

Sermon: 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Epiphany

Text: Mark 1:21-28: Jesus preaches in Capernaum

Theme: Jesus' preaching is powerful!

Goal: To be sure that Jesus' Word is powerful even over the big enemy.

Dear Friends,

**Introduction:** Church attendance is always a challenge. You never know how many people will come to the service. Some are always here, unless they are sick or on duty at their job. Some come every now and then: once or twice a month. I don't know what they do on the other Sundays if they just stay at home... - We are bringing a proposal to the next AGM to set a goal to have at least an average of 50 adults per Service this year, increasing it next year, and so on.

Jesus went to the synagogue with His disciples on Sabbath, as He was used to doing it. Since his childhood with His parents Joseph and Mary in Nazareth this was His weekly commitment. - And do you know who came to that service as well? Satan! The enemy in person! He doesn't need to be invited. He always comes, to disturb! Even in our church...

### **I – People were amazed with the powerful preaching of Jesus!**

That event took place in Capernaum, the city of Simon Peter. After calling His first disciples to be “fishers of men”, as we heard last Sunday, Jesus was hosted by Peter and spent some days there. “When the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach.” - The Jews had the system to invite guests to preach. Jesus, and the apostle Paul (as we read in the Book of Acts), used that opportunity to proclaim the Kingdom of God. Jesus' preaching was very well received by the people and they “were amazed at His teaching, because He taught them as one who has authority, not as the teachers of the Law.” The teachers of the Law were professional church workers. Most of them just explained the Law, without personal conviction. Religion

was something just to obey, a set of rules for the life, - as many thought. When Jesus began to preach, all felt and experienced something different. He was preaching what really came from His heart and what He knew from His experience as the One sent by God.

His message was always to call people to repentance from their wrong way, and to believe in God's promises, bringing the Good News of God's love and forgiveness to the people, and to proclaim that God's Kingdom was near.

## **II – The devil got frightened of the powerful preaching of Jesus!**

While people were amazed by the powerful preaching of Jesus, Satan interrupted the sermon: “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!”

Can you imagine the scene? If you had been there, what would have been your reaction? Or, if it happened here, among us?...

Satan always tries to disturb the preaching of God's Word and he attempts to distort it. This happened in the Garden of Eden, when he planted doubts in Eve's heart about the words of God; and the same happens every time when someone is listening to God's Word: Satan puts doubts in our heart : “Is it really so? Did God really say this and this...?” (Gen 3:1), - was the doubt seeded in Eve's heart. And she fell into temptation, because she gave more attention to the devil's whispering than to God's Word.

*This episode underscores the fact that satanic forces are present even in the assembly of God's people. The critical issue is whether God's people can recognize the enemy within. Resistance to divine authority, especially when the good news is being proclaimed with power, is a constant reality (ABC 1175).*

What impresses us in this Gospel is that the devil was afraid because

he knew who Jesus was and what He had come to fulfill! Jesus' preaching was bothering him and he was feeling that his end was to come. "Have you come to destroy us?" - was the question. - Yes, "the reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work" says 1 John 3:8.

This was not an isolated case when the devil confronted Jesus in the synagogue of Capernaum. The devil tried to tempt Jesus several times to divert Him from the way God had proposed to Him to save humankind from the power of the devil. Close friends to Jesus, as Judas and Peter, fell into temptation and were stumbling blocks on His way. But God delivered Jesus from all temptations till His victory on Easter Sunday. Even the cross, which in the first moment seemed to be devil's victory over the life, was God's way to pay for our sins. It happened on our behalf. Jesus' resurrection on Easter Sunday morning shows us that God accepted Jesus' sacrifice and brought Him back to life as a Victor, to have, and to give eternal life to all, free from the power of the devil!

The devil confessed with **fear** that Jesus was "the Holy One of God". We confess with **faith** that "*Jesus Christ, true God... and also true man... is my Lord, who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person, 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 with His innocent suffering and death, that I may be His own in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as He is risen from the death, lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true!*" (2<sup>nd</sup> Article of the Creed, M.Luther).

### **III – His Word is still powerful**

Jesus' Word is still powerful and casts out the devil. Every time a child is baptized, the devil is expelled from that child through the Word and the water to give room to Jesus. Every time someone comes to faith in Jesus by the preaching of the Word, the devil is cast out and Jesus

enters that life. We are now new creatures by God's grace. It didn't happen in a spectacular way, as we read in our Gospel, but God is still working. The devil has power and he does a lot of damage. But he is far not as powerful and he is not almighty as Jesus! *He is seized with fear; he knows the power of Christ and is rightly afraid. With all his power base Satan is no match for the Son of God. (Series B 58).* In Jesus we trust! And He says to the devil sternly: “Be quiet!”

People were amazed when Jesus began to preach, and they were much more amazed after the healing of the demon possessed man. “They asked each other, 'What is this? A new teaching – and with authority?... and news about Him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee”.

After His resurrection, “all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Jesus”(Matthew 28:18), and news about Him spread quickly all around the world, reaching our city and our hearts as well. This spreading of the Gospel will never stop until the end of the world. Anyone who listens to Jesus' powerful message and believe in Him, receives the freedom from the devil to serve God in a new life and becomes a messenger to proclaim Jesus as Saviour to others. This is our Watchword for this year: “Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lod has done for you, and how He has had mercy on you” (Mark 5:19).

**Conclusion:** *The Word of God must go forth with **divine** authority* (ABC 1175). It is not our authority. God is with us and He is behind us every time we share His Word with others. And His Word is powerful, as Paul wrote: “I am not ashamed of the Gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes” (Romans 1:16). We are God's tools to proclaim His Word. He does the work to call people to repentance and to faith in Jesus. *The power is in His Word. As we grow in His Word, we grow in His power. In times of stress and trial, we depend on Christ. He never fails us.* (Series B, p. 59). Amen.

Pastor Carlos Walter Winterle  
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