

Mark 1:21-28 (Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany—Series B)

“The Authority of God for You”

Lutheran Church of Our Redeemer, Enfield, CT

January 31, 2021

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Our text is the Gospel lesson recorded in Mark 1:

²¹And they entered into Capernaum. And immediately on the Sabbath, upon entering the synagogue, he began to teach. ²²And they were astonished at his teaching, for he was teaching them as one having authority and not as their scribes. ²³And immediately there was in their synagogue a man in (the power of) an unclean spirit and he cried out, ²⁴saying, “Why are you meddling in our affairs, Jesus Nazarene? Have you come to destroy us? We know who you are, the Holy One of God.” ²⁵And Jesus censured him, saying, “Be muzzled and come out of him.” ²⁶And upon convulsing him and crying out with a loud voice, the unclean spirit came out of him. ²⁷And all became astounded, with the result that they began to argue with themselves, saying, “What is this? A new teaching with authority? Even to the unclean spirits he gives commands, and they obey him. ²⁸And the report about him went out immediately everywhere, into the whole surrounding region of Galilee.

Authority. God’s unrestricted sovereignty. God’s power. “Even to the unclean spirits He gives commands, and they obey Him!”

Last week I was trying to find something to watch on TV. I pulled up the movie based on C.S. Lewis’s book *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. I hadn’t seen it in a while and thought it would be a good escape from the craziness of reality. If you know the story, the four children, Peter, Susan, Edmund, and Lucy enter the world of Narnia through a large wardrobe. They are led to the home of Mr. and Mrs. Beaver. Mr. Beaver says that they are going to meet Aslan, the great lion, the King of the Wood, the Son of the great Emperor-beyond-the Sea. Susan, hesitant about meeting a lion asks, “Is he—quite safe?” “Safe?” said Mr. Beaver. “Don’t you hear what Mrs. Beavers tells you? Who said anything about safe? ‘Course he isn’t safe. But he’s good. He’s the King, I tell you.”

God is *the* King, with authority. He is not safe. God’s holiness means that He is dangerous. But His holiness also means that He is good.

What has been most lost in people's conception about God today is His holiness. God is *different* from us. He is "other." He is set apart. God's holiness has to do with His authority—His power, His nature, what makes Him and Him alone God. The holiness of God means that he is a "consuming fire" (Heb. 12:29). Sinners cannot stand before a holy God, and we are sinners, one and all. We are not God; we are His creatures. And we are fallen creatures at that, totally corrupted from conception and birth, diseased with sin, lacking true fear, love, and trust in God as our Creator and our Lord. Unholy sinners cannot be in the presence of the holy God. Psalm 1:5, "Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous." To be unholy and to be in the presence of God would result in us be consumed like the sons of Aaron who violated God's holiness. We read in Leviticus 10, "Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it and laid incense on it and offered unauthorized fire before the LORD, which he had not commanded them. And fire came out from before the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD" (Lev. 10:1–2 ESV).

The point is that God's holiness means that He is dangerous. He is not safe for sinners. What's more, God is also sovereign and so He has complete authority and power. He is free and all-powerful and so His freedom is unlimited. He does what He pleases. And everything He does is just, right, and holy. And we sinners cannot understand His ways. In this sense, God is "wild." Aslan, as Mr. Beaver explained, is not a tame lion. Ours is not a tame God. A new teaching with authority! Even to the unclean spirits this Jesus gives commands, and they obey him!

This Jesus is God in human flesh. As we sang this morning, "Anthems be to Thee addressed, God in man made manifest" (*LSB* 394). He acted like God and spoke like God

because He is true God. Throughout Mark's Gospel especially, we see Jesus exercising authority. We see Jesus "oozing" authority. And it is the authority—the sovereign power and holiness of the only true God. Is He safe? No, But He is good. He is loving. He changes lives.

Notice what Jesus is doing in our text and in the Scriptures with His authority as true God and true Man. He is not consuming sinners in holy fire. He is not bringing death to the wicked or the unrighteous. He's overthrowing the reign of the devil. He's bringing the reign and rule of God into Satan's kingdom. With power and authority in His teaching, with power and authority over the unclean spirits, with the power of the God He is, Jesus brings the reign and rule of God to humanity. He exercises His authority **for your benefit** by giving you forgiveness and new life with freedom from the power of the devil.

Jesus came to do battle with Satan and the powers of darkness. They held all people in condemning bondage. In every case this bondage is spiritual, and in many cases, the bondage was even physical as it was with the man in the Capernaum synagogue. It should be expected, then, that as Jesus brings the reign and rule of God breaking into this world that there would be an immediate encounter between God and Satan as well as numerous skirmishes between the reign and rule of Light and the kingdom of darkness throughout Jesus' ministry. And what is it that overcomes the demonic forces of Satan? What it is that defeats the devil? The authority of the Lord Christ, Jesus, true God and true Man. The holy God with unrestricted sovereignty, the God whose very Word is power, Jesus, undoes the work of Satan, sin, and death.

The *Large Catechism* clearly explains how Jesus, true God and true Man, used His authority for us, overruling the powers of evil. "[Jesus] has redeemed me from sin, from the devil, from death, and from all evil. For before I did not have a Lord or King, but was captive

under the devil's power, condemned to death, stuck in sin and blindness. For when we had been created by God the Father and had received from Him all kinds of good, the devil came and led us into disobedience, sin, death, and all evil. So we fell under God's wrath and displeasure and were doomed to eternal damnation, just as we had merited and deserved. There was no counsel, help, or comfort until this only and eternal Son of God—in His immeasurable **goodness**—had compassion upon our misery and wretchedness. He came from heaven to help us. So those tyrants and jailers are all expelled now. In their place has come Jesus Christ, Lord of life, righteousness, every blessing, and salvation. He has delivered us poor, lost people from hell's jaws, has won us, has made us free, and has brought us again into the Father's favor and grace. He has taken us as His own property under His shelter and protection so that He may govern us by His righteousness, wisdom, power, life, and blessedness" (emphasis mine).¹

On the cross, Jesus suffered, bled, and died humanity's death. He paid for all sins in full so that there is now no condemnation for those who belong to Christ by faith. Satan and sin lie defeated in the grave. Jesus rose from the dead on the third day forever defeating the power of death. He is the Victor over all—sin, death, and the devil. Jesus alone has the authority to forgive our sins and to grant us eternal life because He won that right with His death and resurrection.

In Christ, by faith in Christ, it is now safe for us to approach God the Father because we are made holy by the blood of Christ shed for us. Christ makes the untamed God safe for us because He is our one Mediator (1 Tim. 2:5). With sins forgiven, you and I are declared

¹ Paul Timothy McCain, ed., *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2005), 401–402.

righteous and holy. We are announced in the presence of God as His beloved children, heirs with Christ of God's reign and rule. In His letter to the Church in Laodicea, the Lord Christ declared, "The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne" (Rev. 3:21 ESV). This is a precious confirmation of the victory of the Gospel that we have because of God's authority used **for us**. To the victor, to the child of God with faith in Jesus Christ as Lord, to the one who conquers because of the grace and mercy of God in Christ through the forgiveness of sins . . . to the victor goes the crown and the right to sit on the Lord's throne. You will reign with Christ and the Father forever in the new creation. The authority of the Father and of His Christ has won this gift for you as you have been made in your Baptism a royal priesthood, "that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Pet. 2:9 ESV).

The God of all authority and power and holiness isn't safe for sinners. But He is good. He is good in that His Son Jesus won for us the forgiveness and sins and eternal life. We have been rescued from the power of sin, death, and the devil by the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. He has made you by Baptism holy ones, His saints. Under His gracious declaration of freedom in Christ, you can approach God with all your worries, cares, and concerns. You can ask of Him as dear children ask their dear Father. With authority, the Lord Christ taught and threw out the unclean spirits. He brought the reign and rule of God into this world and threw out Satan and his kingdom with His sacrificial death and resurrection, making you a chosen people, a holy nation, redeemed by the blood of Jesus. God's authority and power is for you in Christ. He will continue to give you strength and protection from the

power of the devil, the world, and the sinful flesh until that day you are perfected in glory and sit on the throne wearing the crown of life that He has prepared for you. Amen.