

Title: ***Kingdom authority***

No. 201524

Venue: Tyrrell Baptist Church

Date: June 7, 2015

Scripture: Mark 1v21-28

Call to Worship: Colossians 2v6-10

Main Idea: King Jesus has all authority

(All Scripture is from the English Standard Version unless otherwise indicated)

Call to Worship

Colossians 2v6-10

- ⁶ *Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him,*
⁷ *rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.*
⁸ *See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.*
⁹ *For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily,*
¹⁰ *and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority.*

As a doxology

Jude (v24-25)

Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

Introduction to the Scripture reading

Have you ever wondered about how God looks at what happens in churches and what He sees that we don't?

God sees all the messiness of our lives. He knows everything that's going on. And that's even when things in churches appear good, calm, even-keeled and seemingly spiritual.

Well, Mark records a time when Jesus stepped into a Sabbath service—not a Sunday service—in a synagogue—not a church building—and things looked good but then, something really messy came out.

We'll read the word "*immediately*" twice in this passage from verses 21 to 28. That adds up to six times it appears, in total, in the first 28 verses of the Gospel account. So, let's turn our attention to the passage "*immediately*."

Mark 1

Jesus Heals a Man with an Unclean Spirit

- ²¹ *And they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath he entered the synagogue and was teaching.*
- ²² *And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes.*
- ²³ *And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit. And he cried out,*
- ²⁴ *"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."*
- ²⁵ *But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!"*
- ²⁶ *And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying out with a loud voice, came out of him.*
- ²⁷ *And they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, "What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him."*
- ²⁸ *And at once his fame spread everywhere throughout all the surrounding region of Galilee.*

Jesus does the conventional thing

As we read the text of Mark, Jesus has, at this point, called four fishermen to follow Him. So Andrew, Simon, James and John, those last two being the sons of Zebedee and Jesus and possibly some of their female relatives, travel from the area of the River Jordon to the city of Capernaum. The Gospel accounts will suggest that Capernaum, by the Sea of Galilee, became the home base for Jesus during the years of His public ministry.

Now, in your own reading of the Gospel accounts, would you describe Jesus as “conventional” or “unconventional”?

Here are some definitions of “conventional”—

1. Following accepted customs and proprieties
2. Conforming with accepted standards
3. Unimaginative and conformist

Personally, I think that only definition number 1 applies.

Jesus would astound people, perplex people—even among his own close group of followers—and he would infuriate some of the religious establishment, so we will see Him to be quite unconventional, and for good reason. But, at least, He tried to join with people where they would conventionally assemble.

And so, being in Capernaum, He, without delay, went to the synagogue on the Sabbath. That was the place for devout Jews to be on that day.

While the Temple in Jerusalem was a focus of worship and festivals for the nation of Jews, each town and city would have a synagogue. We might liken that to Christians having a church. To start a synagogue, it required ten men to participate. They would have scrolls of the writings of Moses and the prophets. It would be a meeting place where Jewish men would pray, read the Scriptures out loud and some would teach from the passages. Women and children could also congregate at a synagogue building but would be in a section separate from the men. The buildings would be located on an elevated piece of land.

Here is a picture of the ruins of the synagogue in Capernaum. These date back to the 1st or 2nd Century. Probably the buildings for most synagogues were simpler structures.

You could think of our churches as the Christian version of the Jewish synagogue though we always need to make a distinction between a church building and how the New Testament always describes the church as a gathering of people apart from any special building.

So, here is Jesus and His first followers at the synagogue in Capernaum on the Sabbath. For Jews, the Sabbath is marked by the span of time from sundown on Friday until the appearance of the first three stars in the night sky on Saturday.

Jesus came to the conventional place of assembly at the conventional time and, as Mark tells us, He was teaching. That would be a conventional activity for one acknowledged as a rabbi. As a student of the Torah, the rabbi is also considered a master and teacher.

Now, this message is entitled, “*Kingdom authority*” and we will see this revealed in two special ways in this passage.

Interpret for yourself

If you can read and you have a Bible, then you can learn for yourself what is written there. The role of a preacher is to proclaim Jesus Christ and the gospel of salvation that is to be found in Him alone. With preaching there can be an element of teaching that gives you some background on the Scriptures and helps to join the dots.

But whether it is preaching or teaching, the authority for our message remains in the Word of God. It happens that Christians will hear a fine preacher or teacher and go on about the message and about the person. There are a number of them that I admire and respect. But let us not lose sight of the preciousness of the Word of God. The ability to convey a message will never be as important as the actual message from God in Scripture. Preachers and teachers are just messengers. Our words will never match His word to us.

Then, there is the response of the people in Capernaum on that Sabbath day.
And they were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes.

The scribes were a special group among the Jewish religious leaders. While they might have been involved in writing copies of the Scriptures, their primary duties were to study the law of Moses, to teach it to the people, and to help settle any disputes involving questions of the law. The activities of the scribe could be traced back to a good foundation in Ezra—a person and book so named in the Old Testament. But, by the time of this Sabbath day in Capernaum, the scribes had devolved into something else. They were losing themselves in the finer points of the Law and so had lost the spirit of what God would have them hear as a message.

Jesus teaches from a Scripture passage and there is a freshness and an authority that the people had not heard before. Of course! As the Son of God, this was His book and it was a message about Him.

In the Gospel of John (John 5v37-40), we have these words from Jesus to Jews who were persecuting Him for healing on the Sabbath. Jesus said:

And the Father who sent Me has Himself borne witness about Me. His voice you have never heard, His form you have never seen, and you do not have His word abiding in you, for you do not believe the one whom He has sent. You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about Me, yet you refuse to come to Me that you may have life.

And so I again say, “Of course the people would recognize that Jesus spoke as one who had authority.” His was kingdom authority because this book is about the kingdom rule of God and it was and ever will be a book about Him.

Well, as soon as Jesus’ authority is being recognized and people’s lives are on the threshold of being changed someone wants to get in to spoil it. That is the way it has been and the way it is still is today.

What is the greatest danger?

Now, I’m going to ask something of a “staging question.”

What is the greatest danger to a soldier in wartime? [REPEAT] The greatest danger to a soldier at wartime is in the failure to recognize the enemy. Do you agree?

Most days, we probably don’t live our Christian lives as though we are engaged in battle. Paul tells Christians to put on the full armour of God. That should be our daily practice but I won’t go into that now. Here is how he prefaces that passage in the letter to the Ephesians (6v11-13):

Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. 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. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.

Before we move on in this passage in Mark, let’s take a brief look back at Mark 1v13:

And He [Jesus] was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan

Do you believe that the person Satan exists? Satan aka the devil? aka Lucifer?

Mark tells us that Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness. Matthew expands on that account and reports the conversation between Jesus and Satan. There are other places in Scripture, for example in Genesis and Job, where Satan is shown to be real.

Sadly, some people sitting in church pews don't believe in the existence of God as we saw from the matter presented earlier about a United Church clergy person who is a confessed atheist. Another report suggests that people in her congregation now also question the existence of God. And so, they probably don't believe in the existence of angels or Satan or his demons.

I ask again, *"What is the greatest danger to a soldier in wartime?"*

The greatest danger to a soldier at wartime is in the failure to recognize the enemy.

OK. It's time to get back into this account of Jesus in the synagogue in Capernaum.

The second response

Earlier, I said that there were two special ways that Jesus' kingdom authority is revealed in this passage. The second one may surprise you. Have a look at verses 23 and 24:

And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, "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."

Jesus drives the demon out of the man and the people respond, *"What is this? A new teaching with authority!"*

But, let's not be distracted by the response of the people. They had already recognized Jesus' authority. It is the response of the demon that reveals some very important things.

You wouldn't expect a demon to be in a place where there is the Scriptures and people gathered for worship. Now, I know that this was a synagogue and not a church but I will say without any hesitancy or apology that Satan just loves to get into the church. He would rather be in the church than out there. You see, in those dark places in the world; places like strip clubs, bars and casinos, places where there are displays of pornography like on the Internet or television, he's already got those people under his power. And it's not just the dark places. Even where there are people gathered for amusing things like Sunday morning golf or gardening, he doesn't have to be trying to trip them up. Those people have no interest in worshipping God. They've already been sidelined.

The reason I say he loves to be in the church is for the same reason that he tempted Jesus in the wilderness. He wanted to sabotage Jesus' mission and God's kingdom plan.

Today, he wants to sabotage the lives of Christians and our mission to the world.

I have seen Satan at work in churches. He just loves to get into churches and stir things up. I have also encountered a demon-possessed man and heard about how he disrupted church services where we were carrying out a mission in London, England. That's a story for another day.

But Satan's work undermining the gospel ministry of the church is not generally a frontal attack or as dramatic as the account that we read in Mark.

There are a number of lists that I could read (Romans 1v29-32, 2 Corinthians 12) but here is just one from the apostle Paul:

Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. (Galatians 5v19-21)

And if we take somethings from that list that appear not so severe; things like "*strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy*" or from another list, things like *gossip and slander*, well Satan is pleased to work these into the life of a church. And if and when he does, he makes Christians ineffective in fulfilling God's kingdom purposes.

Let's recognize the enemy and not let him come to our church.

We will now make a transition to our service of Communion. This is a time when we look to the symbols of the bread and wine representing the body and blood of our Lord Jesus.

I will read a passage from the book of Revelation where John describes the victory that comes by the blood of the Lamb.

Revelation 12v7-11

Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God.

You see, Satan is the one who would accuse us. Let’s not give him any ammunition for his accusations. John continues by writing:

And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.

Outline of Mark from ESV Study Bible

A. Introduction (1v1–15)

B. Demonstration of Jesus' Authority (1v16–8v26)

1. Jesus' early Galilean ministry (1v16–3v12)

2. Jesus' later Galilean ministry (3v13–6v6)

Calling of the Twelve (3v13–35)

Parables (4v1–34)

Nature miracle, exorcism, and healing (4v35–5v43)

Rejection at Nazareth (6v1–6)

3. Work beyond Galilee (6v7–8v26)

Sending of the Twelve (6v7–13)

Death of John the Baptist (6v14–56)

Teachings on moral defilement (7v1–23)

Opening to Gentiles (7v24–30)

Additional miracles in Decapolis and Bethsaida (7v31–8v26)

C. Testing Jesus' Authority in Suffering (8v27–16v8)

1. Journey to Jerusalem (8v27–10v52)

Peter's confession (8v27–33)

Call to discipleship (8v34–9v1)

Transfiguration and healing (9v2–29)

Instruction on discipleship: putting others first (9v30–50)

Instruction on discipleship: divorce, wealth, humility (10v1–52)

2. Entering and judging Jerusalem (11v1–13v37)

Triumphal entry to Jerusalem (11v1–11)

Jesus' judgment on religious leaders (11v12–12v44)

Jesus and the coming judgment (13v1–37)

3. Death and resurrection in Jerusalem (14v1–16v8)

Betrayal (14v1–52)

Trial (14v53–15v20)

Crucifixion and resurrection (15v21–16v8)

[4. "Longer ending of Mark" (16v9–20; see note)]