

Greeting to you! The theme for our morning's meditation is "The unique authority of Christ our Lord". In the gospel reading that was read to us from Mark Chapter 1 we notice the authority of Jesus to teach God's word, his authority over evil spirits and his authority as the Holy One of God. Mark records for us that they went to Capernaum, which was a sizeable town in Jesus's day. It was located on the north side of the Sea of Galilee. Peter's house there became the base for operations in Galilee. Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. The synagogue was an important religious institution among the Jews which provided a place for them to study scriptures and to worship God. Mark also records for us that it was on a Sabbath day when Jesus began to teach. Jesus taught them as one who had authority and they were amazed at his teaching. Jesus was able to teach with authority because he had soaked himself with the Old Testament scriptures and it was indeed written about him. He was the living word and therefore he was able to explain it much better than anybody else. He radically interpreted the scriptures regarding the Sabbath and the purity laws. Teaching was one of the key roles of the authoritative Messiah, and here we see Jesus doing exactly that. In John's Gospel Jesus says that his teaching comes from God himself. Jesus words were therefore God's words and they are spirit and life.

In the second part of the text we are told that there was a man in the synagogue who was possessed by evil spirits. He said, "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 evil spirit was distinct from the person possessed and was an active personality controlling the behaviour of the one who was possessed. The evil spirit recognized Jesus as the Holy One of God. In other words they were able to identify Jesus as God. Jesus immediately gave a stern command, "Be quiet! Come out of him!" The evil spirit shook the man violently and it came out of him with a shriek. In this incident we see that deliverance takes place when the evil spirit is commanded to "come out" of that person. Jesus is shown to be in direct confrontation with all the powers of darkness. His ministry of exorcism and healing is clearly brought out by Mark. The use of the plural, "you have come to destroy us" indicates that there were numerous demons. The demons knew that their time was up when they saw Jesus. Jesus has authority over every kind of evil spirits and the demons also knew that. So in this section we see the authority of Jesus over all the power of darkness.

In the third section we see the power of Jesus as the Holy One of God. When Jesus gives the command to the evil spirits they obey. The Greek word literally means, "Be muzzled". Jesus in other words was asking the demons to shut up. He was not interested in the testimony of the demons as to who he was. The demons needed to be silenced of their defiant shouts. A resident demon not only takes control of ones thoughts and words but also affects the physical behaviour of the host. The subjugating

word of Christ has to be obeyed. The evil spirits immediately left the man. This incident took place in full view of the synagogue and all were amazed. At once they began to ask one another, "What is this? a new teaching- with authority!" He commands the unclean spirits and they obey him.

In this passage we have looked at the authority of Jesus in the area of his teaching; his authority over all the powers of darkness; and also as the Holy One of God. In our own lives we are called to accept the authority of Jesus' teaching by being obedient to them. We are also reassured that no power of darkness is greater than Jesus. We also will be able to drive out demons, if we surrender ourselves to his authority. May we this morning surrender ourselves to the authority of Jesus.

Shalom
Paul Swarup

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