

In the Gospel of St. Luke, chapter 4, we read, **Luke 4:31-32: (Jesus) 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.**

This morning I want to talk about the authority of Christ's Word and what that has to do with our day to day lives in Him and with one another.

OPENING PRAYER

READ Luke 4:31-44

(Jesus) 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. ³⁸ And he arose and left the synagogue and entered Simon's house. Now Simon's mother-in-law was ill with a high fever, and they appealed to him on her behalf. ³⁹ And he stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her, and immediately she rose and began to serve them. ⁴⁰ Now when the sun was setting, all those who had any who were sick with various diseases brought them to him, and he laid his hands on every one of them and healed them. ⁴¹ And demons also came out of many, crying, "You are the Son of God!" But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew that he was the Christ. ⁴² And when it was day, he departed and went into a desolate place. And the people sought him and came to him, and would have kept him from leaving them, ⁴³ but he said to them, "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose." ⁴⁴ And he was preaching in the synagogues of Judea.

Again, as Jesus preached, the people were "astonished at His teaching, for His Word possessed authority."

The people were used to listening to the rabbis blather on and on, splitting hairs over obscure laws, speculating about the meaning of words, arguing about genealogies and concerning the purity and impurity of certain foods and practices. Their teachings were intellectual and academic, and they had no meaning for the everyday man, people who were discouraged and powerless under the rule of the Romans, people who were hungry for a savior.

But here was Jesus. We heard how he was confronted by a demon in a synagogue, whom He rebuked, **Luke 4:35-36, saying, "Be silent and come out of him!" ...³⁶ (and the people responded), "What is this Word? For with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits, and they come out!"**

When Jesus spoke, things happened, for His Word had "authority and power."

And consider how there was a demon in the church! This should give us pause, for while there is a perfect, pure, and holy church before the Lord, which we call the Universal Church, the church which only God can see, in the local congregation there may be persons who do not love Jesus. In other words, the church itself is often a battlefield.

On the other hand, we must be careful not to call every sin the work of a demon! For every individual is capable of sin without the devil's assistance. Nonetheless, we are given this illustration that we might better understand the power and authority of Christ in our midst. Sin and the devil cannot abide the pure proclamation of God's Word.

Again, Jesus' Word had "authority and power." Authority is an attribute which is social, for it is bestowed on one person by another party in order to accomplish a task or mission. Jesus' authority came from His Father in Heaven. Thus it was authority over all Creation. And authority is also political; it's about wielding power over enemy forces. Jesus' political authority was demonstrated when he usurped the domain of darkness, the devil and his legions, and the sin that cast a shadow over the hearts and minds of the people of God.

Jesus Himself proclaimed the nature of His authority. Remember when He quoted from the prophet Isaiah in the synagogue? He said, **Isaiah 61:1-2, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; ² to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn."**

Our FIRST LESSON then is that the authority and power of Christ's Word crushes the work of Satan, shines light in the darkness, and brings healing, hope, and wholeness to everyone who believes it.

We read that, **Luke 4:37, "...reports about Him went out into every place in the surrounding region."**

Jesus' ministry spread like a wild fire, for the people had been praying for and looking for the Messiah for a long time. So when they saw Jesus, they asked themselves, "Could this be the one whom we've looked for, for so long?" The people hoped Jesus' authority and power would bring a revolution against the Roman Empire. But they were mistaken. For God had other more important work in mind.

In the Gospel we read that Jesus went to Peter's house with the disciples, and Peter's mother-in-law was very sick, so, **Luke 4:39, "...he stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her, and immediately she rose and began to serve them."**

Notice WHERE Jesus had been working. First, He was in the synagogue and then He was in a home. These are the two major places of Jesus' ministry, the church and the home, which are the two major institutions created by God. Friends in Christ, the Lord is among us. In our homes and in our church, the Lord wills to rule among us with authority and power through the proclamation of His Word. With this Word Jesus cast out false teachers and demons in the synagogue. And in the home, with this same Word, He brought forth healing, hope, and wholeness.

After Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law, the people came to him again. He found no rest, for the people were hungry for a savior. And He didn't turn them away: **Luke 4:40, "he laid his hands on every one of them and healed them."** And we read that, **Luke 4:42, "when it was day, he departed and went into a desolate place."**

Jesus had a long night healing, making people physically whole, a very good night for the people and a very bad one for the devil! But that's the nature of Christ's authority and power. Unlike human authority and power, which is for money, Christ's authority and power are for humanity's salvation, for mankind's deliverance, for the healing of the planet.

Consider how after His long night, "(Jesus) departed and went into a desolate place." He was praying. Prayer was a part of our Lord's MO. For instance, after His baptism, He spent 6-weeks in the desert fasting and praying and wrestling with the devil. Later on, as He prepared for His crucifixion, He was in the Garden of Gethsemane praying. It is with this

kind of prayerfulness Jesus readied Himself to do His Father's will with authority and power. Who are we that we should neglect prayer as the one thing that can prepare us and sustain us for the work the Lord has given us?

This is our SECOND LESSON: the authority and power of God's Word is administered through prayer.

In the Gospel, we read that again the people found Jesus and, **Luke 4:42-43**, "**would have kept him from leaving them,**⁴³ **but he said to them, "I must preach the Good News of the Kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose."**

From the perspective of the people Jesus would have made the perfect nursemaid! Whenever they were sick they could go to Dr. Jesus and he'd make them all better! But they didn't get what they wanted. Jesus was doing His work to illustrate the authority and power of God's Word. He used intimate, personal, physical means, demonstrating what this authority was to be used for, how great this power was, that it was "the Good News of the Kingdom of God" for the forgiveness of sins, the trampling down of the devil, and the mending of the human heart.

In summary, Jesus used his authority to usher in God's Kingdom, that place where God reigns, the devil cowers, and the dark things of this world have no power.

Later on Jesus proclaimed, **Luke 17:21**, "**Behold! The Kingdom of God is within you!**"

And this is our THIRD LESSON: the authority and power of God's Word ushers in the Kingdom of God.

Friends in Christ, the Kingdom of God is that place in your heart that knows Jesus as your Savior, Shepherd, and King.

The Kingdom of God is that place where your fear has been replaced with confidence, love, and joy.

The Kingdom of God is that place where there is no self-condemnation, for all of our sins have been forgiven.

The Kingdom of God is that place where you live, where nothing in heaven or on earth can snatch away from you the love of God.

Friends in Christ, this next week, may you be filled with confidence that God has broken the chains of the devil, the world, and your own sinful nature with His Word, that Word that says Jesus died for your sins.

This week may you be encouraged to pray, taking hold of Christ's authority and power with His Word in your own life.

And this week may you be filled with courage in your daily activities, for your heart and your mind are rooted in the Word of God and "the Kingdom of Heaven is within you," in Jesus' name. Amen.