

*The Fourth Sunday After Epiphany*

January 27, 2013

Amazing Grace Lutheran Church – Pastor Chip Wilke

Luke 4:20-32 – Epiphany 4

*Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, and he began by saying to them, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.” All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips. “Isn’t this Joseph’s son?” they asked. Jesus said to them, “Surely you will quote this proverb to me: ‘Physician, heal yourself! Do here in your hometown what we have heard that you did in Capernaum.’” “I tell you the truth,” he continued, “no prophet is accepted in his hometown. I assure you that there were many widows in Israel in Elijah’s time, when the sky was shut for three and a half years and there was a severe famine throughout the land. Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon. And there were many in Israel with leprosy in the time of Elisha the prophet, yet not one of them was cleansed—only Naaman the Syrian.” All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this. They got up, drove him out of the town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him down the cliff. But he walked right through the crowd and went on his way. Then he went down to Capernaum, a town in Galilee, and on the Sabbath began to teach the people. They were amazed at his teaching, because his message had authority.*

It has been said that the World War II dad had one of the biggest challenges when it came to parenting. He had been taught that authority was to be respected. It didn't matter who it was, whether it was their drill sergeant, their father, their teacher, or their president and commander-in-chief, all authorities were to be respected and obeyed. Then starting in the 60s here is where the turmoil over this one issue of authority seemed to trend in a whole different direction. Authority instead became something to be questioned. Teachers, police officers, college administrators, and anyone with authority was suspect. Rather than being honored, they were likely to face outright defiance and disrespect. And the conflict over differing views of authority at times boiled over, especially at home.

How would you say that people view authority today in 2013? I asked a couple people this week to tell me when they hear the word authority if they think of something positive or negative. If you guessed that they said negative you are right. We live in a time when, whether it is your teacher or the President, authority is to be questioned. We live in an age when people want no absolutes. People want to be their own boss and not have anyone tell them what to do or how to live. There are some who want to reject all authority no matter if it comes from the home, or the state, or even the Church. I googled “attitude toward authority” this week and found many others see this as well. One person had this to say: *“There are a lot of things about the current culture that bothers believers: sexual looseness, drugs, alcohol (abuse), homosexuality...etc. But what bothers me the most is the culture’s lack of respect for authority.”* So how do we feel about authority? Have we been swayed by the masses? I want us to prayerfully consider our attitudes and actions regarding authority. I want us to especially consider this in light of this truth from God's Word: **Jesus Speaks with Authority.**

This Word of God before us continues the lesson from our Gospel when Jesus returned to His hometown of Nazareth. Last week you heard Jesus' message to them – a message where Jesus reveals Himself as the Son of God and the Messiah God had promised. This is what Jesus is clearly saying when he tells them: ***“Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”*** Now today we see how the people here in Nazareth react to this message. There was no denying that Jesus' Word sounded different from any they had heard. ***“All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips.”*** There was a beautiful, admirable, and delightful quality to the words Jesus spoke to them. They could not deny how Jesus spoke with wisdom & authority. But then they began to ask: ***“Isn't this Joseph's son?”*** Isn't this the boy that was raised by the carpenter right here in town? Though His words sounded good and although He pointed them to God's Word & His message was powerful, they asked: ***“Why should we listen to Him?”***

Jesus, knowing even what was in the minds of the people, says to them: ***“Surely you will quote this proverb to me: ‘Physician, heal yourself! Do here in your hometown what we have heard that you did in Capernaum.’”*** ***“I tell you the truth,” he continued, “no prophet is accepted in his hometown.”*** Jesus says they will tell Him to prove Himself like they might ask a doctor to use medicine on Himself first to show that it works before they trust him. They want Jesus to show them – with mighty miracles like they heard He did in other places. And Jesus quotes a proverb that states a truth that is often seen - that people do not want to listen to the word of someone they have known since youth. People have trouble listening to and respecting the authority of one that came from among them.

Jesus points to two examples to warn the people. By rejecting Jesus they would be missing out on the blessings He came to provide for them. Jesus points out how Elijah during the time of a famine under wicked King Ahab was not sent to any of the widows in Israel. Instead, he was welcomed in by a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon. This non-Israelite woman and her son received the blessings of housing this prophet of God. The other example is the high commander Naaman who traveled to Israel to see Elisha to be cured of his leprosy. While there were other Israelites with leprosy too at that time, only this Syrian, after some convincing, listened to the prophet of God and was cleansed.

And the people here in Jesus' hometown understood the point Jesus was making. Listen to their reaction: ***“All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this. They got up, drove him out of the town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him down the cliff.”*** How dare this son of Joseph speak words of judgment about them! They refused to listen. They did not respect Jesus' authority whatsoever. They attempt to throw Jesus off a cliff and kill Him.

What happens when Jesus speaks to us in a similar way? Everything God tells us in His Word is Jesus speaking to us with authority. When God tells us that He alone has the right to end life, or that the marriage bed is to be kept pure, or that we are not to lie, steal, or give others a bad name He is speaking to us with authority. Every command of God or doctrine in the Bible is to be respected and obeyed because Jesus speaks with authority. And how many of these commands have we at one time or another wanted to take and throw off the edge of a cliff? How many times by our words and actions have we told Jesus we don't respect His authority? How many times have we told God we

don't want to follow what His Word says because we want to do what we want to do and live how we want to live? Jesus also is speaking a warning here to us, many of us who have known Jesus by faith for some time. The world, the devil, and our own sinful nature are constantly working to lead to a brow of a cliff and throw Jesus out of our lives.

While Jesus' own people attempted this here, the One who speaks with authority showed He is more than just words as He "**walked right through the crowd and went on his way.**" Miraculously, Jesus uses His power as true God to escape this angry mob. After having people try to kill Him for speaking God's Word, listen to the astounding thing Jesus does next. "**Then he went down to Capernaum, a town in Galilee, and on the Sabbath began to teach the people. They were amazed at his teaching, because his message had authority.**" If I preached a sermon some Sunday and afterward you dragged me out of here and tried to throw me off a cliff, I think I'd probably be ready to take a long vacation and not come back. But Jesus keeps going. He keeps speaking the Word of God, a message with authority. He keeps teaching. He preaches the good news and wants others to receive the blessing He came to provide. Love for the lost keeps Jesus moving to more people – to another town – with the same message. What an example for us. If Jesus, true God, was rejected when He preached the Word, will we not at times be rejected too when we try to reach others with the truth of God's Word? Like Jesus may love for the lost keep us speaking and working to tell more and more people!

So how do we feel about authority? More specifically how do we feel when Jesus speaks with authority? I pray we understand just how good it truly is to hear that Jesus speaks to us with authority. For it we pick and choose His Words, if we undermine the authority of God's Word, if we get rid of Jesus' authority then we miss out on the blessings Jesus came to provide. If we don't allow Jesus to speak with authority about our sin, then how can He speak with authority about our salvation? For Jesus spoke with authority when He saw that paralytic lying there on the mat and said: "**Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven**" (Matthew 9). As Jesus took all our sins upon Himself, as Jesus shed His blood on the cross, suffered, and was about to die so we don't have to die eternally, Jesus spoke with authority when He declared: "**It is finished**" (John 19). When Jesus, who Himself triumphed over the grave, looked into the grave of Lazarus He spoke, when Jesus comes again one day and stands outside our graves He will speak, with authority: "**Come out!**" Aren't we glad Jesus speaks with authority? It is actually a wonderful thing to have our Savior Jesus tell us what to do and how we should live!

All authority is established by God for our good – whether in the home, or the state, or the church. These authorities are to be respected and obeyed. But there is really only one true authority from which all others exist – God. Jesus spoke with that authority right here in this Word. Jesus keeps speaking with that authority in this Word. In fact, before Jesus ascended back into heaven He declared: "**All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.**" But what Jesus says next tells us a whole lot about how Jesus uses His authority. How many of you know what Jesus said right after telling us He has all authority on heaven and earth? "**Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age**" (Matthew 28). Our Savior has spoken. Time for us to get busy! Amen.

