**THE AUTHORITY OF JESUS**

Text: Mark 1:21-34

Readings: 1 John 3:1-10; Eph 6:10-20

Theme: Jesus demonstrated his authority in his teaching, in his casting out of demons & in his miraculous healings

Purpose: To demonstrate the authority of Jesus in his teaching and miracles so that we may believe in him and trust in him in our lives

Children, some of you are being taught at home by your parents, but most of you are being taught at school by teachers.

Some teachers are easy going and find it hard to control the class; others were very strict and strong on discipline. Some teachers only have to walk into the classroom and say a few words and all the pupils go quiet. The students recognise that these teachers have authority.

The people who heard and saw Jesus recognised that he was a man with authority. Authority is “the power or right to give orders, make decisions, and enforce obedience.” The people who heard Jesus speak, and saw what he did, recognised that he had this power and this right.

When he gave orders people and spirits obeyed him, and when he spoke people listened to what he had to say and recognised that he knew what he was talking about.

People knew that he had authority in his teaching and in his miracles. We need to recognise this about his too.

**1. His authority in his TEACHING** – v 21-22, 27

Mark has not told us anything about the birth of Jesus but rather has taken us directly to the beginning of his three year ministry. After a one sentence introduction to his gospel (chapter 1:1) he described how John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus (1:2-8), and then how Jesus called his first disciples (1:14-20).

In verse 21 he describes the ministry of Jesus in Capernaum, one of the busy towns on the shore of the Lake of Galilee. The disciple Peter lived in this town and his home was the base for Jesus in his Galilean ministry.

On the Sabbath Jesus always went to the synagogue, just as most of us always come to church on a Sunday.

The synagogues were first established during the exile after the temple had been destroyed. With the temple gone the people had no place for worship so they built synagogues wherever they were living in the Babylonian empire. These were places where the Jews would gather for the reading of the Scriptures, teaching and prayer. When the people of Judah returned from the exile they built synagogues in Israel.

A synagogue could be built where there were ten married Jewish men. Each synagogue had a ruler who was an administrator, and a Chazzan who looked after the scrolls, cleaned the building, and taught the children. But there was no permanent teacher or preacher. Each Sabbath the ruler would call on any competent Jewish male to give an exposition of the Scriptures. This practice gave Jesus wonderful opportunities to teach and preach to the Jews during his ministry.

On this Sabbath morning Jesus was invited to teach.

Mark tells us that “the people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law” (v 22).

The teachers of the law, or the scribes, spoke to the people about the Torah, the Law. They described and analysed the commandments, and added many human commands to the laws of God and developed these in extensive and fine detail.

The method of teaching by the scribes was to quote other Jewish authorities. They would explain the law and then quote Rabbi Cohen who said this, and Rabbi Shammai who said that, but Rabbi Hillel who said something else. All this could be very boring and tedious!

But Jesus did not quote any other authorities or rabbis. He spoke on his own authority and referred back to his Father in heaven. This is a repeated refrain in the Sermon on the Mount; “You have heard that it was said..., but *I* say to you....” Jesus could do this because he was the Son of God; he spoke with a divine authority.

He could speak authoritatively about the Scriptures because they spoke about him; they had been written under the inspiration of the third Person of the trinity, the Holy Spirit, who was the Spirit of Christ. Jesus was the co-author of the Scriptures; this is why he could explain them with clarity and authority!

This is why the people who heard him were amazed! They had never heard a man speak like this man!

Remember that there had been no voice of prophecy for 400 years, from the time of Malachi to the time of John the Baptist. All of Judea and Jerusalem had gone out to hear John, but he was in prison; and now they all loved to hear Jesus! They recognised that he proclaimed the authoritative voice of prophecy once again.

Twice Mark wrote that the people were “amazed” or “astonished”, in verses 22 and 27, using two different Greek words. The word in verse 22 has a very strong meaning of to strike, to have a feeling of wonder.

In his gospel Mark uses 6 different Greek words to describe this response of wonder and amazement by the people as they heard Jesus teach and preach; they regarded him with awe and fear and alarm!

Would that we had more of this response when we read the Scriptures and hear the preaching of God’s word. For us it is often so familiar that we treat it with contempt and we pass over it lightly.

We are not amazed or astonished or afraid!

Rather we are inattentive, distracted or bored.

Instead you need to hear the words of Jesus with open ears, with inquiring minds, and with warm hearts.

You need to be alert to what the Holy Spirit is saying to you through the teaching of the Lord Jesus, and you need to be willing and ready to apply it to your own life and thinking, speech and behaviour.

Will you do this?! Is this your attitude as you read and hear the Bible?

Mark does not say much about the *content* of the teaching of Jesus. He uses the verb ‘to teach’ 16 times in reference to Jesus, and the noun ‘teacher’ 11 times of Jesus. But he does not say much about what Jesus taught. Matthew made up for that because his gospel is structured around five major teaching sections.

Mark does summarise the content of this teaching as being all about “the kingdom of God” (1:15).

Jesus preached and taught about the rule and reign of God and how this had to work itself out in our lives as followers of Jesus Christ the King.

Jesus had authority in his teaching so that people were amazed.

**2. He also had authority in his MIRACLES,** in which he demonstrated his power over *evil spirits* and over *sickness.*

**a. Over evil spirits**

As Jesus was teaching the Jews in the synagogue in Capernaum a man who as possessed by an evil spirit interrupted him in the middle of his sermon!

Occasionally preachers in our churches get interrupted by a crying baby, or even by someone else who wants to speak, or ask a question, but not often.

For Jesus and his hearers this was a very dramatic interruption! The man cried out, “What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth?” This man was possessed by an evil spirit, one of the spirits of Satan, the Devil. The evil spirit had taken control of him and ruled over him.

The passage we read from Ephesians 6 reminds us that we are fighting a spiritual battle “against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in heavenly places” (v 12). This is a battle between God and Satan, between Jesus and the devil, between the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness.

Satan knew that “the reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work” (1 John 3:8). This is why he had tempted Jesus for those 40 says in the wilderness even before Jesus had begun his ministry. This is why he threw all his evil angels into this conflict at this time; he put forward all his forces. This is why we read so much about evil spirits and demon possession in the gospels. Satan was fighting against Jesus with his gloves off! There was no holding back, no pulling punches, no restraint! This was all out warfare! The battle was going to be won or lost in this conflict with the Son of God.

The evil spirit in this man knew who Jesus was. When he asked, “What do you want with us?’ he was asking, “What do you have in common with us?” and the answer was, nothing at all! The evil spirits and Jesus were on opposite sides of the battle, in opposing armies.

He asked, “Have you come to destroy us?” And the answer to that question was, “absolutely!” Jesus had come to destroy the devil and his evil angels.

And then the evil spirit said, “I know who you are – the Holy One of God!” Luke used this title for Jesus in the parallel passage in his gospel, and, apart from that, this title is only used once more in the gospel of John (6:69). Jesus was the Holy One of God – he came from God, he was the Son of God, he was the second person of the Trinity, the Word of God from all eternity.

He was holy but the devils were unholy and corrupt.

Jesus was of God and the demons were of Satan.

Jesus was pure but the demons were filthy and depraved.

Jesus told this demon to “Be quiet!” (v 25). In the evening of that Sabbath day Jesus “also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was” (v 34).

This was early in the ministry of Jesus and he wanted to teach the people who he was and why he had come, and he wanted to do this in his own way and in his own time; this is why he did not let the demons speak. He did not want them misrepresenting him or distorting the perception people had of him.

Jesus had the power and authority to keep them quiet and to cast them out of people.

The Jews and the people in the pagan religions tried to cast demons out of people with elaborate spells, and incantations and magic rites. The casting out of demons is known as exorcism. In the early centuries of the Christian Church there was even an Order of Exorcists. And in ancient cemeteries skulls have been found with a hole bored through the bone with the belief that this would allow the demon to escape from a person.

Jesus, however, did not use any of these techniques but simply commanded the evil spirits to leave that person, and they did. The power of Jesus was effective and immediate because he had a divine authority.

Sometimes you see a man commanding his dog to do something: to sit, lie down, beg, stay, or come. There are times when you are impressed with the authority this man has over his dog because the animal is obedient. At other times you see that a person has *no* authority over his dog – it does *not* come, sit, stay, or obey! Not so with the evil spirits – they obeyed Jesus immediately!

In v 27 we read, “The people were all so amazed they asked each other, ‘What is this? A new teaching – and with authority! He even gives orders to evil spirits and they obey him’.” Jesus had authority in his teaching and over the evil spirits. He was the King of the God’s kingdom, the all powerful Son of God!

**b.** And he had authority over **sickness**

Jesus went immediately from the synagogue to the home of Simon Peter which was in the town. Peter was married and his wife’s mother was in bed with a fever.

“They told Jesus about her”. In his expository thoughts on this gospel JC Ryle draws out some helpful applications from these words.

This is the first thing we should do when we are sick, or depressed, or discouraged, or going through a time of trouble or trial – we should tell Jesus, we should talk to him, we should pray.

When Jacob was worried about meeting his brother Esau he wrestled with Jesus in prayer.

When Hezekiah received a letter from the commander of the Assyrian army he laid it before the Lord in prayer.

When their brother Lazarus was sick, Mary and Martha sent a message to Jesus asking for his help.

When you need help do you go and tell Jesus your need and ask for his help?

But we also need to go to Jesus with our thanks and praise. One writer observes; “For one prayer that goes up to God in the days of prosperity ten thousand go up in the time of adversity. Many a man who has never prayed when the sun was shining on life begins to pray when the cold winds come.”

Are you thankful to God when things are going well, and are you patient and praying when things are going against you?

Jesus went to this woman, “took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them.” Her healing was immediate and complete. When we get over a sickness it usually takes us a couple of days to regain our strength. Not so with the healing of this woman. She got up and began to serve them!

In the evening of that Sabbath day, after the sun had gone down, “the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon possessed. The whole town gathered at the door.” And Jesus healed them of their sicknesses and diseases. Without this miraculous healing these people would have remained ill. At that time there was no penicillin, medical knowledge was limited and surgery was very primitive.

Today Jesus can heal people suddenly and miraculously. Most of the time he heals us through medicine and surgery. He can also heal our minds and memories, our emotions and our marriages, our souls and our lives. He says to you, “Come to me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest” (Matt 11:28).

Jesus can heal you, and help you, and save you because he is the Holy One of God. He is God’s One and Only Son, and God the Father has given him all authority in heaven and on earth (Matt 28:18). He has the authority to teach you and the authority to heal you, in your body and your soul, in this life and in the life to come.

Do you recognise who he is?

Do you accept his authority?

Are you submitting to him?

Are you going to him in prayer and asking for his help?

Do you recognise him as the Holy One of God?

Amen