

## Teaching with Authority

The gospel for this coming Sunday (Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany) is Mark 1:21-28. This text follows on the heels of Jesus calling his first disciples. It takes place on the shore of the Sea of Galilee near the city of Capernaum. Capernaum was at the intersection of several trade routes which made it an ideal base for carrying the gospel into the regions of Galilee and beyond. The sense of urgency is expressed by Mark in that Jesus “immediately” entered the synagogue to teach. Jesus, like Paul (see Ac 13:15; 14:1; 17:2; 18:4), took advantage of the custom that allowed visiting teachers to participate in the worship service by invitation of the synagogue leaders.

Jesus’ teaching was very powerful, with “authority.” The Greek word for “authority” means to have the ability/power to do something. Jesus spoke with a direct line to his Father. He spoke God’s Word, not like the scribes who appealed to human authority. The word “authority” is used throughout Mark’s Gospel in the context of Jesus’ miracles and his conflict with the demons.

Just what is this “authority” that they recognize? It likely consisted of both the manner and the content of his teaching. It was more than the sternness and directness of Jesus described in v 25, although that probably was part of it. Many of the verbs in our text describing the reaction to or consequence of Jesus’ words give us some inkling of Jesus’ authority. It could only be the authority of God himself. He spoke and it was so (cf. Gen 1). His word even had the power to drive out the demons.

We, too, can teach with authority when we faithfully share the pure truths of the Word. It is not our teaching but the Word that will do its work. We are assured about this in Hebrews 4:12: *For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword. It cuts through the sinful self and brings repentance. The Word also soothes and empowers the weary soul.*

In Isaiah 42 (first of four Servant Songs) it says of Jesus, the servant, that he will not “*cry out aloud or lift his voice or make it be heard in the street.*” That means that he will let the word carry his message. It will do so for us too.

Jesus had a direct line to the Father. He had a relationship with the Father that made them one. We were brought into an eternal relationship in our baptism. The Lord daily renews that contact through his Word and Sacraments. As a result we are empowered to boldly confess his life changing word.

Prayer: Dear Lord, thank you for giving us your powerful and comforting Word. Thank you for bringing us to be your valued child. Help us to use your Word daily. Help us when we teach your Word to become equipped by it and to be a blessing with those with whom we share it. Amen