

Pastor Kenneth Mars
St. John's & Immanuel Lutheran Churches – Kimball, NE & Burns, WY
Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany
January 31, 2010
Text: Luke 4:31–44

Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Have you ever heard someone say to you, “Now, don’t get preachy with me!” You know what they’re saying. You’re being too meddlesome in something they want you to leave alone, or they don’t want to deal with whatever subject you’re discussing, or they think you’re being a bit too, shall we say, eager or zealous in what you’re saying. At any rate, to be “preachy” in today’s way of thinking is bad, to be avoided at all costs.

Then we hear today’s appointed gospel reading from Luke 4:31–44. Jesus has been preaching in the synagogue of Capernaum and they were “astonished at his teaching, for his word possessed authority” (vs. 32). Did Jesus get “preachy” with them? Probably not in the modern sense of that phrase. But He preached in such a way that the folks of Capernaum knew something was different. Did Jesus offend some or at least make them uncomfortable? Probably so. All you need do is read His recorded teachings in the gospel to know that Jesus didn’t pull any punches. He was direct, clear, and powerful in preaching and teaching about God’s kingdom. Later in His ministry, it would be His preaching and teaching that kept getting Him into trouble with the Jewish religious establishment. In many ways, it was our Lord’s preaching that drove the Jewish leaders to have Jesus crucified.

Our Lord preached with authority, make no mistake about that. When Jesus preached against sin, He spoke powerfully and authoritatively. When Jesus preached about the forgiveness of sins and God’s eternal love for humanity, He spoke powerfully and authoritatively.

But that’s not all that Jesus did in Capernaum. Vs. 33-35 tells about a demon-possessed man who went to church, actually it’s the synagogue, but you get the point, a demon went to the weekly worship service. Think about that for a moment. And what is it that they, i.e., the demons, want to do? Keep us from hearing the Word of God, to stop us from hearing and believing that Jesus is our Lord and Savior. We don’t need to be afraid. Jesus’ death and resurrection covers and protects us. To get to us Christians, they have to go through Jesus.

That’s why baptism is so very important (and why we rejoice with such great joy today that Jesse was baptized). The Bible teaches us in Romans 6 that when we are baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, we are baptized into the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Or to put it differently, when we are baptized we

are connected to Jesus' death where our own sins are forgiven and the devil's power is destroyed. When we are baptized we are connected to Jesus' resurrection so that we receive at that moment and for the rest of eternity, the eternal, undying resurrection life of our Lord Jesus Christ. Baptism is nothing short of God the Holy Trinity's powerful, authoritative preaching that you belong to Him. His name is placed upon Jesse and upon you all. And as we'll see in just a moment, that's a powerful, authoritative name indeed!!

There's a demon-possessed man in the synagogue of Capernaum. He knows who Jesus really is and he's scared witless. Luke records (vs. 33-34) that with a loud voice the demon says, "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." This demon understands what no one else fully realizes, not Jesus' family, not His disciples, and certainly not the people of Capernaum. The demon knows that Jesus is not only a man, born in Nazareth but Jesus is also God, the Holy One of God. And there's something else the demon knows, Jesus is his conqueror. "Have you come to destroy us?" he asks.

With one authoritative word, dare I say, with one preached word, Jesus rebukes the demon and says, "Be silent and come out of him!" (vs. 35). The demon must obey. He can't help it. He's no match for the Lord Jesus. The power and authority the people of Capernaum heard in Jesus' sermon is now seen in action with this demon-possessed man. Here's how they respond to these extraordinary events, "What is this word? For with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits, and they come out!" (vs. 36). Remember what I said about baptism? It connects us to Jesus. That makes us baptized Christians untouchable as far as the demons are concerned. Talk about power and authority!! Talk about glorious comfort and victory in the gospel of Jesus.

After all this ruckus, Jesus and His disciples go to Peter's mother-in-law's house. When they arrive, they find another problem, she's sick with "a high fever" (vs. 38). They didn't have Tylenol in those days. A high fever was serious business so they come to Jesus. If He can take care of a pesky demon then maybe He can heal a troublesome fever. In vs. 39, Luke records that Jesus stood over Peter's mother-in-law and rebuked the fever. Immediately, she gets up – fever all gone – and she makes supper.

Now we need to stop for a brief moment and consider that word "rebuke." It's the same word used to describe what Jesus did to the demon. In this case, He rebukes the fever. What this means is that for Jesus, sickness and demonic powers are the same and He treats them the same. Both are a result of man's fall into sin. And both must bow before the authoritative, powerful word of the Lord Jesus.

Now that's something we need to stop and consider. The devils work through the power of sin. Sickness and disease arise because of the sin that infects us and all people. Death is the endgame for both the devil and sickness. Yet today's gospel has something to say

about sin, death, and the devil. Jesus rebukes them with His authoritative words. He gets “preachy” with them. He gets downright angry and sends all these evil forces packing.

Our Lord Jesus was a conquering hero come to liberate a world held in complete domination under the dreadful slavery of sin, death, and the devil. Jesus came to fight for you and deliver you from your sins, not with human weapons but with an authoritative, powerful word that rebukes evil and at the same comforts His people with grace, forgiveness, and eternal love.

And just in case we missed the connection between sickness and disease, Luke writes that after Jesus healed Peter’s mother-in-law, He healed even more people by laying His hands on each person individually (vs. 40) and Jesus delivered those who were demon-possessed by rebuking them and casting them out (vs. 41). The demons know who Jesus is. They called Him “the holy One of God” in vs. 34 and “the Son of God” in vs. 41. Every time they try to create confusion with their words and actions Jesus silences them with His stern command. Their time is over. God’s kingdom is restored to this broken world through the power and authority of Jesus’ word.

Well, it’s been quite a day in the town of Capernaum. Jesus wants to get away for a bit so He went into what Luke calls a “desolate place” (vs. 42). He goes there to rest and pray for there is much work to be done in the time He has before His crucifixion some 3 short years in the future. As I said earlier, this isn’t fun and games for Jesus. It’s divine warfare against sin, sickness, death, and demonic forces. Throughout His ministry, Jesus found renewed strength through the God’s Word, God’s people, and prayer. Those same sources of renewal are also given to us and are the hallmarks of every worship service at Immanuel Lutheran Church. God’s people gather together to support and encourage each other, to hear and receive God’s Word, and to pray. And through it all, the Holy Spirit is working in us and through us for our good and eternal salvation.

The good folks of Capernaum aren’t too keen to Jesus leave. Who can blame them? If we keep Him around, sickness and spiritual oppression will be vanquished. Luke says they sought Him out and even tried to keep Jesus from leaving them. How Jesus responds is most important for us today. He says to them in vs. 43, “I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose.” In other words, signs, miracles, and wonders aren’t the main thing for Jesus. Preaching God’s kingdom is. The miracles aren’t an end in and of themselves. They are object lessons pointing to something greater: the complete and final restoration of all things established in His death and resurrection.

Casting out demons, healing diseases, and preaching God’s kingdom all point to Jesus’ cross and empty tomb. There is where you and all the world finds healing. “By His stripes we are healed” writes the prophet Isaiah. Preaching God’s kingdom and receiving

the sacraments, which by the way, are a visible form of preaching Christ, connects us to Jesus in His death and resurrection.

We are healed in Jesus. It's done. Remember what Jesus said on the cross, "It is finished." That's your healing, your forgiveness, your place in God's kingdom, it's all finished. In the meantime, we live under the power of Christ's authoritative preached Word. And what Jesus did in Jerusalem on the third after His crucifixion He will do to all His people on the Last Day. He will resurrect us.

So maybe getting a little "preachy" isn't so bad after all, not when it's Jesus and His Word of deliverance and salvation that is being preached. Live in that preached Word. Rejoice in that preached Word. It's the Word of your eternal salvation and victory.

+ In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit + Amen

Now the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, keep you hearts and minds in Christ Jesus unto life everlasting. Amen.