

SERMON FOR FEBRUARY 3, 2019
TEXT: LUKE 4: 31-37
THEME: THE ONE TRUE AUTHORITY

³¹ And he went down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee. And he was teaching them on the Sabbath, ³² and they were astonished at his teaching, for his word-possessed authority. ³³ And in the synagogue there was a man who had the spirit of an unclean demon, and he cried out with a loud voice, ³⁴ "Ha! 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." ³⁵ But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent and come out of him!" And when the demon had thrown him down in their midst, he came out of him, having done him no harm. ³⁶ And they were all amazed and said to one another, "What is this word? For with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits, and they come out!" ³⁷ And reports about him went out into every place in the surrounding region.

In the name of Jesus:

If you lived during the 1960's you will remember that it was a decade of change. A decade of upheaval, of questioning authority. Television showed images of marches, arrests, sit ins, and riots. It was a decade when people questioned authority of any and all kinds.

Today there is still a questioning of authority. If authority isn't questioned, then it is need of clarification, if not clarified, authority is down right rejected. Even today the authority of God's Word, the Holy Bible, is under attack. Its authority is questioned by the learned and the influential in society. Their thinking is simple, do away with the authority of the Bible and then you can be truly free, living how you want to live, with no restrictions and no consequences. So you can be free from the constraints of marriage, free to declare your own sexuality, you can be free to be whoever and whatever you want to be because you are free from the restrictions that come from authority.

When there is no authority, or when authority is questioned or dismissed, then the devil can create all sorts of havoc in society and in the hearts of people today. When you cast off authority, the devil then enters the heart and brings with him insecurity and uncertainty. Then you despair when you realize that you have little or no hope. Who or where can you turn when you are in the depths of despair, when you have no hope, where uncertainty and insecurity reign? Jesus. For Jesus comes to us and speaks to us with authority, for He is THE ONE WITH ALL AUTHORITY.

Luke records that Jesus, as was His custom, was in the synagogue on the Sabbath. As we saw last week, Jesus made it a habit of going to church, of attending the synagogue to hear, read, and study God's Word. On this particular Sabbath, Jesus was teaching the Word of God. Luke notes the response of those who heard Jesus, for as "he was teaching them on the Sabbath, ³² and they were astonished at his teaching, for his word possessed authority;" that is to say that Jesus taught like He knew what He was talking about! He was teaching in such a way that those who heard Him were deeply touched to the core of their being, so that they were drawn closer to God their heavenly Father.

Jesus' Words and teaching possessed authority. But where did Jesus get this authority? He possessed all authority because He was and is the eternal Son of God in human flesh. This is what the Bible record about Jesus: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing

made that was made. ⁴ In him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.” (John 1: 1-3, 14). Jesus possessed the authority from eternity because He was and is the Son of God in human flesh. And in this case that Luke records in the Gospel lesson for today, Jesus shows His authority by revealing His glory, the glory of the only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth.

As He was teaching a man possessed by a demon cries out to Jesus.

³⁴ “Ha! 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.” This demon-possessed man knows who Jesus is. He raises a question to which he must have known the answer, have you come to destroy the demonic who work and live in the darkness? The demon knows the answer to the question because he calls Jesus by name, in an attempt to show authority over Jesus. But it is Jesus who has authority over the demons and demonic, for Jesus is the Holy One of God, He is altogether different than His creation.

Jesus answers this question posed by the demon possessed man with an emphatic Yes! Yes, Jesus has come to destroy him and all of evil, and Jesus shows this by not only rebuking the demon but as Luke records: “Be silent and come out of him!” And when the demon had thrown him down in their midst, he came out of him, having done him no harm.” Jesus has come to cast out the devil and his minions so that Jesus’ creation and its creatures would not suffer harm.

Jesus' authority is rooted in love. He comes to you today, as One who has authority, not to condemn you but to save you. He comes to you in love, for God is love and Jesus' authority is steeped in the love that God has for sinners. Doesn't the Bible say that God is love? Faith, hope and love abide, these three, but the greatest of these is love, God's love for sinners, and God's love for you.

Jesus used His authority as God's Son not to condemn you but to save you. He came down from heaven not to be served but to serve, to give His life as a ransom, the perfect payment from God for your sins and the sins of the world. For "Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ^{but} emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, ^{being} born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."

Luke records this miracle, but this is not the only time that Jesus healed the demonic. Jesus repeatedly showed that He alone was the Ultimate Authority in life through His healing of the demonic. In another instance where Jesus healed a man possessed by demons, He was accused by the Pharisees of being a son of the devil. But Jesus revealed that His power to cast out demons didn't come from Satan, but from God His heavenly Father. Jesus said this of His authority to do such a miracle: "it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. ²⁹ Or how can someone enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods unless He first binds the strong man. Then indeed He may plunder his house." Jesus came down from heaven to plunder the house of Satan, through His perfectly led life, His innocent suffering and death, and by His victorious rising from the grave.

To all who believe in Jesus He gives the power to become sons of God, children of the Heavenly Father. You have been remade into the image of God, recreated by the power of the Holy Spirit in Holy Baptism. You have been made into a new creation in Jesus Christ. In Baptism, Jesus has thrown the devil out of your life. He has replaced your sinfulness with His forgiveness; you have a new Spirit in Christ. If anyone is baptized into Christ that person has become a new creation, all things have become new! By the powerful Word of Christ spoken to you in Baptism, with authority as the Son of God, He has commanded that you now have become children of God.

God calls you now to live your life as God's newly beloved children. Just as the prophet Jeremiah was given a calling by God to proclaim His Word to those in need of hope, so too God has called you in the waters of Baptism and now has given to you a new purpose in life, that is, to live your life to the glory of God and in loving service to others. You are not to live for yourself; you are to live for Jesus, showing His love to all. The Bible says: "I appeal to you therefore, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." A tree is known by the fruit it produces so you are to live for Jesus, so that all who meet you receive love of Christ as made evident in your words and deeds.

Jesus stands at the door today and invites all to come to Him. So look to Jesus and see what how much God loves you! Point others to Jesus and share with

them how much God loves them! Then and only then will hearts and lives be changed! For Jesus said: "All authority has been given to me, so go and make disciples." Follow Jesus and invite others to follow Him as well.

Amen