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Epiphany 4

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Jesus Comes With Authority

He comes with authority to teach the truth, and to protect from all evil. How do we react to this authority? Do we rage against it like the demon? Do we live in jealousy like the scribes? Do we wander away when we get bored like the crowds? Or do we delight in the gifts He comes to bring like the disciples? Jesus comes with the authority to forgive.

Mark 1:21-28 ²¹ Then they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and taught. ²² And they were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. ²³ Now there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, ²⁴ saying, "Let *us* alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are -- the Holy One of God!" ²⁵ But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be quiet, and come out of him!" ²⁶ And when the unclean spirit had convulsed him and cried out with a loud voice, he came out of him. ²⁷ Then they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, "What is this? What new doctrine *is* this? For with authority He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him." ²⁸ And immediately His fame spread throughout all the region around Galilee.

He Came with Authority

Not as one of the scribes

Jesus teaching was different, - too bad if you are one of the scribes

Recently its become the fad to retell fairy tales for the "villains" point of view. There is this one about the three little pigs, where the wolf is just trying to borrow a cup of sugar, or Wicked where the "wicked witch of the west" isn't really evil, just trying to do the right thing.

Imagine the account from the scribes point of view, working hard in a thankless job, year after year trying to remain true to the word of God. Then here comes this guy, acts like he knows more than God's word, starts teaching new things, everyone loves Him, everyone follows him.

But this verse isn't about competition, it's about Jesus authority. The Scribes aren't the bad guys in this verse. Mark doesn't mention them to point out how wrong, or evil, or boring they were. The point is Jesus; the point is that Jesus was something different, not just another teacher, but something different, something far greater, someone with Authority.

The scribes weren't doing anything wrong in this text. They were doing what they were supposed to be doing, reading God's word and teaching it to the people. They didn't have the authority to teach something new. But now here was One who did. Here is the One whom Moses spoke about, the prophet who was to come, who would teach us all things.

We also are supposed to be doing the job of the scribe. Our primary isn't how dynamic or interesting our sermons are. Our primary concern is preaching the Word that Jesus gave us.

We have one prophet, one teacher, and many many scribes. Many people who read and help to explain and teach what HE has taught, but always going back to that one teacher who had authority.

He is the one who came with authority to teach the truth of God

Authority over Demons

And He proves that He has that authority to teach the Word of God by showing that He has authority even over the demons.

This is a passage that is far more appreciated in Africa than it is here. I went with Kossi Blewu once to an evangelism meeting. He borrowed a projector and showed a movie, of course I couldn't understand anything they were saying in the movie, but it was still pretty easy to follow the plot. It starts with a village, and the movie jumps around the village, showing demons causing all these problems. Then a pastor comes to the village. And he starts zapping the demons with blue lightning.

After the movie I asked Kossi, what was that? Where was Jesus? Where was sin and the law and grace and forgiveness. Kossi told me, "this is what the people are afraid of. This is what gets them to come to church if they know that Jesus can protect them from demons."

Well, that's good to let them know that Jesus can protect them from demons but they need to hear about sin and grace.

So they do have a problem over there with jumping too quickly to blame demons for everything. But we have a problem over here with truly appreciating not only the reality but the nature of the threat that demons possess.

They are real and they want to lead us away from Jesus. I don't say this because I want you to stay awake at night fearing demons, I don't want to scare the little kids. We don't have to fear them. As we see clearly in this account, Jesus has absolutely authority over the demons also and they cannot touch us against the will of our Father.

One of the things that Mark doesn't mention but that Luke lets us know is that this demon, caused the man to convulse, and cried out, but did not harm the man. This man was under Jesus protection and the demon could not harm him no matter how much he wanted to.

Like I said I mention this not because I want to scare you, but to remind you of the very real threat that threatens us and the very real power and love of Christ that He surrounds us and protects from every evil.

Remember the Israelites in the wilderness, who because they did not see snakes assumed they weren't a problem. They complained to God, and God removed His protection and the snakes bite and killed the Israelites.

Jesus comes with authority, authority to teach the truth of God's word, authority over demons. In our text we see two reactions to that authority. And two more reactions that are not explicitly mentioned in the text but are made clear to us in other passages.

1. The demons

First of all the demon, who knows exactly who Jesus. He knows His authority, and he reacts against that authority with rage. Like a little child throwing a temper tantrum because he doesn't want to eat his peas. So many people throw similar temper tantrum because God's Word tells them something they don't want to hear. No it's not okay to get a divorce. No it's not ok to fool around before you are married. No it's not ok to go and worship where ever and with whomever you want. No it's not ok to waste your money on gambling and lottery tickets, but we don't want to hear that. We don't want God telling us what to do. We want to hear

about His love, but not when He tells us when are wrong, that is offensive. So we rage against Him and His authority.

2. The people – were amazed

Secondly we have the people who were amazed at His teaching and at His power. And this seems like a good thing, but we know the rest of the story how this is all they cared about. They liked his authority when it was something new and exciting but quickly lost interest. They liked to see the miracles but didn't look beyond that to the greater miracle, the forgiveness of sins and eternal life in His name. And so many today too, care only about what is new and exciting or what Jesus can do for them now and here, instead of looking for the true gifts of God, righteousness peace and joy in the forgiveness of sin.

3. The scribes – were jealous

Third the scribes. Now as I said the scribes don't do anything wrong in the text itself. But again we know the rest of the story. How they did indeed react with jealousy. Instead of rejoicing that the Prophet whom Moses foretold was finally here, instead of rejoicing and learning more and greater truths of God, they rejected Christ's authority for the simple reason that they wanted the fame, the adoration, the glory, the authority for themselves.

4. The Disciples

Finally the disciples were there, and although they aren't mentioned in text, they were there. And we know their reaction to the authority of Christ. "Lord to whom shall we go you have the words of eternal life." They rejoiced that one had finally come with authority to teach the truth of God. They rejoiced that now finally there was light in this sin dark world.

Jesus came with Authority, the authority to teach us the truth of God, the authority to protect us from all evil, from all harm and danger, but most importantly the authority to forgive our sins, so that when we act like the demons, or the people, or the scribes, Jesus forgive us welcomes us into His kingdom and teaches us to live in holiness and righteousness.