

January 30, 2022  
Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany  
St. Timothy Lutheran Church – Huber Heights, OH  
Pastor Joel Sutton

Luke 4:31-44 (1 Corinthians 12:31 – 13:13)

JESUS' WORD HAS ALL POWER AND AUTHORITY.

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.  
Amen.

Our text for meditation today comes from the Gospel according to St Luke, the 4th chapter which you heard read earlier.

When asked which is the greatest commandment, Jesus said:

***“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. <sup>38</sup> This is the great and first commandment. <sup>39</sup> And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. <sup>40</sup> On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”*** (Matthew 22:37–40)

This *love* is what we call ***agape love***. It’s not the *love* of the Buckeyes or the Bengals but a ***longsuffering*** and self-sacrificial *love*. (cf: John 15:13) St Paul illustrates this ***agape love*** in our epistle reading this morning. (1 Corinthians 12:31-13:13) ***Longsuffering*** and self-sacrificial *love* does not come naturally. It cannot be cultivated, but is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. (cf: Galatians 5:22) And because you and I are by nature sinful and unclean, to experience this *love* perfectly fulfilled in your own life, you need look no further than to Jesus, the One with perfect ***longsuffering*** love who comes to you in ***power*** and ***authority*** just as He did in our Gospel reading this morning.

We’re still in the Epiphany season when we reflect on events where God manifests Himself, revealing Himself in His Son, Christ Jesus. Our Gospel text records three epiphanies, three manifestations demonstrating that Jesus has ***power*** and ***authority*** over all creation. Each of the episodes remind us that we live in a seriously broken world. Demon possession and sickness reveal and confirm that the world in which we live is not as God created it. Just like in our broken world today, our text describes that all mankind is helpless and vulnerable to afflictions of body and soul.

You’ve experienced this helplessness and vulnerability. Physical sickness is only a precursor to physical death which we’ll all face unless Jesus returns soon. Throughout the Scriptures sickness and death dwell together. And while you may not be demon possessed, Satan is alive and well in our world. He prowls around like a roaring lion, hoping to chew you up, steal your faith, and leave you dead in your trespasses. (cf: 1 Peter 5:8) Jesus tells us that the devil was a murderer from the beginning, a liar, and the father of lies. (cf: John 8:44)

But all is not lost. In every situation, Jesus has the final Word. His authoritative and powerful Word undoes what sin has broken, delivering those who are suffering, pointing us toward His final restoration of all things on the last day.

In our text, Jesus' first epiphany takes place as He's teaching in the synagogue on the Sabbath. Luke records:

**"...they were astonished at his teaching, for his word possessed authority."**  
(Luke 4:32)

Jesus' teaching and His Word cannot be separated. While Jeremiah and God's other prophets had God's Word in their mouths, (cf: Jeremiah 1:8-9) Jesus is the Word in the flesh of man. He teaches with the authority of God, because He **is** God. His Word is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword. (cf: Hebrews 4:12)

In the synagogue was also a man who had the spirit of an unclean demon. While the others gathered thought Jesus was merely a powerful preacher, the demon recognizes and confesses exactly who Jesus is, calling Him:

**"... Jesus of Nazareth... the Holy One of God"** (Luke 4:34)  
... who has come into the world to destroy their demonic kingdom on Calvary's cross.

So, Jesus speaks His Word, rebuking the demon to come out of the man, and the demon has no choice but to obey, leaving the man without harm. (cf: Luke 4:35) St Luke writes:

**"And they were all amazed and said to one another, 'What is this word?'"**  
(Luke 4:36)

Jesus' second epiphany takes place at Simon Peter's house where his mother-in-law was ill with a high fever, contrary to how God originally intended His creation to live. You'd think that Jesus had better things to do that visit someone with a fever. But this is a picture of our Lord's **longsuffering** love. All people are important to Jesus.

**"... He stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her..."** (Luke 4:39)  
Just as the demon had left the man in the synagogue, the fever leaves the woman, all because Jesus said so. With the power and authority of God, the Word does what it says.

Jesus third epiphany takes place at the end of the day when the sun was setting. It had been a long day, but we again see a picture of Jesus' self-sacrificial **longsuffering** love. St Luke writes:

**"... all those who had any who were sick with various diseases brought them to him, and he laid his hands on every one of them and healed them."** (Luke 4:40)

Jesus heals every one of them. Again, the demons confess Jesus as **the Son of God**. They knew that He was the Christ, the Messiah, God's anointed One. But Jesus rebuked them, silencing them, demonstrating that He has power and authority over all that is broken in His creation. (cf: Luke 4:41) And this is why Jesus came. He came to redeem and restore His creation with power and authority over demons, diseases, and every other consequence of Adam's sin in the Garden.

It might seem odd that Jesus refused to allow the demons to speak, but being the minions of the devil, they witness from evil intent. Whenever they speak it is to undermine the true purpose of why Jesus came to earth in the flesh of a man. We see this all across the United States today in

the preaching of the social justice gospel. The social justice gospel teaches that Jesus was only a miracle worker. Nothing more. It teaches that He came to heal social ills, helping the less fortunate, providing shelter for the homeless, feed the hungry, and clothe the naked.

Each of these things are not inherently bad. As stewards of God's gifts, you and I are called to love our neighbor as ourselves with self-sacrificing longsuffering love, helping and supporting others in every physical need. It's what Christians do. Good deeds of kindness and selflessness flow from your God given faith in Jesus because of the love of Him who loved you to death on the cross. But these works and deeds are not the Gospel of Jesus.

The true Gospel is the Gospel of Christ and Him crucified to redeem sinners from eternal death in hell, restoring them to new life in Him. (cf: 1 Corinthians 2:2) The day after Jesus performed these miracles in our text, the people came to make Him their own miracle worker and doer of good deeds. But Jesus told them:

***“I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose.”*** (Luke 4:43)

It is a divine necessity. Jesus was sent for ***this*** purpose. ***It is necessary*** that He proclaim the Good News message of salvation. The Kingdom of God had arrived.

- He wasn't sent into the world to fix the world but to redeem it.
- Not to right all the world's wrongs but to die for it.
- Not to heal all people one at a time but to take away the sin of the world by taking it all onto Himself and dying on a cross with it.
- Not to defeat every demon one by one, but to defeat the devil and his host by keeping God's Law, becoming our sin, dying mankind's death, and rising from the dead.

In what seems foolish to man, the One who is the Word in flesh and who spoke the Word with power and authority came to be silenced in death to win victory over sin, death, and the grave.

Christ Jesus humbled Himself, leaving the glory of heaven to dwell among seriously broken people in a seriously broken world. You know it's broken. Every day you recognize your helplessness and vulnerability to afflictions of body and soul. And while it's true that Jesus performed many miracles during His earthly ministry, His epiphanies are signs pointing to the fact that God Himself entered His creation, ushering in the Kingdom of God, granting eternal salvation through saving faith in Christ Jesus. He is the King of creation. When He speaks to nature, nature listens and obeys. When He speaks to spiritual powers and they listen and obey. One little word from Jesus has perfect power and authority over all things.

Does this mean Jesus will heal you of all of your troubles and afflictions? Yes it does – but it might be the type of healing you are looking for. It is always according to His will and in His time. You may not see this healing on this side of heaven but will one day in the new heaven and the new earth where Jesus will wipe away every tear from your eyes, where there is no more mourning, crying, or pain. (cf: Revelation 21:1–4)

And that way is the way of the cross. (cf: Luke 9:23–25) In God's economy victory comes through defeat. God's strength comes through weakness where to live is Christ, and to die is gain. (cf: Philippians 1:21) Being His disciple is a cross-bearing life where the God of creation

hides Himself in the humility of Jesus, granting salvation and eternal healing to all who believe. He allows you to face troubles and afflictions to draw you nearer to the One who has power and authority over body and soul, authority over heaven and hell so that you trust in Him alone.

God's plan of redemption was manifested in Jesus. His teaching and miracles testify that He is the Son of God in their midst. Jesus continues to preach all the way to the cross where He is put to death for your sins, my sins, and the sins of all mankind. He let the Devil do His worst. And Jesus took all the abuse. Through all of His suffering, He never blamed you and He never blamed God. He only prayed for mankind's forgiveness. It was necessary that Jesus do all this so that the Good News of salvation could be preached to you. For all who are in Christ Jesus are declared *not guilty* of sin – for the sake of Jesus.

Make no mistake, God hates sin and His Word rebukes every transgression. But He's also:

***“... merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.”*** (Psalm 86:15)

He hates sin so deeply that He sent His Son to save you from your transgression in this sin-sick world, rescuing you from its curse and its eternal consequences. His Word remains powerful and authoritative even today. His Word creates faith and is the power of salvation to all who believe. (cf: Romans 1:16, 10:17) His Word has the power to unite His body and blood in, with, and under bread and wine to forgive your sins and keep you safe in body and soul unto life everlasting. And by the power of the Holy Spirit you are led into sorrow and contrition for your transgressions, led into repentance and complete forgiveness. In Christ, you're forgiven and empowered to overcome sin. You're strengthened with longsuffering love so that you serve your neighbor as yourself. Not because of a social gospel but from love that flows from the fruits of your salvation.

You may not have a spiritual demon, but you know what your demons are. You may not be tormented by a fever, but you know the illnesses that seize and attacked you. Jesus has power and authority over all that is broken in His creation. The Lord is your Shepherd, there's no need to fear evil, for He is with you, so take up your cross and follow Him. Whether you live or die, you belong to the Lord, knowing that His good work of restoration will be brought to completion on the Last Day in His eternal kingdom that has no end.

Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understand, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus,  
Amen.