

The Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany
February 5, 2012
Amazing Grace Lutheran Church – Pastor Chip Wilke

Mark 1:21-28 - Epiphany 4

They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law. Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an evil spirit cried out, “What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!” “Be quiet!” said Jesus sternly. “Come out of him!” The evil spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek. The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, “What is this? A new teaching—and with authority! He even gives orders to evil spirits and they obey him.” News about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee. (NIV)

Isn't it amazing how quickly news is spread in our world today? You make an update on *facebook* and a couple hundred friends immediately have the announcement. Or you can go the already more old fashion route and send out that same news by email, but now you might do it from your ipod or blackberry. Getting news to people is easy because almost everyone carries a cell phone if you need to tell them something. By now most people have even learned how to send and receive instant text messages. Then there are people who follow or send out tweets on twitter – giving up to the second thoughts or news on the very latest.

It is really remarkable how many ways there is to spread news - to get a message to someone – to give people information. It also strikes me as to how much of this news is so insignificant. Do I really need to know where a certain celebrity ate lunch? I could probably get through my day okay without hearing the news that the roast beef sandwich was great.

This morning we are going to talk about getting out a message – a message we want to reach as many people as possible. We want to use whatever means we can to share this information. This news is of the upmost significance. My prayer is as we witness Christ's amazing teaching and power we, like the people in Galilee, quickly and eagerly: **Spread the news of Jesus. Speak His marvelous words. Tell of His wonderful works.**

Jesus just called Andrew, Peter, James and John to follow Him telling these fishermen they would now be fishers of men. Now we read Jesus and these disciples ***“went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach.”*** Capernaum was an important city located near the Sea of Galilee, and often served as the center of Jesus' Galilean ministry. On the Sabbath there Jesus went into the synagogue. Synagogues gave the Jews a place where they could study the Scriptures and worship. Any city that had at least ten married Jewish men was allowed to establish a synagogue. Since the synagogues had no single ordained minister or pastor, they invited some rabbi (teacher) or scribe to speak. On this Sabbath day of worship Jesus is invited to speak so He begins to teach the people.

Although Jesus' message is not recorded for us here, the reaction to it is - the people "***are amazed at his teaching.***" Literally, they are astonished or dumbfounded. Although we don't know exactly what Jesus says, we are not surprised by this reaction, are we? For we too have been amazed at what Jesus has taught us. Why? "***Because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law.***" I think all of us would agree to the value of sitting and listening to one who is an expert in a certain area. We really enjoy listening to one with a great amount of expertise. How would we like God Himself to be our guest preacher this morning? Wouldn't that be awesome! That is what these people had in this synagogue! They sat at the feet of the Word incarnate and the listened to the One whom has all authority in heaven and on earth. I'd believe we'd enjoy hearing God's Word from the Prophet greater than Moses who knows the Scriptures perfectly?

There is another reason people enjoyed Jesus' teaching. He did not speak to them like the "***teachers of the law.***" These teachers had a certain amount of authority but they make sure everyone knew it by their outward demeanor. The teachers of the law were also well versed in the Scriptures, but they were so busy explaining the things about Scripture that they missed Scripture's message. They had much to say about tithes, outward ceremonies, doctrines of men, and the traditions of the elders. They burdened consciences of people without providing true rest for peoples' souls through the gospel. They talked at people rather than talk to people.

Now compare this with the words of Jesus. He proclaimed and applied the law to peoples' consciences. He showed people their sin. Then above all Jesus never failed to offer the grace and mercy of God as He invited the sinner to come to Him. His word was different. Jesus spoke right to people. He had compassion for people as He looked at them as sheep without a shepherd. His words are full of life and light! He always rightly applied law and gospel. He always has the right words ready to guide a lost soul. It is no wonder these people, it is no wonder we, consider Jesus' words so marvelous. Amazed at this new teaching the: "***news about Jesus spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee.***"

Doesn't our amazement over Jesus' teaching lead us to do the same? Jesus speaks to us like no one else. His words still are the very words of God. Jesus doesn't speak to us to place burdens onto our shoulders, but He lifts our burdens from us! He takes away our sins. He comforts our spirits. He makes us pure and holy in God's sight. He has washed us from our sins in His own blood. This is news worth getting out and words worth speaking. I am sure there is someone you know that needs to hear them. Who do you know that is going through a rough time? Who do you know that needs God to speak to them through His Word right now? Who do you know who has been listening to only teachers of the law, who is still burdened by their sins? Who in your life needs Jesus in their life? Who is missing out on the love of Christ? Do whatever and anything you can to speak Jesus' marvelous words to them.

It is interesting how quiet the devil is when false doctrine is taught, how silent Satan is when the teachers of the law are telling people they must get right with God by what they do. But as soon as Jesus appears with the gospel, the devil is enraged and does all he can to hinder the message. For as Jesus spoke: "***Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an evil spirit cried out, 'What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One***

of God!” The devil confesses what on the surface is truth; but he does it with evil intent, to hinder the work of the glorious gospel. Who, after all, wants to be confessed by the devil? At the very least the confession of the demons would confuse people. So Jesus says in a stern voice: **“Be Quiet! Come out of him!”** And at His command this **“evil spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek.”** Luke’s account adds that the spirit came out of the man **“without injuring him.”** Just like that Jesus silences the devil and drives him away.

Again the people are astonished. They ask each other: **“What is this? A new teaching –and with authority! He even gives orders to evil spirits and they obey him. News about him spread over the whole region of Galilee.”** They had never seen anyone like Jesus before, first with His words, now with His power. This man can heal the sick, give sight to the blind, and make the lame walk. This man commands obedience from evil spirits. No wonder news spread about Jesus so quickly.

We too have witnessed the wonderful works of Jesus and watched as Jesus proves Himself to be the Son of God by His miracles. Yet, dear friends, we have witnessed even greater. We have seen our Savior’s ultimate triumph over Satan. That was when the devil struck the heel of Christ with his most vicious blow as all sin and guilt was laid on Him as Jesus stumbled to the cross. But it was there Jesus won our salvation. Jesus defeated the devil once and for all by His suffering and death on the cross for sinners, for us, and by His resurrection from the dead. Satan can no longer accuse us. Jesus is our righteousness. Jesus paid for all our sins. Jesus is stronger than the devil and again and again Jesus’ Word silences the devil and drives him away. There are no works more wonderful than this!

These wonderful works are worth telling – to everyone. They are way more super than any football game! This is especially true of the most important work of Jesus which led Jesus to the cross to save sinners, to save us. Isn’t spreading this message really the work we as God’s people at Amazing Grace come together to do? As we install our church officers today I pray we think about the different gifts and roles all of us have as a body of believers. I pray we use these gifts and fulfill our roles with this purpose in mind – to spread the news of Jesus. I pray we do everything in our power to get out the good news about a Savior—a Savior who speaks words unlike anyone else and a Savior who does works so wonderful on our behalf because He doesn’t want the devil to have us but wants us in heaven with Him. Now this is even news worth tweeting. Amen.