see that the Demons had their final shrieks at Jesus as he hung on the cross, challenging and mocking for the last time the validity of His authority. But you know what happened on that cross: He completed the healing, rescuing work he began that day, dying as the perfect sacrifice for the sin of the world that heals the broken relationship between God and humankind and sets us free from the power of evil. And with authority, He will announce “It is finished.” And He'll be raised on the third day, which is God affirming his authority. And after another 50 days, Jesus will say to His disciples at His ascension, “All authority in Heaven and on Earth has been given to me. So go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And remember, I'm with you always as you carry out this commission.” All authority can be found in the person of Jesus Christ.

Now, I hope you don't mind, but it's time for us now to pause for just a moment and fill in our “Jesus is” blank again. Remember that each week as we study a Jesus story, we are to come up with one word that describes him to fill in the blank. Last week we used the word “Jesus is: calling,” the week before that “Jesus is strong.” Today, after studying this story, it seems best to use the phrase “the voice of authority.” Jesus is the voice of authority. In fact, He's the supreme voice of authority over Heaven and over Earth. All of Old Testament Scripture has been fulfilled in Him and points to Him and must be interpreted through His eyes by Him. He's the word made flesh, the author Himself, who reveals God to us. His authoritative words are words of power and wisdom for our lives. They accomplish things. They're active. They can set people free and give them a new start in life and restore us and save us. He says, for instance, in John's gospel, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples. And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” He's got authoritative truth for us in matters of salvation. In those matters, He tells us:

I am the way and the truth and the life, and no one comes to the father but by me. I am the way of salvation. I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes

in me, though he die, yet shall he live. Whoever believes in me shall have everlasting life.

He talks to us in about matters of faith and life with His authoritative word as we try to figure out what makes life work best for us. His voice of authority says things like, “Now, regarding your priorities, what does it profit a person to gain the whole world and lose his or her life?” Or as we face worries and fears, He says things like, “Look at the sparrows and how God takes care of each one of them. And remember, you're of more value than many sparrows to your Heavenly Father. He knows you. He knows what you need. You really can trust Him and call upon Him for help. Trust Him.” And in the area of building good relationships, that voice of authority says to us, “A new commandment I give to you: love one another as I have loved you.” He had just washed the disciples’ feet, the work of a servant, when He had said that. In other words, He says the way to great life is to serve each other, to set aside self and put the other first in those relationships of yours. Then you’ll have a great marriage, great friendship, and so on. And His word of authority provides us with a firm foundation upon which to build our lives. See, He's promised, “Whoever hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house upon a rock. And the rain fell and the floods came and the winds blew and beat on that house. But it did not fall.” Why: because it had been founded on the rock. What a promise! As we listen to this authoritative word and put it to work in our lives, it says Jesus is promising we will stand strong in any storm that life may throw in our direction.

Perhaps Mark doesn't tell us the content of Jesus’ teaching in this particular passage because he simply wanted us to see that Jesus is the voice of authority that we should listen to. He's come to rescue us and speak God's truth into our lives to give us a new, eternal life. Therefore, we should take Him seriously – more seriously than anyone or anything in life. Submit to His authority and give Him a serious hearing.

So I have a question for you: has Jesus gotten a serious hearing from you? Is He your savior that you trust for salvation? Is He the voice of authority as you live out your daily life, as you make your decisions and considerations? Have you submitted to His kingly authority, His will over you? You see, if Jesus is our voice of authority in all matters of faith and life and of our salvation, then we'll trust and obey His word to us. His words will carry great weight in our lives, will give them credence. They will be precious and valuable to us. That means diligently getting to know what they are. We'll have to study them in our Bible so that we know them. We believe they are truth and

commit ourselves to put them to work in our lives in every area of our lives, not just our Sunday morning life. In believing that Jesus is our authority on living life in this world, our attitude will become like the apostle Peter's, who responded to Christ question, "Do you want to go away from me?" with these words: "Lord? To whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."

You know, personally, I've learned over and over again as I've lived this life, and I'm still learning because I'm a slow learner, that Jesus really does have the answers for salvation and life. He knows what makes my life work best. And I guess that shouldn't surprise me. After all, He designed you and me. The inventor knows what makes his or her invention work best.

So here is the application as we consider Jesus, our voice of authority: open those gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John and take a daily sitting with Jesus. I encourage you to commit yourself to reading a chapter a day, for instance, and ask yourself after you've read, "What did I learn about Jesus and about me and about His will for my life as a citizen of the kingdom?" Can you do that? Sure you can.

A friend of mine just spent 600 hours these past 10 months learning to speak Spanish. He tells me he's gotten fairly proficient at it. He wants to use it in his business and maybe even in doing some ministry. He figures it will be helpful to him and to others. I got to thinking after that conversation with him, what if a person were to put that kind of time and effort in studying and learning the language of the Kingdom of God, God's word? I'm willing to bet that would be a real game changer in his or her life and a blessing in the lives of others around us. That authoritative word, you see, has the power to change us and make us into something that's a useful instrument in the hand of God.

As a story that Warren Buffett, who's one of the greatest investors of our day and a very rich man: in June 2005, Warren Buffett decided to help raise money for his charitable foundation by offering an online auction for anyone to have lunch with him. The winning bid was \$351,000; the price of access to him and his wisdom regarding investments. You and I, think of this, have access to the greatest authority on life and investments available for meeting every day of our lives. He's paid the price for us to have access to Him and His saving wisdom. We don't even have to pay for it. It's a gift.

I encourage you to start taking advantage of this wonderful gift and listen. And take seriously the voice of authority, Jesus Christ.

Amen.