

## “The Authority Belongs to Jesus” – Pr Jim Sprenkle – Epiphany 4 February 2, 2025

- I. **Luke 4:31-32** – <sup>31</sup>[Jesus] went down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee. And He was teaching them on the Sabbath, <sup>32</sup>and they were astonished at His teaching, for His word possessed authority.
- II. **Back in 2007, we went to the Holy Land on a tour.**
  - a. Many of you joined that trip, as I think we had 20 or more come along.
    - i. I remember going to the ruins of Capernaum, the city where Jesus is healing people in our Gospel today.
    - ii. The synagogue ruins were there, and though we can't be sure it's the exact one that Jesus did His miracle, it was amazing to think that our Lord may have stood in that very spot to cast out a demon.
    - iii. In that same area is a large chapel that is built over the site of Peter's mother-in-law's house (again where they believe she lived), which shows the proximity of these two places.
    - iv. Sometimes we read the Word of God given by the Holy Spirit and forget that these are real places, real people, and real events.
  - b. I can just imagine Jesus in Capernaum, after just being rejected in His hometown of Nazareth, with a huge line of people desperate for His help.
    - i. After healing people of all kinds of maladies and demon possession until sunset, Jesus gets some sleep and heads out the next morning.
    - ii. Yet, the crowd wasn't about to let Him get away that fast, because they wanted more of this healing power... but Jesus said that He needed to proclaim Good News to other towns too.
    - iii. He needed to show the truth, the power, and the authority He had to all people... to pass it on so people would come to believe in Him.
  - c. Ever wonder how those people felt who didn't get healed... who just happened to be *after* the last person in the line... the one who couldn't press their way through the crowd before Jesus went to bed that night?
    - i. In this Gospel lesson, we celebrate God's power to heal and His authority over all things... but Jesus wasn't meant to stay in Capernaum and wait for people to come to Him... He was sent to go out and share the Good News in many places.
    - ii. Some were left with an illness or a problem that would not be healed or solved that day, but instead they had the Truth – Jesus Christ was the Messiah, and the reign of God had come into their midst.
- III. **Our trials in life don't always turn out like we want.**
  - a. We pray for miracles... for God's intervention... for healing... for peace... and sometimes these things happen and sometimes they don't – at least in this life.

- b. It's difficult when we look around at the suffering – families struggling, war torn countries, diseases in every age and walk of life – and we wonder how God is working in all this...
  - i. How can preaching the Good News to people and sharing the Word of God alleviate the suffering and trials in the lives around us?
  - ii. For that matter, how can the Word of God alleviate *my* suffering?
    - 1. When we see so much trouble and suffering in the world, it can be hard to recognize God's power and authority... and some may even question His Word.

IV. **However, we need to go back to the beginning.**

- a. God created the heavens and the earth... the land and oceans... all life and even human beings... with His words.
  - i. Genesis tells us that God said, "Let there be..." and whatever He said was spoken into existence... so yes, God's word has authority and unlimited power.
  - ii. But soon after, God's own creation, Adam and Eve chose to reject His authority and power – and *they* unleashed the sin and suffering we all experience – even today.
    - 1. God is not responsible for evil and suffering... His creation is!
    - 2. So, before we rush to blame the Creator...
      - a. Let's just say you have a cooktop at home that was manufactured by General Electric... if you burned your hand on that cooktop, would you blame G.E.? Would you blame the inventor of the cooktop? Would you blame the people who put it together in the manufacturing plant? Would you blame God?
      - b. Just because something causes suffering and brokenness, it doesn't mean the Creator intended it for that purpose – but instead, evil and sin came into the world through humans and another created being – satan.
- b. We may want to question God's plan of salvation, or how His word can do such great things, or why we suffer... but in all of these things God is hard at work – through His word... and you.

V. **Jesus Christ**, the one who broke through the darkness, called you.

- a. Just as He entered a world of darkness and suffering 2,000 years ago to preach and proclaim God's salvation... He reminds us through His Word that God is still with us today!
- b. The people suffering from demon possession were released... the sick and disabled were healed... and the brokenness was fixed so that all would know that God came to be with us.
- c. I can't help but see the irony in our complaints about suffering and the trials of life when Jesus – God Himself – endured the same.

- i. He suffered loss... He saw deaths and murders... abusive governments... evil people at work... the aftermath of wars... the poverty, disease, and loneliness... He experienced it all as our Brother in human likeness.
- ii. No, not even Jesus got to avoid it... and in the Garden of Gethsemane He prayed to His Father to allow Him to avoid the most horrific suffering and death of all – His torture and crucifixion.
- d. Yet the victory over sin, and death, and satan needed to be won – and that would only be through our Savior’s death... and resurrection from the dead.
  - i. Without Jesus’ death and resurrection, God’s plan of undoing the damage of sin would not be completed... but now we have our victor, our Savior who will redeem and restore all things in the end.
- e. The best part is that Jesus did all this for you... and me... and all people...
  - i. He died for us so that He could break the power of sin... death... and satan’s power in this world... while empowering us to be a part of His great plan of salvation.

VI. **Jesus was the first to be sent, and now He sends us.**

- a. The Father sent Jesus... and the gave Him all authority in heaven and on earth (Mt. 28:18), and a part of this power and authority was passed along to the apostles... or the sent ones... and down the line to the Church.
- b. As we see the people around Jesus in awe in our Gospel reading, they are amazed at His authority – that His words can drive out demons, heal, and restore... and this same word was given to us to share.
- c. No, we may not always get the results we want in proclaiming the Good News to others – and yet, God’s word does what it’s supposed to do! (Isaiah 55:11)
  - i. The truth is that many who come to faith in Christ do not see healing or an end to suffering immediately... but the day comes when all brokenness and suffering goes away.
  - ii. The prayers for healing are always answered in the positive for Christians, because whether we are healed in the present or in heaven, we will be healed.
- d. Jesus our Savior was sent into the world, and all believers are now sent by Him to continue proclaiming the word with authority!
- e. All authority belongs to Jesus, but He authorizes us to share this word of salvation among all those we know.
  - i. Don’t ever question the power of God’s word to bring about life, healing, and salvation – because if it can bring about creation itself... if it can bring about the healing of thousands and even the resurrection of the dead (remember the words, “Lazarus, come out!” John 11:43), then God’s word is able to empower you as well.
- f. In that dusty little town of Capernaum, Jesus healed and saved people by the authority and power of His word – the very same word He now brings to

us – assuring us that no matter our trials... His love... His victory... and His authority were passed along to us.

- g. We may suffer, but praise and thanksgiving be to Him that He has called us worthy to walk in His very same footsteps, amen.