

August 12, 2018
Sunday Morning Service
Series: Luke
Community Baptist Church
643 S. Suber Road
Greer, SC 29650
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AFFIRMING SIGNS Luke 4:31-44

Satan's temptation of Jesus centered on whether Jesus would concede to Satan and do something to prove that He was indeed the Son of God. Last week we studied the event in Jesus's hometown of Nazareth, where Jesus taught that He was the Messiah sent from God to fulfill Isaiah's promise to deliver sinners from bondage to sin. The people were so enraged by Jesus's claim that they attempted to murder Him.

The argument throughout all four Gospel accounts of Jesus's earthly ministry turn on whether people will believe that He is who He said He was. If Jesus was not who He said He was, then He could not do what He was supposedly sent to do. What He was sent to do was tell the Good News that salvation from sin, deliverance from bondage to sin, is available because He came to pay sin's penalty by shedding His blood.

If Jesus was not who He said He was, it was impossible that He paid sin's price for our release. Furthermore, what good is accomplished if Jesus was indeed the Savior sent from heaven, who indeed paid the price for sin, who proved that the price is acceptable to God our Creator, if we don't believe it? The argument throughout the Gospel accounts is, "Jesus is the Son of God, the Savior from Sin." The challenge of all four Gospels is, "Believe it!" Over and over Matthew's, Mark's, Luke's and John's telling of the Good News lays down the challenge for us to believe Jesus.

Jesus's initial works in Capernaum were intended to validate the fact that He was God the Son, God in the flesh. Only God can cast out demons so effectively. Only God can heal all kinds of sicknesses with a word. Only God can teach truth with astonishing authority. All of

Jesus's authoritative preaching and teaching pointed to the same purpose—to affirm the Good News that the Savior from sin had come. All of Jesus's healing of sicknesses was to validate that He was the promised Savior. Every time Jesus rebuked and cast out a demon, it was to demonstrate that He was who He said He was.

And still we are left with Isaiah's question: "Who has believed our report?" After all the reports, records, and evidence of Jesus's authority displayed, still the world concludes that He was a brilliant teacher, a doer of good deeds, and maybe He even did a miracle or two. But He could not have been God! But if He was not God as He said He was, then He was dishonest. A dishonest man cannot be our Savior. Better for us to acknowledge that Jesus proved the truth about Himself by His teaching and mighty works.

Authority Over Demons.

Jesus taught in Capernaum on the Sabbath. To do that, Jesus had to go down to Capernaum. *And he went down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee. And he was teaching them on the Sabbath (v.31).* It is good for us to realize at this point that Luke's account is not strictly chronological. As we already mentioned, the events recorded in John 2-4 took place between Luke 4:13 and 4:14. Also the quote attributed to the people, "*What we have heard you did at Capernaum, do here in your hometown as well*" (Luke 4:23), must refer to miracles Jesus had already done in Capernaum. Possibly the teaching and works mentioned in our text were those works referred to.

Regardless of when exactly, at some point Jesus went "down" to Capernaum. Most geographic locations in Israel were "down" compared to Jerusalem. If Jesus left Jerusalem to go to Capernaum that would have been "down." But then, because Capernaum is situated at 700 feet below sea level, pretty much every place was higher.

Capernaum was a significant city. It was far enough away from Tiberius where Herod generally stayed to make life comfortable. Yet it was not a little hick town out in the sticks. Capernaum was a bustling seaside (lake side) town that boasted a harbor bolstered by a half mile long promenade, a stone wall eight feet thick. Multiple boat docks extended into the Sea of Galilee.

We know that it was important enough to justify a detachment of Roman soldiers garrisoned in the city and led by a Centurion who kindly built a synagogue for the Jewish people (Luke 7:5). A major highway that connected the major trade route between the Mediterranean coastal plain and Damascus. Therefore, it was necessary to establish a tax office where Jesus met Matthew (Luke 5:27).

This is where Jesus established “home base” during His ministry (especially the Galilean ministry). As was His custom, Jesus taught on the Sabbath. This was not an open-air meeting, but Jesus taught in the synagogue (v.33). Also, this was not the synagogue which lies in ruin in Capernaum today, which some guides errantly identify as this one in which Jesus taught. Actually, the ruins of the synagogue in Capernaum are from a 4th century synagogue.

Jesus taught, and people were astonished at His teaching. *They were astonished at his teaching, for his word possessed authority (v.32)*. Jesus’s teaching demonstrated an authority the official teachers of Israel did not convey. This caused the people to be astonished. The Greek word translated *astonished* means to drive out or strike with a blow. Therefore, in the most common vernacular, Jesus’s teaching blew the people’s minds.

In that setting, a demon obeyed Jesus. It strikes me as a bit strange that a demon-possessed man was at the service. While Jesus was in the process of teaching, a demon-possessed man cried out. *And in the synagogue there was a man who had the spirit of an unclean demon, and he cried out with a loud voice (v.33)*.

Reading the Gospel accounts, we might conclude that demon influence and demon possession was always rampant in the ancient days. However, there really is not much mention of demons and their work in the Old Testament. Probably the “fallen angels” (sons of God) who indwelt men and cohabited with women before the flood were demons (Genesis 6:2). Satan might have done his dastardly deeds against Job through these spirit beings. Demons are alluded to in Leviticus 17:7 (goat demons), Deuteronomy 32:17 (Israelites sacrificed to demons), and Psalm 106:37 (they sacrificed their sons and daughters to demons).

There is no specific mention of demon possession in the Epistles after the church history of Acts. Though the influence of

demons is acknowledged. Paul warned the Corinthian believers that to sacrifice to idols is to sacrifice to demons (1 Corinthians 10:20). Paul warned that in latter times people will resort to teaching of demons (1 Timothy 4:1). And James reminds us that even demons believe in God (James 2:19). That is not a lot of information about demons compared to the Gospels.

When God the Son was on earth, there was extreme demonic activity. Almost all references to demon possession are in the Gospels and Acts. This should not be surprising since the Kingdom of Righteousness was at hand, because the Righteous King was at hand. The ever-present, perfect righteousness did not bode well for Satan and his demons. Satan and his demons were highly agitated at Jesus’s presence. People will experience the same kind of scenario, the extreme demonic activity, during the Great Tribulation in the last days.

So, at some point while Jesus was teaching, the demon in the synagogue screamed at Jesus. It seems likely that it too felt the authority with which Jesus spoke. No longer able to stand Jesus’s righteous authority, it screamed two questions and an affirmation. As it screamed out the demon identified Jesus for who He was. *“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” (v.34)*. “What have you to do with us?” means, “We have nothing to do with each other. Why are you harassing us?” Notice that one demon is speaking (“I know”) but he speaks of many demons (“we”). All of the demons were well aware that Perfect Righteousness was among them.

The second question the demons posed was “Have you come to destroy us.” This was preceded by the affirmation, “I know you are the Holy One of God.” Even God’s people fear greatly when they come face to face with the righteousness of God in Christ. How much more demons who know that Jesus Christ will cast them into the lake of fire forever.

Jesus rebuked the demon. *But Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be silent and come out of him!” And when the demon had thrown him down in their midst, he came out of him, having done him no harm (v.35)*. Jesus did not repeat a mantra, no incantations, no formula like “professional exorcists” use. Jesus did not even quote Scripture. His authoritative word was sufficient to release the victim from the power

of the demon. The demon had no choice but to obey. No debates, no deals, no negotiations. But showing its power, the demon cast down the victim.

It was just the one demon who was the synagogue attendee. At the same time, many demons recognized Jesus as the Christ. They vocally acknowledged Jesus's divinity. *And demons also came out of many, crying, "You are the Son of God!" (v.41a)*. This kind of miracle became a common part of Jesus's kind works. A quick survey of the Gospels reveals that the majority of Jesus's ministry was characterized by: 1) authoritative teaching; 2) authoritative healing of disease; and 3) authoritative release from demonic control. Isn't that what Jesus promised in Nazareth that He had come to do? *"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed" (Luke 4:18)*.

All the demons recognized Jesus and Jesus rebuked all the demons. *But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew that he was the Christ (v.41b)*. They all knew He was the Christ, the Son of God and said so. On one hand, it is ironic that the demons accepted without question Jesus's divinity while worldly wise humans did not. On the other hand, Jesus is not glorified by the testimony of demons. That is why He forbid them from speaking.

As might be expected, word about Jesus spread. Why wouldn't it when the people were so amazed. *And they were all amazed and said to one another, "What is this word? For with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits, and they come out!" (v.36)*. The wording here means that the people were dumbfounded. No one they had ever known could command demons with authority and power. This was something different, something new. Matthew noted, *And when the demon had been cast out, the mute man spoke. And the crowds marveled, saying, "Never was anything like this seen in Israel" (Matthew 9:33)*.

People talked. *And reports about him went out into every place in the surrounding region (v.37)*. No doubt the talk was like, "Wow! This guy has amazing power!" Or maybe they even feared this Jesus of Nazareth. But how many believed the wonderful truth that by His

authoritative word, Jesus could command sin to depart? This is the important picture of Jesus doing exorcisms. He proved He has authority to dismiss the author of sin, the agent of sin, and the effects of sin. We rejoice to place our implicit trust in Jesus to do what we cannot do. We are by nature slaves to sin, incapable of bringing about our deliverance. But with a word, Jesus dismisses sin authority over us when we confess our sin and, by faith, embrace His work in our behalf.

Authority Over the Effects of Sin.

Also while He was in Capernaum, Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law. That was within the context of many people asking for help. *And he arose and left the synagogue and entered Simon's house. Now Simon's mother-in-law was ill with a high fever, and they appealed to him on her behalf (v.38)*. The illness Peter's mother-in-law experienced could have been any number of diseases. Because the city was located at such a low level, mosquito-borne diseases were common. Malaria was probably common. And there is little doubt that common sicknesses we know and experience were intensified due to lack of medical knowledge.

The pronoun "they" in this verse must refer to family and friends. They had seen Jesus's authoritative word dismiss demonic possession. Could this same Jesus not speak a word and dismiss a sickness? Would this not be within the scope of Messiah's work of release (4:18)? Healing a disease is very much like restoring sight to the blind. It is possible Jesus had not called Simon (or Andrew, James, John) as disciples yet.

How would Jesus help a diseased person? The same way He helped demon-possessed people. Jesus exercised authority. *And he stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her, and immediately she rose and began to serve them (v.39)*. It is interesting that Jesus did not address the victim, but rebuked the fever. It is almost as though the fever was some kind of a being. Notice that the same word *rebuke* is used to describe Jesus's authority over sickness and over demons (vv.35,41). The Greek word is *epitimao*, which means to strongly censure, rebuke, or admonish. Only the one in authority is able to

successfully admonish or censure. The demons never responded, “Says who?” Nor can sickness.

Surely word about Jesus healing Peter’s mother-in-law spread quickly which gave opportunity for Jesus to display authority over many sicknesses. Friends brought many diseased people to Jesus. *Now when the sun was setting, all those who had any who were sick with various diseases brought them to him (v.40a).*

This was simply a case of people recognizing a solution to their problem. We should never conclude that all the people who brought their sick friends and relatives to Christ had faith in Him. They were no more followers of Christ by faith than the fickle bread-seekers who chased Jesus around the lake. Sure it is nice to have friends and family members healed, but more important is to trust Christ implicitly. If Jesus is the Christ, He is the Lord. If He is the Lord, let Him be Lord.

Because He is compassionate, Jesus healed all of the people who were brought to Him. *And he laid his hands on every one of them and healed them (v.40b).* So the grace and mercy of our Lord. He had compassion on the seek and needy. *When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them and healed their sick (Matthew 14:14).* He has compassion on us who are spiritual beggars in need of the Good Shepherd. Jesus is still the compassionate Shepherd who, *When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd (Matthew 9:36).*

But we must also admit that Jesus did not heal every disease in the world at the time. Nor did He even heal every disease He witnessed. Nor did He heal some of the great saints – like Paul’s thorn. Nor does He still. Eventually, most of us will die from disease. Our Lord heals diseases according to His will, His timing, for His glory. That was Jesus’s explanation for the man who was born blind: *“Jesus answered, “It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him” (John 9:3)*

The Authoritative Word.

Jesus’s words conveyed authority to the listeners. The people were astonished. Go back to the beginning of the text and read, *And*

he went down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee. And he was teaching them on the Sabbath, and they were astonished at his teaching (vv.31-32a). Again the people had never seen anything like the work Jesus did. However, the specific issue here was Jesus’s teaching. The people’s response was much like their response when Jesus finished the Sermon on the Mount according to Matthew’s record. *And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes (Matthew 7:28-29).* The people were astonished at Jesus’s authority *for his word possessed authority (v.32b).*

Jesus’s word even held authority over demonic powers. *And they were all amazed and said to one another, “What is this word? For with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits, and they come out!” And reports about him went out into every place in the surrounding region (vv.36-37).* We are not surprised that the people were amazed at Jesus’s authority and power as He displayed it in word.

But we need to stop and consider “What is this word?” “This Word” was the authoritative preaching, the authority to cast out demons and the authority to heal sicknesses. The world still marvels as “this word” when we try to explain how we have been born again. Yet faith still comes by hearing and hearing by “this word” of God.

Preaching the authoritative word was Jesus’s purpose. *And the people sought him and came to him, and would have kept him from leaving them (v.42b).* What did the people desire that drove them to seek Him? The entire Jesus story reveals that the people desired personal, physical benefit. They were convinced that life was about them. Dying to self and taking up their cross to follow Jesus never entered their minds. They were glad that Jesus’s authoritative word brought physical benefit to them.

No wonder Jesus often went to a desolate place. *And when it was day, he departed and went into a desolate place (v.42a).* He needed to have respite from the people. He needed to be strengthened because He was sent to preach. Sometimes Jesus escaped the crowds in order to talk to the Heavenly Father (Mark 1:35). Sometimes Jesus escaped the crowds to get rest because He was human. If we are going to serve the Lord effectively (like preach the good news), we will need to escape the crowds.

Strengthened through communion with the Father, Jesus preached the good news. The people wanted Jesus to stay in Capernaum and continue to meet their needs. *But he said to them, "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose." And he was preaching in the synagogues of Judea (vv.43-44).*

How instructive it is for us to read that Jesus, the King of Righteousness, must *evangelize (euangelizo)*. He had to go from town to town telling the good news of the kingdom of God. The good news is that the King has come and paid the price in order to set His people free from slavery to sin. He was sent to declare the good news. When He completed the Heavenly Father's task, He turned the same ministry over to us His followers.

Jesus did exactly what He came to do. In the process, He declared His authority over the author of sin, the effects of sin, and the agents of sin. He still evangelizes through His Word as He has committed it to us. Do you trust Him enough to expect Him to speak through His Word with authority?