

With Authority

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Date: 12 September 2021

Preacher: Matthew Capone

[0 : 00] a group of women who traveled with him who apparently had financial means. And they supported him, it tells us, I think it's in verse 3 of Luke chapter 8, they supported him out of those means.

So the Bible highlights for us that women played a special role in Jesus' ministry. One of their roles was supporting him financially. That, by the way, is part of the reason we believe it's appropriate for missionaries when they're going out to ask for support.

So Jesus was a real man. He needed money just like you need money. Things didn't appear for him out of thin air during his ministry, but instead he had people who support him, just like we continue now 2,000 years later to support those who go out in ministry.

With that, we're going to turn to our passage today. We're in Mark chapter 1, verses 21 through 28, and we're going to continue to ask our two questions that we've been looking at, which is, who is Jesus and how do we respond to him?

You'll notice in this passage, again, that these are not questions that I pulled out of thin air, but they are actually the questions that the gospel of Mark itself is asking. In this passage, we're going to hear people say or ask, who is this?

[1 : 07] And so the questions that the audience of Mark is asking are the same ones that we're asking. With that, we're going to jump right in here. We're in Mark chapter 1, starting at verse 21. You can turn with me in your Bible.

You can turn on your phone. You can turn in your worship guide near the inn. No matter where you go, remember that this is God's word. God tells us that his word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path, which means that God has not left us to stumble alone in the dark, but instead he's given us his word to show us the way to go.

And so that's why we read now, starting at verse 21. And they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath, he entered the synagogue and was teaching. And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority and not as the scribes. And immediately was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit. And 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. But Jesus rebuked him, saying, Be silent and come out of him. And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying out with a loud voice, came out of him.

[2 : 18] And they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, What is this? A new teaching with authority. He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.

And at once, his fame spread everywhere, throughout all the surrounding region of Galilee. I invite you to pray with me as we come to this portion of God's word.

Let's pray. Our Father in heaven, we thank you that you haven't left us alone, but you have given us your Son in the flesh, and you've given us this gospel that we would learn about him, that we would know him, and that we would respond to him.

We ask that you would help us do that this morning, that you would show us more clearly who Jesus is, in his glory and his beauty, and you would also show us more clearly how we can love him, and follow him, and serve him.

We thank you that that love and that service doesn't earn anything from you, and it doesn't prove anything to you, but instead, it is only by your grace. And so we ask these things in Jesus' name.

[3 : 24] Amen. Amen. When we began our journey in the Gospel of Mark, you may remember we were in the desert for quite some time. For verses 1 through 13, there was John the Baptist who was out in the desert, and then there was Jesus who was out in the desert, and we made this transition from the desert to Galilee, which would have been in the northwest of Israel, in verses 14

and 15, when Jesus begins his earthly ministry.

So Jesus begins preaching in Galilee, and then we saw, last time we were in Mark, verses 16 through 20, he continues calling his disciples to him, also, remember, by the Sea of Galilee, which is this body of water in the north of Israel.

That's why we have the region of Galilee. It's next to the Sea of Galilee. Jesus is continuing that here in this passage. We see in verse 21, it tells us, they went into Capernaum. So Jesus has called these men to himself, and now they're traveling as a group.

I mentioned last time that Jesus is with us. He's calling these people, and he remains with them. He's not calling them to do it alone. That's the pattern we see here. Jesus is traveling with them into Capernaum, and he's in the same area that he was before.

So if you think about the Sea of Galilee, Capernaum would be, well, the way I'm looking at it, northwest for you would be right here. So he's right along the sea. Capernaum would have been and is still a sea town.

[4 : 45] It is right on the water. If you go there today, you can see the 4th century synagogue, and you can walk from there right to the seashore. It's right there. It's a port town. It doesn't surprise us then that Jesus calls fishermen and immediately goes to this area, and we see the first thing he's doing here is he's going in to the synagogue.

It tells us immediately on the Sabbath, he entered the synagogue and was teaching. Now the tradition then would not have been that someone barged into a synagogue and just started giving a lecture. In the same way, you would not expect someone to simply walk into Cheyenne Mountain on a Sunday morning and just take over the pulpit.

So our assumption here is, most likely, Jesus had been working in Capernaum for some time. He was well known, and he was invited to speak in this synagogue. In fact, if you're familiar with Jesus' ministry, you'll know that Capernaum was the city that was called his base of operations during his ministry in Galilee.

So Jesus is constantly coming to Capernaum, returning there. We'll find out next week, this is where Andrew and Simon live. So this is part of his home base here in Capernaum.

And apparently he's become well known enough that he's invited to teach in the synagogue. And this is where we find out that there's something different about Jesus. By the way, I forgot to tell you at the beginning, the two things we're looking at, you'll see the word authority is repeated in this passage.

[6 : 09] We're gonna see Jesus' authority in teaching, and we're gonna see Jesus' authority over evil. Jesus' authority in teaching, Jesus' authority over evil.

The first thing we see in this scene in the synagogue as Jesus is invited to teach is his authority in teaching. By the way, Capernaum was a large city, and so we would expect this to most likely be a large crowd.

There would have been a lot more people listening to Jesus than we have right here in this sanctuary this morning. And we're told the very first thing that's important as Jesus is teaching, verse 22, they were astonished, for he taught them as one who had authority and not as the scribes.

In other words, Jesus is teaching in a way that's different than anything they've ever experienced before, and this power, this authority, is something that comes across probably in Jesus' content and also in Jesus' call.

It comes across his authority in the content and the call. We would expect that when the scribes were teaching, they may have been quoting this person or that person, giving different ideas or theories about what the texts mean.

[7 : 15] Jesus has no need to do that. He can teach directly from the scriptures without referring to anyone else, knowing that he himself is the authority, giving the most direct and true application and preaching of these texts.

Jesus is able to speak as someone who knows what he's talking about, not because he studied it, but because he knows it intimately and deeply and personally. He is not referring to other authorities because he is the authority.

Jesus is not standing up in front of them and saying, well, on the one hand, this passage might mean this. On the other hand, it might mean that. You know, scholars disagree, but you know, isn't it interesting that we see this here in this text?

No, Jesus is speaking clearly and directly to these people in a way that hits them back on their heels, a way they're not expected, a way they're not used to, accustomed to from listening to the scribes teach.

Jesus is his own source. He doesn't need to quote anyone else. And so there's this freshness, there's this directness that comes with his teaching that they're not used to.

[8 : 23] We're not told the content of his teaching here, but we can guess because remember in verses 14 and 15, we're told the general summary of what Jesus was teaching. He's teaching that the kingdom of God has come near and he's calling people to repent and believe.

And so that's likely also what Jesus is teaching here as he's talking in the synagogue. He's likely telling them the kingdom of God is near, it's at hand, repent and believe. That would have been the other part of this that would have astonished them.

And Jesus' teaching with authority would have included his call here to repentance. And that's what makes sense, right? When we think of authorities, they're people who have power, who have control.

They're people who are going to tell us what to do. And so it's not just here that Jesus is speaking as his own source. He is speaking as someone who is calling people to act and respond.

Going along, right, with our questions. Who is Jesus? How do we respond to him? And so when it tells us in verse 22 that they were astonished at his teaching, what it is not saying is that they were so impressed with Jesus because he gave such a fascinating TED talk.

[9 : 33] Okay? They were not astonished in the sense that Jesus was just telling them things that were so interesting and so fascinating, although he may have. They were astonished in, as I mentioned, a being pushed back on their heels sort of way that this is a man who's impressive and scary and unnerving and unsettling.

He is speaking to them. He's probably speaking directly to their hearts and their consciences. He's exposing what's going on in their lives. He's calling them to change and repent and believe.

And we also, of course, know not just the fact that that might be scary and unnerving. We know the joy, right, of watching someone who can speak authoritatively about something. There's a reason that there are some videos on YouTube that have millions of views because the speaker is able to speak so clearly and directly to that situation.

Same is true of Jesus. He is speaking here with authority. And that gets to our challenge as people living today because we live in a culture now where we have a fundamental loss of trust in people who have authority.

And if we didn't have it before, we most likely have it now, right? We've lived over the last couple years with COVID. We've heard so-called experts after the fact telling us that they lied to us about certain things.

[10 : 57] We've had new facts come out. People maybe were very sincere and earnest. They weren't trying to lie to anyone. But we found out later that what we were told was wrong, right? I'm not saying everything was wrong, but I am saying that when it comes to our leaders and our politicians, whether on the right or the left, we as people are increasingly losing trust and confidence.

We are losing the ability to look at someone and say, man, I really believe that person is telling me the truth. There's one pastor a couple weeks ago who wrote this.

Authority is linked to the control of information and no one is in control of information anymore.

There is a vacuum of leadership and the difficulty is that nothing has arisen to fill the vacuum.

The temptation for American Christians is to think that our country is falling apart. Actually, no. It is the world that is falling apart.

This is a global crisis of authority. Brothers and sisters, I do not blame you for losing trust in the people who speak in the world around us.

[12 : 07] I don't blame you, as many of you have told me, for stopping to watch the news, stopping listening and watching because you don't believe any of it anymore. Or you know some of it's true, you just don't know what to believe and what not to believe.

As we come to this passage, the point is this. You may stop watching the news. Don't stop listening to Jesus. You may stop listening to the news.

Don't stop listening to Jesus. Jesus. He is still the one who tells us words that are true in a world filled with words that are not true.

Jesus is still the one that we can trust. Jesus doesn't lie to us. Jesus doesn't change his story from year to year. Jesus doesn't gaslight us.

He doesn't say one thing and then say another thing a month later and pretends he never said the first thing. and if you think about the people that lead our world today for many of them the story is always changing.

[13 : 14] It doesn't take long before the narrative shifts. It doesn't take long before there's new data and new information. When we look at our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ we can look back at 2,000 years of the testing of his words and know even more than the people who received these for the first time that he is true and reliable.

He is a real and true and trustworthy authority. The audience here knew that Jesus was telling them the truth.

How much more for us 2,000 years later? And so the point is this Jesus still speaks with authority on September the 12th 2021.

He is still the one in control and in charge. And that authority is not just his trustworthiness and his reliability.

It's also the fact that he is calling here for a response. Authority demands a response. That's part of the definition that someone who has authority is someone who's in control.

[14 : 21] There's someone who's able to tell us what to do. In other words as we look at Mark chapter 1 we are not engaging together in a book club. We're not going to make just fascinating observations and talk and then walk away as if nothing had happened.

No, this is a book that's meant to be believed and understood and obeyed. Jesus' authority is not just in his reliability and his trustworthiness but also that he calls us to do what he's commanded us to do.

That his commands are good and right and true. His teaching requires a response. Jesus is not sharing interesting ideas here. He is proclaiming and calling and telling and commanding.

That's what it means for him to speak and teach with an authority. And so we have to answer and listen to him. We have to hear him and respond to him.

Kids, you know the difference between your parents and other adults. You need to obey your parents. That does not mean you're required to obey all adults everywhere, right?

[15 : 30] That's ridiculous. When I was growing up, my mom spent a lot of time training us to correctly respond to stranger danger and one of the things she taught us is that if we were ever at a store and some adult separated us from our parents and was giving us a hard time, what we needed to do was to make a scene and here's how we were supposed to make a scene.

We would say very loudly, he is not my dad or she is not my mom which is our way of letting everyone know this person actually has no authority over me, right?

This person might be an adult, they might look like someone who is my parent, I want to make sure all of you know that they are not. And at that point the idea was that people would realize that something wrong was going on and other adults would come to help us, right?

There's this distinction between those who have true authority and false authority. Now I want you to imagine for a second that I decided I didn't do this by the way but I want you to imagine that I was a devious kid and I decided to flip the tables.

What if I decided in front of everyone to yell at my mom this is not my mother or to yell at my dad he is not my father?

[16 : 47] Chaos, right? The tables would be turned in the worst sort of way. Brothers and sisters when we say that Jesus is our authority we are saying that we have to answer to him.

He is actually our father. He is actually the one we have to listen to and answer and obey. When I was growing up one of the big questions that preachers like to ask was this when was the last time you stopped doing something or you started doing something because Jesus said so?

When was the last time you started doing something or stopped doing something because Jesus said so? Because the Bible told you to. In other words is Jesus actually an authority in your life?

When you read his words do you read them do you treat them as words of authority? Another way of asking it would be this. What do you wish that Jesus had never said?

What do you wish that Jesus had never said? What are you tempted to explain away or talk your way around? There's people who have made their careers out of explaining away Jesus' words.

[18 : 07] People who have made entire ministries out of talking around what Jesus has said clearly. Maybe it's what Jesus has taught us about rich entering the kingdom. Remember Jesus says it's easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.

Maybe that's what you wish Jesus had never said. Maybe it's Jesus teaching on divorce. Maybe it's what Jesus tells us about caring for the poor. Maybe it's Jesus' words about turning the other cheek.

For all of us there are our hits list, our favorite things that Jesus has said that we want to repeat over and over. And for all of us I believe if we're honest there's our ignore list.

The things that Jesus has said that we'd rather not think about. That we'd like to find neat and easy explanations for that Jesus really didn't mean it. But if Jesus is the one who speaks with authority, if he's the one that we can trust, and the one that we can believe, then we respond to him by obeying him.

We respond to him by listening to him. We respond to him by seeing our lives and our hearts changed in their direction. We want to be like Jesus' followers.

[19 : 24] In John chapter 6, Jesus is asking the twelve. It says here in verse 67, verse 66, it tells us, many of Jesus' disciples turned back and no longer walked with him.

So Jesus said to the twelve, do you want to go away as well? Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed and have come to know that you are the holy one of God.

Brothers and sisters, that's the response of the Christian. We look at Jesus and we say, no matter what you command us to do, we know that you alone have the words of life.

you're the only one who tells us what's true and only tells us what's true. You're the one we answer to and we obey. Who is Jesus?

He's the one who speaks with authority. How do we respond to him? We follow him and listen to him and obey him. Now, as we only read the beginning of this passage, we might be tempted to believe that Jesus' authority was only expressed in his words and his rhetorical skill.

[20 : 38] Thankfully, Mark doesn't leave us there. As we turn to the next section, we see Jesus' authority not just represented by words, but what he's able to do and change.

I don't want you to lose the story here. If you're an engaged reader, there's an anxiety that's meant to come with this next part of the story. If you're really in it, you should feel something maybe in the pit of your stomach.

What's happening here is similar to what would happen if I was preaching here on a Sunday morning and I want you to imagine that while I'm preaching, someone walks into the sanctuary, right, and they just start screaming and yelling.

What would you be feeling in that instance? Maybe you've been to an event where there's a speaker and someone interrupts, just walks into the auditorium and starts giving their own speech. This actually happened to me when I was in college.

I was listening to a man give a lecture in a very large auditorium. It was a special lecture. He was a special guest who had been flown in to speak to us and someone just wandered in and started yelling.

[21 : 40] Now what I was feeling in that moment, you might feel a variety of things. Some of you might just feel anxious. Some of you might be angry. Some of you might be checking to see if you truly were exercising your Second Amendment rights this morning.

There would be a lot of different things that would go through your mind. For me in that moment, I was thinking, do I need to leave this auditorium? Am I about to die? What's going to happen here? This is a very strange situation. That is what is going on in this passage. There's a complete disruption of Jesus' teaching. Let's not downplay this.

This man is screaming out, verse 23, in their synagogue, a man with an unclean spirit, and 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. In other words, he's saying, why are you here? What do you want?

[22 : 41] One person translates it this way, go away and leave me alone. Jesus, why are you here? We were doing fine before you were the guest preacher.

Everything was good before that. But now you are here disrupting things. What happens next year, it's easy for us to miss as modern readers, but those who were the original audience would have understood that this demon begins a power play with Jesus because there is common ideas about the practice of exorcism during this time.

One of the techniques that you would use if you wanted to gain control over someone, especially over a demon, is you would speak their name. It was really important to know the name of the demon here.

The demon is trying to turn the tables on Jesus. He begins a power struggle by saying his name. What do you have to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? I know who you are. In other words, I think I may actually be able to exercise authority and power over you.

I'm going to test and see if your speaking with authority has any match of being able to act and perform with authority. So there's an inversion here.

[23 : 53] The naming is supposed to come from the exorcist, not from the demon. And bringing in the name is a way of power. And so what comes next is even more surprising.

This demon throws out Jesus' name, right? What do we expect to happen in reverse? If Jesus is a good exorcist, what is he going to do? Jesus is going to say, oh, you think that's a big deal?

I know your name. Jesus doesn't say his name. Why? Because he doesn't need to.

Jesus doesn't call on any higher power. We're going to see demons cast out later in the Gospel of Mark. By those who follow Jesus, they're going to do it in Jesus' name. Jesus doesn't call on any name.

Jesus doesn't use, as we might expect if some people have pointed out, any incantation or spell. In other words, Jesus ignores all the rules. He does nothing that's supposed to give him an advantage.

[24 : 59] Jesus does nothing that's supposed to work because Jesus doesn't need to. That is how powerful Jesus is in this moment.

Jesus doesn't appeal or call to a higher power because Jesus is the higher power. Jesus doesn't need to use anyone's name because it is his name that they need to tremble at.

Jesus instead simply speaks with and by his own authority. Be quiet and leave. This is in the same vein of what I've told you before.

I used to say to some of my students, it's time for you to shut up and sit down. So verse 25, Jesus rebuked him. Be silent and come out of him.

What does this spirit do? Well, 26, he's silent and comes out of him. No matter what you've seen, no matter what these people in this passage have seen, they have not seen power like this.

[26 : 07] They have not known about power like this. Maybe they've heard of great exorcists who have the right incantation or spell or name. They're able to get the knowledge.

They're able to find out the identity of the demons so they can gain power. Jesus skips all of those things because Jesus has a power and authority over evil and demonic forces that has never been seen before.

Jesus has a power over evil and demonic forces like nothing else. Brothers and sisters, the same is true even now today.

Jesus is the one with the great and greatest power over evil. He is the one and the only one who is able to put an end to death and evil forever, once and for all.

The king is on the move. We are beginning to finally see how powerful this king is, how much he is actually able to do.

[27 : 10] One man says this, the coming of the king and the inauguration of his kingdom implied the destruction and end of the kingdom of darkness. Jesus here is showing that he has come to bring evil to an end once and for all.

He is not an exorcist, he is the exorcist. He is not a power, he is the power.

power. He is the power that doesn't need any tricks in his bag because his word is enough. And so that is why these people are able to say, what is this, a new teaching with authority?

For us, we respond to Jesus by recognizing how powerful he is. We recognize that as we submit to him and obey him.

we recognize that as we take comfort and joy and hope in knowing that there is no force that can stand against him. It's this same power that he's going to use to bring freedom to us from the bondage of evil.

[28 : 25] It's this same power that he's going to use one day to bring full and final freedom in this world. And so we trust and we hope in him. He is the only one who can put death to death.

Jesus is the only one who can defeat and end the kingdom of darkness. And that's what we're going to see later on in the Gospel of Mark. When Jesus dies on the cross and raises again from the dead, he also shows a power that no one else has.

He shows the power to defeat death. And so that's why the Apostle Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 15, then comes the end when he, that is Jesus, delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power.

For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. Jesus has ultimate power over evil in this world.

He will show it by ending even death itself. Who is Jesus? Jesus. He is the one with the greatest power.

[29 : 39] Power like we have never seen before. How do we respond to him? We love him. We obey him. We trust in him. We take hope in him.

In his first book, in the Chronicles of Narnia series, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, C.S. Lewis tells us the story of the Pevensie children who have to move away from their home because of the bombing during the World War.

They enter the world of Narnia and they quickly meet the Beaver family. When they meet the Beaver family, they have dinner with them. After they have dinner with them, they sit down to talk and they find out about this lion named Aslan who, of course, they've never heard of before because they've never been in Narnia before.

They have to ask, who is this person? Who is Aslan? Asked Susan. They begin to explain. Aslan is this great king. He's going to come back and he's going to make everything right.

There's this poem, wrong will be right when Aslan comes in sight. At the sound of his roar, sorrows will be no more. Lucy wants to know if Aslan's a man.

[30 : 48] She's surprised to find out that he's a lion. And so Susan has this final question. Oh, said Susan, I thought he was a man. Is he quite safe?

I shall feel rather nervous about meeting a lion. That you will, dearie, and no mistake, said Mrs. Beaver. If there's anyone who can appear before Aslan without their knees knocking, they're either braver than most or else just silly.

Then he isn't safe, said Lucy. Safe, said Mr. Beaver. Don't you hear what Mrs. Beaver tells you? Who said anything about safe?

Of course he isn't safe, but he's good. He is the king, I tell you. Brothers and sisters, Jesus is not safe.

He is the one who comes with authority. He comes with authority in his teaching. He comes with authority in his power over evil and darkness and sin.

[31 : 50] But he is good. Will you listen to him? Will you obey him? Will you follow him? Let's pray. Our Father in heaven, we thank you that you aren't safe, that you are dangerous and powerful enough to protect us from evil.

We ask that you would give us the confidence and the hope that comes from that, and you would give us the trust and obedience and submission to you that comes from knowing that you are the authority in this world and you are more powerful than anyone else.

We thank you that you showed your power, not in strength but in weakness, when Jesus died for us on the cross, taking the punishment that we deserved and raised from the dead so that we could live with him in new life.

We ask these things, thankful that we haven't done anything to earn them, but instead we ask them in Jesus' name. Amen. For our closing hymn, ■■■■■■■■.

Amen., amen.