

Jesus, Teacher and Preacher

Turn with me to Luke chapter 4 and read along, beginning with verse 31,

³¹Then He (the Lord Jesus) went down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and was teaching them on the Sabbaths. ³²And they were astonished at His teaching, for His word was with authority. ³³Now in the synagogue there was a man who had a spirit of an unclean demon. And he cried out with a loud voice, ³⁴saying, "Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!" ³⁵But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be quiet, and come out of him!" And when the demon had thrown him in *their* midst, it came out of him and did not hurt him. ³⁶Then they were all amazed and spoke among themselves, saying, "What a word this *is!* For with authority and power He commands the unclean spirits, and they come out." ³⁷And the report about Him went out into every place in the surrounding region. (Luke 4:31-37)

After Jesus had triumphed in His encounter with the temptations of the devil there in the desert, and then being filled with the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, He immediately began to preach and to teach the people. And His words were so very powerful, filled with the special enabling of the Holy Spirit living within Him.

And in these words, we find that Jesus began His teaching and His preaching ministry first within the Jewish synagogues. And that was exactly as God the Father had planned for the ministry of Jesus to be. Recall that Jesus was sent first to His own people, the children of Israel, to redeem them first.

And here in these words of Luke chapter 4, we see that the people were immediately captivated by Him and drawn in by the unique power within His words. Listen, first in verse 14 . . .

¹⁴ And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and a report about him went out through all the surrounding country. ¹⁵ And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all. (Luke 4:14-15)

And then also in verse 32 . . .

³²And they were astonished at His teaching, for His word was with authority. (Luke 4:32)

Folks, these words that tell us that Jesus “spoke with authority” are very significant and meaningful. The people of that day were not accustomed to hearing their Rabbis and their Priests giving thoughts and opinions from their own authority. The Rabbis and the Priests of that day were always very careful to quote and to give credit to other of the more revered Rabbis. But as Jesus taught and preached, He would use expressions like those in Matthew 5 where He said,

²¹ “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘*You shall not murder*, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.’ ²² But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. (Matthew 5:21-22)

As Jesus spoke those words, “But I say to you”, He was expressing His own authority. And while the people, at those moments, might not have realized it, Jesus was openly declaring Himself to be the Original Lawgiver, explaining what He intended for those laws to mean even from the beginning.

Folks, we must take understanding from words of scripture such as these. Remember that in John chapter 1 Jesus was declared to be the “Word of God”, the “Speaking Voice” of the Trinity. And as such, He was that voice who originally gave the law to Moses. He was the Voice of God who spoke out from the “burning bush”. And His voice is the “never-ending” Voice that calls out every moment from the heavens. Listen to these words in Psalm 19!

¹The heavens declare the glory of God;
And the firmament shows His handiwork.
²Day unto day utters speech,
And night unto night reveals knowledge.
³*There is no speech nor language*
Where their voice is not heard.
⁴Their line has gone out through all the earth,
And their words to the end of the world. (Psalm 19:1-4)

These words of this Psalm are not just metaphors, figurative language, telling us about some general principle about the existence of God. The words do that, yes, but the greater truth is that there is an actual “Voice” emanating throughout this earth, declaring the Person and the Presence of God. And that Voice that is speaking is the Holy Spirit of Christ. He is the “Speaking Voice, the Word of God”. That same Voice that spoke all creation into existence. And

now here in these words of Psalm 19 His Voice is still constantly calling out to anyone and to everyone who will listen, giving glory to God.

And yes, also, His Voice is the same Voice that those people of Jesus' day heard and were astonished at. Listen again to verse 32.

³²And they were astonished at His teaching, for His word was with authority. (Luke 4:32)

Those naïve people had no idea who they were listening too. But they got it right when they said that He spoke with “authority”. Jesus really did have “authority”. And He spoke with that “authority”, the authority of Almighty God Himself.

But unfortunately, because those people could not quite comprehend who they had in front of them, the Lord Jesus would almost immediately begin to meet with opposition. First from His constant enemy, the devil and his demons, and then from the people who would begin to reject Him and to reject the truths that He was giving to them.

We mentioned in an earlier message that these precious scriptures within our bibles are said by our bible teachers to be both “Prescriptive” and “Descriptive”. “Prescriptive” in that they instruct us as to how we are to think, and how we are to do the things of this life in a Godly and Holy way. And they are also “Descriptive” in that they describe for us who God really is, and how He sovereignly manages the affairs of this earth.

And these words are “Descriptive” also in other ways. They especially describe for us what the “world, the flesh and the devil” are really like, and how they involve themselves within the daily activities of our lives.

And now here, as we read these words in this passage in Luke chapter 4, we find that God has chosen to reveal a special truth about the “world, the flesh and the devil”, a truth that we too often naively choose not to see, that of the existence and active involvement of the demonic spirits right within our own local churches.

As we have been saying over these recent weeks, the demonic kingdom really is obviously well-entrenched within most all of the fabric of this world, especially within the activities and behaviors of the secular world. But unfortunately, their presence and their influences are usually not so obvious and open within the

walls and the activities of our churches. But sadly, those wretched evil beings can be there also.

Here in our scripture passage, just as Jesus began to teach and to preach, suddenly, out of one of the pews came a man who was fully possessed by a demon. Listen again to these words!

³¹Then He went down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and was teaching them on the Sabbaths. ³²And they were astonished at His teaching, for His word was with authority. ³³Now in the synagogue there was a man who had a spirit of an unclean demon. And he cried out with a loud voice, ³⁴saying, "Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!" ³⁵But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be quiet, and come out of him!" And when the demon had thrown him in *their* midst, it came out of him and did not hurt him. (Luke 4:31-35)

As we have learned from these scriptures, the local synagogues within the towns in Israel were much like the local churches of our day, a place within most towns where the people met on the Sabbath to receive teaching and preaching, using scrolls of the various Books of the Old Testament as their bibles. And the synagogues were the first places that Jesus began His ministry of teaching and preaching.

And while we perceive our churches to be a haven from the evils of the "world, the flesh and the devil", God is revealing to us here that while yes, within the walls of our churches really is probably the "safest" place from our spiritual enemies, it is not always completely safe. Unfortunately, even within the walls of our safe churches and within the souls of some of our dearest friends can lurk the presence of evil spirits.

As I have pondered such a possibility as this taking place within our church, I must confess that I almost immediately dismiss any possibility of it taking place. And I am confident that we are safe from such possibility here. But folks, is that so in every church?

Some years ago, I became aware of a situation involving a young woman who worked parttime as an employee at a thriving evangelical church. This young woman was very attractive and outgoing. She was married and had some beautiful children. Unfortunately, as she worked closely each day with the pastor, a relationship began to develop. Eventually, the two became intimately

involved, causing her some serious family problems and causing the pastor to have to leave the ministry.

Thankfully, the young woman fully repented of her sins and over time her marriage has been restored. I don't know what has become of the pastor. I hope that he has also been restored to his relationship with the Lord.

But to what should we attribute their obviously sinful behavior? Was it just the "ways of this world", or was it just the "ways of the flesh" or was it "demonic influence", or was it perhaps some of all three, the "world, the flesh and the devil"? I would suggest that it was all three. That "unholy trinity", "the world, the flesh and the devil" do seem often to work in tandem, bringing to the surface within a person's soul the lustful desires that lurk there, causing as much sinful conduct and misery as they can possibly cause.

Also, I am aware of another situation, one involving a long standing "Revival" that was taking place some years ago at a Pentecostal church on the Florida Coast. During the first months and years of that revival, thousands of people were reported to have not only given their hearts to Christ in salvation, but also, many of them continued on into full time ministry.

But eventually, things began to go wrong within that ministry involving its leadership. One report said that "The Holy Spirit is easily quenched by pride, greed, selfish religious agendas, and broken relationships."

Many media voices from both the secular world and the Christian media were critical of that "Revival", but I am personally convinced that a lot of good came out of its ministry. But again, those words "The Holy Spirit is easily quenched by pride, greed, selfish religious agendas, and broken relationships", is a truth that can take place within any church or church ministry and can bring destruction to everyone it touches.

On another occasion, I once counselled with a young man who had just taken the position as pastor of a small church. Almost immediately upon getting to know some of his membership, he began to see factions within the church, serious divisions had been developing there for many years along family lines. When he asked to look at the church records, the one side of those factions that controlled the "church records" refused to share those records with him. Again, those words are appropriate that say that "The Holy Spirit is easily quenched by pride, greed, selfish religious agendas, and broken relationships". The remedy

for that church was only able to take place when one of those families eventually left that church.

In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul speaks about a circumstance taking place among the Corinthian Church membership. There he said,

¹It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife. ²And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you. (1 Corinthians 5:1-2)

While it seems that often the problems within our churches manifest themselves in matters of immorality, sinful conduct can be exhibited in many ways.

And again, to what should we attribute the obviously sinful behavior that took place in each of these situations? Was it just the “ways of this world”, or was it just the “ways of the flesh” or was it “demonic influence”, or was it perhaps some of all three, the “world, the flesh and the devil”? Again, I would suggest that it was all three.

The incident that is given to us here in today's text, Luke chapter 4, describing a local synagogue member that was possessed by a demon is given to us for a reason, and we need to take heed to the warning that is implied. And that is that yes, satan and his demons are ever and always all around us, yes in the world and their more obvious pursuit of the high-profile world leaders and media giants. But those evil beings are also at work down at our level, corrupting our local churches by infesting the lives and activities of ordinary folks, often in these days, in the form of bringing about very liberal beliefs and very liberal behaviors.

And while those evil creatures can't be seen by our natural eyes, they are still among us. And if we will ask God's Holy Spirit to reveal them to us, I believe that He will. And when He does, we'll be able to see those evil beings within the hearts and minds of people like that naïve church pastor and the young woman who fell victim to their lusts and to the temptation to fulfill their lust.

And yes, if we look carefully, we will also see the fingerprints of those evil beings in great revivals that dissipate into nothingness, the Holy Spirit having been quenched by pride, greed, selfish religious agendas, and broken relationships.

And also, if we look and listen carefully, we will be able to hear the voices of the evil ones causing factions and dissensions to develop within an otherwise healthy congregation, causing the people to behave unkindly to each other.

Folks, none of this is new. Self-seeking people, influenced by the world, the flesh and the devil have been disrupting, even destroying churches and church organizations for thousands of years. That is the nature of sinful souls and that is the nature of satan and his fellow demons.

So then, how can we recognize that such things are taking place in us and in our churches? Jesus gives us the clear answer to that question. He tells us that we can recognize such people by their fruits. Listen to these words from Matthew chapter 15!

¹⁵ "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. ¹⁶ You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? ¹⁷ Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. (Matthew 15:15-17)

These words are appropriate whether those evil beings are influencing the pastors, or they are influencing the ordinary members of a church. We really should be able to recognize them by their fruits.

But what must we do about such things? Folks, you and I are not able, as Jesus is, to battle one-on-one with the devil and his evil demons. But here again, Jesus has given us the clear answer about what we must do. When He encountered His temptations from the devil there in the wilderness, Jesus used the ever-powerful word of God as His weapon of defense. You and I need to read, and commit to memory, the powerful word of God given within these scriptures. And the Holy Spirit will then give us the exact words and the exact response that we will need to protect us and to protect our congregation against the influences and the attacks of satan and his demons.

May we close with these words from Ephesians 6. Listen!

¹⁰ . . . my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.
¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. ¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*.
¹³ Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to

withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. (Ephesians 6:10-13)

May we pray.