

Emmanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church

Epiphany 4

January 28, 2018

The Amazing Authority of Jesus

Sermon by Pastor Daniel Pautz

– Mark 1:21-28

Over the years there have been many unusual occurrences in our church services. Years ago during the sermon a grandmotherly woman named Thea was holding a child in her lap. The child was very active and started waving his hands around and happened to catch the woman's wig which flew in the air. The wig landed on the lap of a man sitting in the pew behind her – and it sort of startled him. Later on, he teasingly said, "I didn't know whether I should kill it or pet it." On another occasion while I was preaching a man from one of the pews toward the back rushed down the side aisle coming toward the front – I wondered whether I had said something that deeply offended him. What happened was that the Advent wreath with the candles lit caught on fire and he quickly put it out. There was another time when we had a pastoral tag team at a wedding. Synod President Karl Gurgel who knew the bride spoke the message for awhile and then, so to speak, tagged me, and I spoke for awhile.

But one of the most amazing and memorable events happened in a church – a synagogue – almost 2000 years ago in a small village named Capernaum nestled on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. On that Sabbath Day a teacher, a new rabbi, who had just turned 30 was teaching the people. The teacher's name was Jesus from Nazareth. The people in the synagogue that day had never seen or heard anything like it. The Bible says that they were amazed.

Now what do you supposed caused them to be amazed? Was it the style of this preacher from Nazareth or was it substance? Sometimes today people get excited about the style and oratorical ability of a pastor – one who is a really smooth and polished speaker, well groomed – even should he not speak all the Biblical truth. And there are those just like that in the religious world today who appear to be more concerned about promoting self than the Scriptures. Were the people amazed because that day in their synagogue stood Jesus who as the Nicene Creed says is **God from God, true God from true God who through Him all things were made**? No, because the people did not yet realize that Jesus was the promised Messiah and true God. This is what amazed the people about Jesus. It was what he taught. **The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law.**

What did Jesus teach that day? We do not have a copy of his sermon but we are told from the Bible that as Jesus began His ministry **He went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God (Mark 1:14) and From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."** (Matthew 4:17) Jesus taught the Law of God – He did not mince words. Here are a few snippets from His Sermon on the Mount.

· "You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' ^{Mt 5:28} But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

· ^{Mt 5:43} "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' ^{Mt 5:44} But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. ^{Mt 5:48} Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Those words of the law must have made the hearers cringe. Jesus called upon them to repent. He said, I have come to call sinners to repentance but then he also taught the good news of salvation. He might have told them that he had come to seek and to save the lost. He might have said what he told Nicodemus in the words of John 3:16. He told them of forgiveness. He told them of the merciful and compassionate God who forgives all sins. (Psalm 103) He taught with authority because He was teaching the inspired Word of God.

Would that not be special if Jesus would be scheduled to preach at our church service – and we could announce in advance that Jesus will be our guest speaker and that He would speak with amazing authority. In looking at the preaching schedule I see the names of Pastors Brauer, Buchholz, Gran, and Pautz –but I don't see the name of Jesus. And yet He is here every Sunday and with authority as long as each of us pastors faithfully preaches His Word, the Law and the Gospel, calling upon you to repent of sins and then announcing the wondrous grace of God who forgives our sins. You should notice too that in the beginning part of the liturgy after you have confessed your sins, the pastor announces that you are forgiven. He says, "As a called servant of Christ and by His authority, I forgave you your sins in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.

Something else in the synagogue also left the people amazed. Somebody in the synagogue hated what Jesus was preaching – and hated Him too. Here are the words of Mark. **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!"** We might want to know more about devil possession? No examples of devil possession are given in the Old Testament with the possible exception of King Saul. Was this a new tactic of the devils during the ministries of Jesus and the apostles? Are there cases of it today? Even though I think my computer has been possessed, we do not have these absolute answers.

Here are some of the many facts we do know from the Word of God, the Bible. There are devils and demons. They are fallen angels who rebelled against God. They are real. The word devil or devils is used 34 times in the Bible, the word demon or demons is used 77 times, evil spirit 36 times, the name Satan is used 46 times in the Bible and Beelzebub 7 times. One of the clever tricks of the devil is to get people to believe there is no devil. That is similar to a soldier walking into a forest thinking there are no enemy snipers present when, in fact, the forest is infested with snipers. Peter writes, **Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.** Devils are enemies of God – they hate Him and they despise God's number one creature, mankind. They want to deceive people and take as many as they can to hell with them. Since we are saved by God's grace through faith, they attack our faith and seek to lead us away from Jesus. This is not some sort of game because the devil is playing for keeps.

But here is another fact, an important fact. Our Lord Jesus has absolute authority over demons, devils, and evil spirits. Listen to what happened that Saturday morning in the synagogue along the shores of the Sea of Galilee. **"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." "Even the evil spirits obey Him.** The words are similar to what the disciples a few months later would say when Jesus calmed the storm on the Sea of Galilee, **"Who is this? He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him."** Throughout His ministry of over 3 years Jesus cast out devils including seven from Mary Magdalene who became a faithful follower of Jesus.

AMAZING AUTHORITY The devil indeed did tempt Jesus throughout our Lord's life but Jesus never fell. The Bible says that Jesus **was tempted in every way, just as we are – yet was without sin.** (Hebrews 4:15) Our parents, Adam and Eve, had fallen to the temptation of Satan. Our Lord Jesus became a true human being to overcome Satan and He did by His perfect life and by giving His life on Calvary's cross for your sins and my sins. Many of you have memorized those wonderful words from the Catechism that **Jesus has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil. Not with gold or silver but with His holy precious blood and His innocent sufferings and death.** A very comforting passage of the Bible speaks about God's love: **For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.** (Rom 8:38-39)

Jesus who has that amazing authority over the devil gives us directions concerning the attacks and temptations of the devil. First of all, do not stray from Jesus. As long as you are in the arms of Jesus, you are safe.

- **No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.** (You can not excuse yourself by saying "The devil made me do it." He tempted you but you did it. The temptation was overwhelming.)
- **Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.** (Ephesians 6:11-13)
- **In your anger do not sin. Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.** (Ephesians 4:26-27)
- **Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.** (James 4:17)
- **Resist him, standing firm in the faith** (1 Peter 5:9)

Jesus told Peter that Satan desired to sift him as wheat but then told Peter to pray. We pray the same, don't we? Lead us not into temptation. I hope you pray also both Luther's Morning and Evening Prayers. In both of them are the words, **"Let your holy angel be with me that the wicked foe may have no power over me."**

Stay in the arms of Jesus. You are safe there now and eternally. He has amazing authority. His Word is true. He has power over the devil.