

Sermon Luke 4 31 44 4th S of Epiphany Series C

Sermon: 4th Sunday after Epiphany

Text: Luke 4:31-44 (v. 32): “They were amazed at his teaching, because his message had authority.”

Theme: Jesus’ authority

Goal: Jesus reveals Himself as the One sent by God, powerful in His preaching and in His deeds, to save everyone.

Dear Friends,

Introduction: Epiphany Season shows us Jesus manifesting Himself as the One sent by God according to the prophecies of the Old Testament: The Messiah. Today, He shows us His authority in preaching and healing. He is the Almighty, with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Next week Lent will begin, showing us again the humble and suffering Messiah. Epiphany is a Season that prepares us to support Lent and strengthens our faith in Jesus, the powerful Son of God!

I - Jesus’ authority in preaching

People “were amazed at his teaching, because his message had authority”; “not as the teachers of the Law” (Mark 1:22), who just used to repeat words and teachings. The authority of Jesus came by the Holy Spirit, who had “anointed him to preach good news to the poor” (Luke 4:18), as we heard last Sunday. John the Baptist had announced that “One more powerful than I will come” (Luke 3:16). Jesus’s authority was also based on the straight link He had with His Father, as Jesus said: “These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me” (John 14:24).

In His authority, Jesus preached repentance, calling people who were astray back to the gracious arms of the Father. In His authority, Jesus preached the Kingdom of God: He Himself had come to establish the Kingdom of God through His church, and to point to the eternal

Kingdom of God in heaven. Even so, in spite of His authority, He never ‘forced’ anyone to believe in Him. Many believed, but many rejected Him, hardening their hearts to the Good News. The rejection grew that big that they put Jesus to death on the cross. The enemies didn’t know that doing that, they were accomplishing God’s will in sacrificing His own and Only Son on behalf of humankind to pay for our sins.

Jesus’ sacrifice was accepted by God, who raised Jesus again from the death on Easter Sunday. Now that sin, death and Satan had been defeated, more authority was given to Jesus; and He shared His authority with His church when He said before going back to heaven: “All authority in heaven and on earth had been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:18-20).

When the pastor forgives the sins of the children in the Holy Baptism; and when he forgives your sins *in the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ*; or, as another version says *and by His authority* – we have to be sure that *this is just valid and certain, even in heaven, as if Christ our dear Lord dealt with us Himself*, as we have it in the Small Catechism. When the pastor preaches and teaches the true Word of God, he is not preaching his own words and teachings; Jesus said: “He who listens to you listens to me; he who rejects you rejects me; but he who rejects me rejects him who sent me” (Luke 10:16). It is a big privilege to be a pastor; but, on the other hand, it is a huge responsibility before God and before the church to be faithful to Jesus’ teachings.

Paul wrote to Timothy (2:15): “From infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures. They have the power to give you wisdom so that you can

be saved through faith in Christ Jesus” (NOG). And he also wrote to the Romans (1:16): “The Gospel...is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes.”

II – Jesus authority over the demons

Jesus not only preached with authority, but He also acted with authority. When He drove out the demon during the service (can you imagine the tumult that happened during the service, everyone running away from the demon possessed man?), “the people were amazed and said to each other, “What is this teaching? With authority and power he gives order to evil spirits and they come out.”

Jesus had shown His authority over Satan when He was tempted for 40 days and 40 nights. He didn't give up, but resisted to the devil, who eventually “left him until an opportune time” (Luke 4:13). In spite of Jesus' authority, the devil didn't give up either, and he kept coming back to disturb Jesus and His ministry. Several demon possessed people were healed by Jesus, not only this one, as we heard in the Gospel for today.

What bothers me is that the demon possessed people acknowledged who Jesus was: “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.” Even so, many of the people who were listening to Jesus were just amazed, but didn't believe that He was the Holy One of God. – The enemies of Jesus acknowledge His power and are aware of His authority, while many so called “Christians” criticize Him, doubt of His Words in the Bible, and turn their back to Him.

When we confess our sins daily, as we do it in the Lord's Prayer: *and forgive us our trespasses...*; when we confess our sins at the beginning of every Service: *I, a poor sinner, confess to you all my*

sins... we are going back to the very first time we received God's forgiveness in the Holy Baptism. There it was asked: *Do you renounce the devil, all his works and all his ways?* And our parents and god-parents answered on our behalf: *Yes, I do renounce them.* This means that Jesus' power in driving out demons is still at work when He forgives us our sins and restores us in His grace. St. Peter warned us: "Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith" (1 Peter 5:8). The devil is still a reality. He doesn't "cry out at the top of his voice" during our Service as he did in the Synagogue (hope so...); but he dissimulates himself in different ways to tempt us. Don't ignore him, but be alert, clinging by faith to Jesus' power, authority and love to save us.

Conclusion: The people of Capernaum wanted to hold Jesus for themselves, and "they tried to keep him from leaving them. But he said, 'I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent.'" We are sometimes comfortably seated on the chairs of our church, enjoying what we have; sometimes we are even bothered with the same hymns, the same order of Service, the same pastor... We even think at home: *Shall I go to the service today? I went last Sunday...* And we don't look outside our windows to see that many others need Jesus as well, and He wants to go there. But we try to hold Him only for ourselves. He came for all and His goal is to reach every single person in all nations! He challenges us to share our faith and the Means of Grace – His Word and the Sacraments – with others as well. His authority is still blessing the preaching of His Word wherever it is preached. Let us be confident in His authority and do His work under His blessings. Amen.

