

6 S. after Pentecost 7/4/21
Mark 6:1-13 9B

AND THEY TOOK OFFENSE AT HIM.

Today is Independence Day. So, allow me to begin with a question: Do you know why the American Revolution took place? I don't mean to make the sermon a history lesson today and that is a question for lengthy discussion, but you know it in a nutshell, "No taxation without representation". The American colonies felt they were being overtaxed and taxed without a clear voice for their own governance. They resented not only the taxes, but the restriction of free trade that was imposed on them. I think we could boil down to this: King George of England was abusing his authority over the colonists.

"Authority" is what is misunderstood in our Gospel this morning. The people should have been blessed by Jesus' teaching in the synagogue, but they were not. Quite the opposite, the Evangelist tells us, "THEY TOOK OFFENSE AT HIM".

In today's Gospel, here is Jesus—fresh off His recent "tour de force" of the region around the Sea of Galilee. In just the past few days, Jesus had overcome **the devil**, in driving out the demons from the possessed Gerasene man. He'd overcome **the world**, turning the scoffers to shame after they'd laughed at His saying Jairus' daughter was not dead, but merely sleeping. And He'd overcome **the sinful flesh**, healing the woman who'd suffered from 12 years of bleeding. That's quite a week, for sure. Maybe a trip back to Nazareth was in order—the native son made good, returning to bask in the admiration of His hometown.

From the Sea of Galilee, Jesus heads west to His boyhood home, the disciples in tow. And, when the Sabbath comes, the Lord of the Sabbath

heads to church, where He teaches the hometown folks a few things and “many who heard Him were astonished” (v. 2).

And the home town folks marvel, “where did this man get these things” (v. 2)? “This man” being Jesus. They believed Him to be just a man, an ordinary man. And by outward appearances, that’s what He was. Mary and Joseph, the carpenter’s son. But He was not just a man, He was also “very God of very God,” so that even the wind and the waves obeyed Him.

You may recall the great commission from the end of the 28th chapter of Matthew’s Gospel, “Go...make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” (28:19-20). But what we often ignore and overlook are the words Jesus spoke before those words. He said this, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me” (v. 18).

During His earthly ministry, it was not uncommon for Jewish leaders to challenge Jesus’ authority. They would ask by what authority He was healing the sick or casting our demons or forgiving sins. You may recall the time when the paralytic was brought to the Master. Jesus did something totally unexpected, He told the man his sins were forgiven. When the leaders challenged His authority to forgive sin, Jesus then said, “But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins,” and He healed the man (Mt 9: 6).

The dictionary defines “authority” this way: “the power or right to give orders, make decisions, and enforce obedience.” That is the way we think of “authority,” isn’t it? The general in charge of his troops, and they better do what he says, or else!

And, that's why our sinful flesh makes a mess of things when it comes to authority. Exhibit A on the 4th of July: King George and his American colonies. Look at the home. The husband and father, selfish and self-absorbed, acts more like a tyrant that wife and child better obey ... or else! History is full of brutal dictators who have used the authority God has given them to enslave and massacre their own citizens. We see our elected leaders enriching themselves by misusing their offices, so there is a distrust of those in authority. That's the problem of the flesh: we tend to think that when we have authority, it means that others are to serve us.

The Biblical understanding of authority always has the idea that we receive authority so that we may serve others. {*REPEAT*}

Let's look at THE AUTHORITY OF JESUS. He is "very God of very God"; all authority in heaven and on earth is His. Yet, He humbles Himself to be born of a virgin. He doesn't come to as a prince in an elaborate palace, servants attending His every whim. No, He is born in a stable and laid in a livestock feeding trough, and raised in the outback of Nazareth as the son of a humble carpenter.

At the age of 30, He enters into His public ministry. Again, He is not crowned with a crown of gold and diamonds. Rather, he is baptized by John in the Jordan with sinners.

Now, He comes home. He doesn't ride on a chariot of fire, with the horsemen of heaven leading the way, demanding the people bow and adore Him. No, the dust of the dry road clings to His feet and "on the Sabbath He began to teach in the synagogue" (v. 1). All the while, His divine authority is hidden under human flesh.

He leaves His hometown and ends up in Jerusalem, where He is beaten and forced to carry His cross to Golgotha, where He is crucified.

My Mom was in choir and directed choir for years. During Lent, the choir would sing a song entitled, "He Could Have Called 10,000 Angels". Its true -- Jesus, the Son of God, had the authority to call 10,000 angels to smite down those who mocked and crucified Him. But, He didn't. He had the authority, but He used His divine authority to serve us! He served us by bleeding and dying on the cross -- for your sin, so that you are forgiven.

Jesus gives you the forgiveness He won in the water and Word of your Baptism. Baptized into Christ, you live in Jesus and He lives in you, which is why Paul writes in the 2nd chapter of Philippians,

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus (vv. 3-5).

That would be Jesus, who "came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many" (Mk 10:45). Remember, authority means that we can serve others, being Christ to them.

Let me illustrate that with the home. Yes, the Bible says, "wives, submit to your husbands" (Eph 5:22). And you are already angry at me for quoting Scripture to you. But you can do that because in almost the next breath, Paul says this, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church" (Eph 5:25). So, how does Christ love the Church? He is loving, patient, kind, good, forgiving. He is most certainly not a self-absorbed tyrant. In fact, Jesus would never say one cruel word to you, Dear Child of God. Would He even have a spiteful thought? The answer is "no". Husbands, that is how you are to love your wives. Yes, you have authority, but you use it to serve.

Dittos with children. You know the 4th Commandment and that same Bible says this, "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring

them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord” (Eph 6:4). I will be blunt: when you say, “You’re so dumb. Can’t you do anything right?”, you are misusing and abusing the authority Jesus has entrusted you with. Rather, using the authority of father, you serve by building up and encouraging your children.

Yes, baptized and living in Christ, you have the authority of Jesus. But, that doesn’t mean to you to lord it over your neighbor. We have the mind of Christ. So, let’s use this Independence Day to rejoice and be glad that we are free to use the authority of Jesus to serve lovingly, with a servant’s heart.

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