

Epiphany 4 2/3/19  
 Luke 4:31-44 C

AND THEY WERE ALL AMAZED AND SAID TO ONE ANOTHER, "WHAT IS THIS WORD? FOR WITH AUTHORITY AND POWER HE COMMANDS THE UNCLEAN SPIRITS, AND THEY COME OUT!"

After Jesus had escaped the crowd in Nazareth -- you remember the crowd that rose up and drove Him out of town and brought Him to the brow of the [a] hill, so they could throw Him down the cliff (cf. Lk 4:29). Once He had escaped that mob, He made His way to Capernaum. And on the Sabbath Day, He went into the synagogue to do what it is He does so well - - He taught. And when He taught in that synagogue, what happened so many other places happened in this place, "they were astonished at His teaching, for His word possessed authority (v. 32)."

Jesus' words possessed authority. Sounds impressive, doesn't it? When Jesus taught, there was no room for questions or doubts. When Jesus taught, He did not teach like the rabbis of His day. A rabbi would teach by standing, reading the text, and then saying, "This is what rabbi so-and-so says about it; and this is what rabbi so-and-so says about it." They would just quote a long list of what other people said. Jesus told you what He had to say about it. When Jesus taught, He taught with authority.

And everyone was astonished by this. Almost everybody that is, but there's always that one guy in the room. There was that one man in the synagogue that day who was not astonished by Jesus' teaching. In fact, this man objected to Jesus' teaching.

This man had an unclean demon "and he cried out with a loud voice, 'Ha! What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are -- the Holy One of God (vv. 33-34)."

Notice the words of the Evangelist here. This man in the synagogue in

Capernaum had an unclean demon -- singular, one demon. But notice his question of Jesus, “What have you to do with us...? Have you come to destroy us (v. 34)?” A singular demon asks Jesus what He is going to do with “us,” plural, all the demons. That’s a very insightful question from this demon. After all, Jesus had just got done spending forty days and forty nights in the wilderness defeating this guy’s boss. So, this man believes Jesus has come not to destroy only him, or only Satan, but the whole demonic host.

“Have you come to destroy us?” That is a good question. Is that a question you ponder? The reason I ask that is because when we come to church we don’t have experiences like they did at the synagogue in Capernaum. We typically don’t meet demon-possessed people in our daily lives. We live with the idea that demons aren’t very active in our world, in our lives today. And that is really a big mistake. Scripture says this,

“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places (Eph 6:12).”

Make no mistake about it, we deal with demons today, they can just be quite sly in how they work. So often the demon is the one who comes and sits on your pillow at night. There you are -- in your Aaron Rodgers pajamas, under your Packer blankee, with visions of getting a buck tag from the North Dakota Game & Fish Department dancing in your head, and you just want to go to sleep, but he wants to talk. He’s sitting there whispering in your ear, “Tell me, how is it that you who call yourself a Christian can say those things to your spouse, to your child? How is it that you a Christian can heartily laugh at that off-color joke with all your co-

workers like you do? How can you hate someone like you do and call yourself a Christian?”

That’s what they do. But that’s not all they do. The demonic host wants you to have nothing to do with the Lord your God. So, they interfere with your devotional life. You go to pray, and they tell you your prayers are never answered anyway. You go to read your Bible, and the demon whispers you’ve heard it all before, and besides you are too busy for that, Wheel of Fortune is on, after all.

And they don’t stop there. They are also the ones who bring misery and heartache and mishaps and accidents into your life. They are the ones who attack you in your mind, your spirit, and your body.

But, you Dear Child of God, should expect that because the demonic host is under the power of Satan and Jesus said of him, “He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies (Jn 8:44).” He’s a murderer and a liar and he’s bent on your eternal destruction.

And if it seems to you that the demonic host is not bothering you today, it is because their work is so commonplace, it’s so every day, in this fallen world. They want to bring you down so that you despair, so that you give up; they want to rob you of the hope you have in Jesus Christ. They are bent on your destruction, your eternal death. This is evil, evil from which you are powerless to free yourself.

This is why Jesus walked into the synagogue in Capernaum and said to the man with an unclean spirit, “Be silent and come out of him (v. 35)!” When Jesus said that, the man was thrown to the ground, the demon comes out of him, and the man is unharmed. And all the people in the

synagogue were amazed and said to one another, “What is this word (v. 36)?”

This word is simply the Word made flesh to dwell among us. This Word is the fulfillment of Genesis 3:15, “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; He shall bruise you head, and you shall bruise His heel.” This word is Jesus’ authority and power against the demonic host.

In this season of Epiphany, we celebrate that God has come to share our flesh and bone and blood and “the reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil (1 Jn 3:18).” And that destruction was not pretty; It’s violent, it’s bloody, it’s gory. That’s exactly what it was when the Holy One of God went to destroy the works of the devil once and for all. He was beaten, spit upon, crowned with thorns, nailed to a cross. This is the Holy One of God triumphing over the unholy by His innocent suffering and death.

In the wilderness, Jesus spoke, “Be gone, Satan!” and the devil left Him (Mt 4:10). In the synagogue in Capernaum, Jesus spoke, “Come out of him,” and the demon came out of the man. But, the most destroying words Jesus ever spoke are the ones He spoke at Calvary, “It is finished (Jn 19:30).” When Jesus spoke that word, Satan’s rule and reign is finished. The power of the demonic host is finished and you are free, Dear Child of God.

You can be certain Satan and his demonic host are finished because He rose again the 3rd day. And the Good News is that when Jesus rose, you rose. That’s what happens in baptism. By water and the Word, you are joined to Jesus, you died with Him and you rise with Him, which puts an end to any power Satan and his demonic host have over you.

But, those demons and their prince, we dare not take them lightly. Even though they are defeated and destroyed, they are super sore losers. And that's why, even though they are destroyed, beaten, and bruised, they still come to sit on your pillow at night. They still try to entice you to sin, interfere with your devotional life; they still come and want you to despair.

Luke records for us in our lesson this Sunday that the demon fought back, throwing the man to the ground, but the Evangelist also teaches us the man was not harmed. Satan will whisper his lies, the demons will rage, but Jesus' words of authority and power say to you, "Be for good cheer, your sins are forgiven (Mt 9:2)." Jesus words of authority and power say to you, "Take, eat...Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins (Mt 26:26-28)."

Have no fear, Dear Child of God, Jesus' words of authority and power cleanses you of all your sin and makes you holy, and that word of authority and power drives Satan and his demonic host away from you, so they can harm you none!