

"FISHING WITH AUTHORITY AND POWER"
MARK 1:21-28
FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY
MESSIAH, BOERNE
JANUARY 28, 2024

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER AND OF THE SON AND OF THE HOLY
SPIRIT. AMEN.

TEXT: "THE PEOPLE WERE ALL SO AMAZED THAT THEY ASKED
EACH OTHER, 'WHAT IS THIS? A NEW TEACHING—AND WITH
AUTHORITY! HE EVEN GIVES ORDERS TO EVIL SPIRITS AND
THEY OBEY HIM.'" (V 27)

DEAR FRIENDS IN CHRIST:

IN LAST WEEK'S GOSPEL LESSON, JESUS CALLED PETER AND
ANDREW TO FOLLOW HIM, AND HE SAID TO THEM, "I WILL MAKE YOU
BECOME FISHERS OF MEN" (1:17 ESV). JESUS WOULD DO THIS BY
EQUIPPING THEM WITH EVERYTHING THEY NEEDED TO MAKE
DISCIPLES OF ALL PEOPLE GROUPS (MT 28:19). FIRST, HE WOULD
GIVE THEM THE PROPER "FISHING LINE," THE MESSAGE OF GOD'S
KINGDOM OF GRACE COME IN THE PERSON AND WORK OF JESUS
CHRIST. SECOND, HE WOULD GIVE THEM "THE HOOK," THE POWER
OF GOD DEMONSTRATED BY WORKING MIRACLES IN ORDER TO CONFIRM
THE TRUTHFULNESS OF THE MESSAGE. IN TODAY'S GOSPEL LESSON,
JESUS TEACHES HIS DISCIPLES IN WORD AND DEED HOW TO CATCH
MEN AND WOMEN BY FISHING WITH AUTHORITY AND POWER.

OUR GOSPEL LESSON SAYS THAT, AFTER JESUS CALLED PETER,
ANDREW, JAMES, AND JOHN, THEY WENT TO THE TOWN OF
CAPERNAUM. WHEN THE SABBATH CAME, THAT IS, WHEN THE SUN

SET ON WHAT IS OUR FRIDAY EVENING, JESUS AND THE DISCIPLES WENT *IMMEDIATELY* TO THE SYNAGOG, THE LOCAL JEWISH CONGREGATION, AND JESUS BEGAN TO TEACH THERE. FOR JESUS AND HIS DISCIPLES, THERE WAS NO QUESTION ABOUT WHETHER OR NOT TO GO TO THE SYNAGOG. ATTENDING SERVICES REGULARLY WAS THE CUSTOMARY PRACTICE OF EVERY BELIEVING JEW. AS SOON AS THEY HAD OPPORTUNITY TO WORSHIP AND LEARN ABOUT GOD AT THE SYNAGOG, THEY TOOK IT.

OUR TEXT SAYS THAT JESUS THEN TAUGHT THE PEOPLE IN THE SYNAGOG. WHAT DID HE TEACH THEM? WELL, WE DON'T KNOW FOR SURE, BUT IN THE GOSPEL LESSON LAST WEEK, WE HAVE AN EXAMPLE OF JESUS' PREACHING. "THE TIME HAS COME," HE SAID, "THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS NEAR. REPENT AND BELIEVE THE GOOD NEWS" (1:15). JESUS TAUGHT THE PEOPLE THAT THE TIME OF WAITING FOR THE MESSIAH TO COME WAS OVER, AND BY HIS WORDS AND DEEDS, HE DEMONSTRATED THAT HE WAS THE LONG EXPECTED MESSIAH. NOW THAT HE HAD COME, THEY NEEDED TO REPENT OF THEIR SINS, LEAVE BEHIND THEIR BAD BEHAVIOR AND LACK OF FAITH, AND BEGIN TO LIVE A NEW LIFE OF GOOD WORKS. THEY NEEDED TO REPENT AND BELIEVE IN JESUS AS THE PROMISED CHRIST AND THE SAVIOR OF THE WORLD.

WELL, OUR TEXT SAYS THAT THE PEOPLE WERE *AMAZED* BY JESUS' WORDS. THEY HAD NEVER HEARD SUCH TEACHING IN THEIR

SYNAGOG. SURE, THEY HAD HEARD LOTS OF TEACHING ABOUT THE NEED TO LIVE A GOOD LIFE ACCORDING TO GOD'S COMMANDMENTS. THEIR SCRIBES HAD TAUGHT THEM ABOUT WHAT SUCH-AND-SUCH TEACHER OF THE LAW SAID ABOUT GOD'S COMMANDS AND WHAT SUCH-AND-SUCH TEACHER OF THE LAW THOUGHT ABOUT THE OTHER'S TEACHING AND SO FORTH, BUT THAT WAS NOTHING MORE THAN THE TEACHINGS OF MEN. THEY HAD NEVER HEARD SOMEONE SPEAK SO DIRECTLY ABOUT GOD'S ABSOLUTE LORDSHIP OVER THEIR LIVES AND HIS DEMAND FOR THEIR COMPLETE OBEDIENCE TO HIS COMMANDMENTS. HIS WORDS FRIGHTENED THEM, EVEN AS THEY WERE AMAZED BY HIS TEACHING.

YOU SEE, JESUS TAUGHT THEM WITH *AUTHORITY*. HE SPOKE THE TRUTH OF GOD'S WORD FROM GOD HIMSELF AS GOD HIMSELF, AND IT DISTURBED THEM. THIS DISTURBANCE OR PERTURBATION OF THE SOUL IS THE VERY ACT OF FISHING TO WHICH JESUS HAD CALLED THE DISCIPLES: TO BE FISHERS OF MEN. AS THE CASTING OF A FLY IN WATER CAUSES A DISTURBANCE OR PERTURBATION OF THE WATER'S SURFACE, SO JESUS' TEACHING OF THE LAW PERTURBED THE SOULS OF THE PEOPLE IN THE SYNAGOG. THEY WERE FRIGHTENED, ALARMED, AND AMAZED BY JESUS' TEACHING BECAUSE HE DIDN'T TEACH THEM THE TRADITIONS OF THE SCRIBES BUT GOD'S ABSOLUTE CLAIM OVER THEM AS HIS PEOPLE. "REPENT

AND BELIEVE THE GOOD NEWS," JESUS SAID, "BECAUSE THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS NEAR."

THIS TEACHING—TO REPENT AND BELIEVE THE GOOD NEWS OF GOD'S KINGDOM OF GRACE—WAS INDEED DISTURBING, SO MUCH SO THAT A MAN IN THE SYNAGOG WHO WAS POSSESSED BY AN EVIL SPIRIT CRIED OUT, "WHAT HAVE YOU TO DO WITH US, JESUS OF NAZARETH?" (V 24). WITH THESE WORDS THE DEMON-POSSESSED MAN SPOKE TO JESUS IN THE SAME WAY ENEMY COMBATANTS DID IN JESUS' DAY. YET IT WASN'T THE MAN SPEAKING BUT THE *DEMONS* WHO WERE AT WAR AGAINST JESUS, AS THE FOLLOWING WORDS DEMONSTRATE. THEY ASKED HIM, "HAVE YOU COME TO DESTROY US" (V 24)? ALTHOUGH THE PEOPLE OF CAPERNAUM DID NOT FULLY KNOW WHO JESUS WAS OR THE REASON WHY HE CAME TO THEM, THE DEMONS KNEW, AND THEY TREMBLED (JAM 2:19). JESUS CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD, CAME INTO THE WORLD TO *DESTROY* THEM, TO *UNDO* ALL THE EVIL THAT SATAN HAD DONE. JESUS WENT ABOUT DOING HIS FATHER'S WILL: TEACHING GOD'S TRUTH IN THE SYNAGOGS, PROCLAIMING THE GOOD NEWS OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD, AND HEALING EVERY DISEASE AND SICKNESS AMONG THE PEOPLE (MT 4:23). AS ST. JOHN WRITES: CHRIST CAME "TO DESTROY THE DEVIL'S WORK" (1 JN 3:8).

THE EVIL SPIRIT THEN SPOKE TO JESUS THROUGH THE MAN AND SAID, "I KNOW WHO YOU ARE—THE HOLY ONE OF GOD" (V 24).

THE BIBLE TEACHES THAT THE DEMONS KNOW WHO GOD AND HIS SON, JESUS CHRIST, ARE (JAM 2:19). BUT JESUS DIDN'T WANT THE PEOPLE TO BELIEVE IN HIM BECAUSE OF WHAT A DEMON SAID. THE DEVIL IS A LIAR AND THE FATHER OF LIES, AND THE DEMONS ARE LIARS JUST LIKE THEIR LEADER. JESUS WANTS PEOPLE TO BELIEVE IN HIM ON THE BASIS OF *HIS* WORDS AND DEEDS. THUS, JESUS COMMANDED THE DEMON TO BE QUIET AND COME OUT OF THE MAN, AND HE DID BECAUSE JESUS IS MUCH MORE POWERFUL THAN ANY DEMON, EVEN SATAN HIMSELF.

WHY, THEN, IS JESUS' HEALING OF THE MAN WITH AN EVIL SPIRIT SO IMPORTANT FOR US? FIRST, BECAUSE IT CONFIRMS THE TRUTHFULNESS OF JESUS' TEACHING, AS DO ALL HIS MIRACLES. JESUS IS TRUE SON OF MAN, BORN OF THE VIRGIN MARY, AND TRUE SON OF GOD, COCEIVED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT. AND SECOND, THE HEALING DEMONSTRATES GOD'S INTENTION TO CLEANSE *ALL* CREATION OF THE DEVIL'S EVIL FORCES. GOD AND SATAN'S FORCES ARE ACTING ON THE LIVES OF HUMAN BEINGS ALL THE TIME, BUT JESUS' MIRACLE OF DRIVING THE EVIL SPIRIT OUT OF THE MAN TEACHES US THAT GOD HAS THE POWER AND THE WILL TO CONFRONT AND CONQUER *ALL* THE EVIL FORCES IN THE WORLD. JESUS' BLESSING TO *THIS* MAN SHOWS US JUST HOW MUCH GOD WANTS TO BLESS US AND GIVE US HIS POWER IN OUR LIVES.

IN THE GOSPEL LESSON TODAY WE SEE THAT JESUS EXERCISED HIS AUTHORITY IN TWO WAYS: FIRST, BY GIVING *NEW LIFE* TO THE MAN BY CALLING HIM TO REPENTANCE AND FAITH, AND SECOND, BY *FREEING* HIM FROM THE POWER OF THE DEMONS. JESUS TREATS EACH OF US IN THE SAME WAY. HE DEALS WITH US ON TWO LEVELS: FIRST, BY CALLING EACH OF US TO *NEW LIFE* THROUGH THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST, AND SECOND, BY ACTING TO *FREE* US FROM OUR PERSONAL DEMONS AND EVIL DEEDS THROUGH HIS WORD AND IN HOLY BAPTISM. JESUS DIDN'T COME INTO THE WORLD SIMPLY TO TAKE US OUT OF A CORRUPT CREATION AND PUT US UNDER HIS NEW ORDER. CHRIST DIDN'T COME JUST TO CALL US TO ETERNAL LIFE IN HEAVEN. HE ALSO CAME TO ANNOUNCE GOD'S *VICTORY* OVER *ALL* THE CORRUPTION THAT HAS INVADED HIS CREATION. JESUS CAME TO WIN *FREEDOM* NOT ONLY FOR HUMAN BEINGS, BUT ALSO FOR ALL CREATION (ROM 8:21).

THE PEOPLE WHO SAW JESUS CAST OUT THE EVIL SPIRIT WERE AMAZED. THEY WERE ASTONISHED AND FRIGHTENED BY JESUS' DISPLAY OF GOD'S POWER. HOPEFULLY OUR ASTONISHMENT DOES NOT IMPEDE US, BUT RATHER DIRECTS US TO COME TO JESUS, TO LISTEN TO HIS WORDS OF TRUTH AND COMFORT, AND REMOVES FROM US OUR FEARS AND ANXIETY. OUR SITUATION IS SIMILAR TO THAT OF THE PEOPLE OF GALILEE. THE FORCES OF EVIL AND OUR OWN SINS CORRUPT US. OUR WORLD IS FULL OF EVIL FORCES.

OUR LIVES ARE SUBJECT TO THE POWERS OF DARKNESS. BUT JESUS CAME TO *FREE* US FROM ALL OF THIS. HE CAME INTO THE WORLD TO BE OUR *SAVIOR*. HIS WORK OF SALVATION WAS FULFILLED THROUGH HIS SUFFERING, DEATH, AND RESURRECTION. TODAY HE COMES TO *RECLAIM* US—OUR LIVES AND OUR WORLD—THROUGH HIS WORD AND SACRAMENTS. *ALL* OF OUR NEEDS, OUR PROBLEMS, AND OUR WORRIES CAN BE GIVEN TO HIM BECAUSE HE CARES FOR YOU, FOR ME, FOR *ALL* PEOPLE EVERYWHERE (1 PET 5:7).

DEAR FRIENDS IN CHRIST, THE PEOPLE IN THE SYNAGOG AT CAPERNAUM COULD NOT CONTAIN THEIR AMAZEMENT OVER WHAT HAPPENED THAT EVENING, BUT INSTEAD SHARED THE NEWS ABOUT JESUS' TEACHING AND MIRACULOUS WORKS ALL OVER GALILEE. HIS FAME HAS ALSO COME TO US HERE AT MESSIAH, BOERNE. THROUGH HIS WORD AND SACRAMENTS JESUS COMES TO DELIVER US FROM SIN AND ITS CONSEQUENCES AND REDEEM US. HE COMES TO HELP US IN OUR AFFLICTION, TO RESPOND TO EVERY CALL FOR HELP. HAVING RECEIVED HIM AS OUR SAVIOR THROUGH HIS WORD AND IN HOLY BAPTISM, WE ARE CLOTHED WITH THE POWER OF GOD AND CALLED TO BECOME FISHERS OF MEN, TOO, JUST LIKE THOSE FIRST DISCIPLES. BY THE GRACE AND POWER OF GOD, OUR HEARTS HAVE BEEN OPENED TO RECEIVE HIS GRACE, AND OUR MOUTHS OPENED TO SHARE HIS WORD OF FORGIVENESS, AUTHORITY, AND POWER. AMEN.