

Mark 1:21-28

²¹They went to Capernaum; and when the sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught. ²²They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. ²³Just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, ²⁴and 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.” ²⁵But Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be silent, and come out of him!” ²⁶And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him. ²⁷They were all amazed, and they kept on asking one another, “What is this? A new teaching—with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.” ²⁸At once his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee.

Who has authority in your life? The government makes rules and laws that we must follow. Money certainly has authority in a lot of people's lives. Political figures seem to have a lot of authority over some people who will do anything for that figure, even if it is wrong. Of course, when you worked or if you still work, your boss has authority over what you did or do on your job. In a family dynamic, sometimes the man is considered the authority figure, yet other times men joke that the wife really has all the power. Your own moral compass and internal meter of right and wrong should have some authority in your life. But who ultimately has authority in your life?

If you call yourself a Christian, as all of us sitting here do, the answer should unequivocally be Jesus. But, is it?

The authority of Jesus is a central theme in Christian theology and belief. Because Jesus was both fully human and fully divine, there are different kinds of authority that He possessed and still possesses today, even after His death.

Let's look at different kinds of authority that Jesus possesses:

Divine Authority: Christians believe that Jesus possesses divine authority as the Son of God. In the New Testament, Jesus often refers to God as His Father, emphasizing a unique and intimate relationship that signifies His divine origin and authority. In other words, Jesus has as much authority as God himself. The creator of all life. If someone doesn't allow God to be the ultimate authority in their life then it is easy for Satan to find that weakness and capitalize on whatever opening you may have in your heart. People's minds and souls crave to be filled, so if

yours are not filled with the divine authority of Jesus, then you risk not only how you act and live in this world, but also your salvation.

Jesus is regarded as a supreme teacher, and His teachings, as recorded in the Gospels, are considered authoritative and transformative. The Sermon on the Mount, for example, is a collection of Jesus' teachings that has had a profound impact on Christian ethics and morality.

Therefore, Jesus has teaching authority. If you don't follow the teachings of Jesus, which includes loving all people and spreading the message of the good news of the Kingdom of Heaven, then your life will be less than it could be. Even during difficult times, which all humans face, knowing that Jesus and His words have authority in your life brings you comfort and peace. Imagine the chaos and unrest in a person's life who doesn't have the words of Jesus to comfort them!

Jesus demonstrated authority over nature, sickness, and even death through His miracles. The Gospels record various instances where Jesus heals the sick, calms storms, and raises the dead, and casts out demons, such as in today's gospel. These miracles showcase His authority over all aspects of creation, including authority over demons and thus Satan himself. It is when we don't allow Jesus to have this authority in our lives that we get into trouble. It is when we forget who is in control that we sin. When we let our own minds have authority over our thoughts and actions, we inevitably fall away from the best path in life. We follow corrupt political leaders, we get greedy for more money and possessions, and we lose touch with who we were created to be.

Jesus also has authority in forgiving sins. In the Gospels, Jesus claims the authority to forgive sins, something

traditionally associated with God alone. This is evident in stories such as the healing of the paralytic in Mark 2:1-12: “A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home. They gathered in such large numbers that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. Some men came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus by digging through it and then lowered the mat the man was lying on. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, “Son, your sins are forgiven.” Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, “Why does this fellow talk like that? He’s blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?” Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, “Why are you thinking these things? Which is easier: to

say to this paralyzed man, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up, take your mat and walk’? But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.” So he said to the man, “I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.” He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, “We have never seen anything like this!”

Some authorities that Jesus has that we don’t often think about include authority over His own sacrificial death, authority over His own resurrection and authority over The Kingdom of God. We see the portrayal of Jesus suffering as He anticipates and experiences His own death and often think that His death was something done *to* Him by the Roman authorities. However, remember that Jesus is God, and God was in control. Therefore, God made this sacrifice for us. The crucifixion of Jesus is understood by Christians as a voluntary act that demonstrates His

authority over sin and death. Through His sacrificial death, Jesus provides redemption and reconciliation between humanity and God. By the same token, the resurrection of Jesus is a pivotal event in Christianity. His victory over death is seen as a demonstration of divine authority and a promise of eternal life for those who believe in Him. And, Christians anticipate the return of Jesus, during which He will establish His kingdom in its fullness. This future event underscores Jesus' ultimate authority as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

The last authority that Jesus has in this world is that of judging others. According to Christian beliefs, Jesus has the authority to judge the living and the dead. This is based on biblical passages such as John 5:22 which states, “Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son”. Notice that neither Jesus nor God

gives us any authority to judge others. So why do we continue to do so, day after day? With gossip, snide comments about someone else's lifestyle or choices, blatant discrimination, bigotry and racism that occurs every day, we as humans certainly think we have the authority to judge others. But, we don't. And when we do, we are making the fissures in our hearts wider in order for Satan to weasel his way in.

As you can see, if you call yourself a Christian, it should be Jesus and Jesus alone who has authority over your life. Your thoughts and actions should always go through a "Jesus filter" so-to-speak. Like back when the big craze was to wear WWJD - what would Jesus do - bracelets and t-shirts. As trite as they were, they did remind of who is actually in charge. So, the next time you are faced with a decision, a challenge or just an action, ask yourself, "What

would Jesus do?” Because if He truly is the authority in your life, you will try to follow in His footsteps. Let us pray.

Heavenly Father,

We pray that you remind us, every day, who should really be in charge of our lives. We know that it should be Jesus. But, we are pitiful sinners who often forget that He should have 100% authority over us. We get greedy, we get selfish, we get complacent in our faith. It is then that Satan tries to sneak into our lives and take over. We need the strength of 10,000 men to help combat this. We need to keep Jesus at the center of every action we take and in every thought that we think. Help us to always remember that. In His name we pray, Amen.