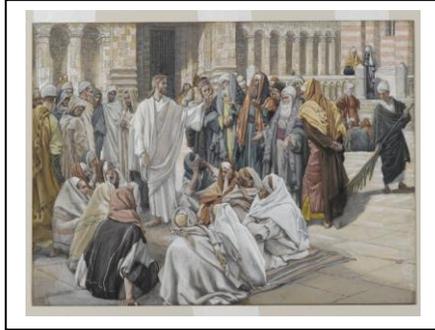


Coop's Scoops # 157 Sunday January 31st, 2021



Jesus Taught them as one having authority!

EPIPHANY 4: Jesus went about Galilee, teaching, preaching, and healing every disease.

(see Matthew 4:23)

Readings: Deuteronomy 18: 15-20 Psalm 111 1 Corinthians 8: 1-13

Collect: Living God, in Christ you make all things new. Transform the poverty of our nature by the riches of your grace, and in the renewal of our lives make known your glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

The Holy Gospel: Mark 1: 21-28

²¹ They went to Capernaum; and when the Sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught. ²² They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. ²³ Just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, ²⁴ and he cried out, "What have you to do with us, Jesus

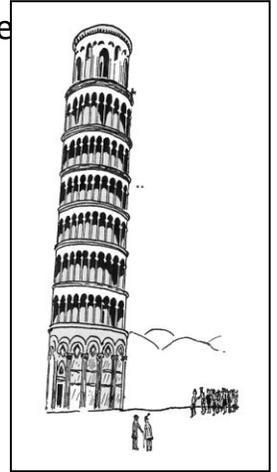
of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God.”²⁵ But Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be silent, and come out of him!”²⁶ And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him.²⁷ They were all amazed, and they kept on asking one another, “What is this? A new teaching—with authority! Hetm commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.”²⁸ At once his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee.

Sermon:

“Authority” is a tough word for our times and our culture. It can conjure up notions of misuse of power, lead to various forms of youthful rebellion, be violent in house arrests, or forced migration in some of the nations of our world. It can also mean experts, or people in whom the government has entrusted the right to make arrests, or the right to judge people accused of crime. We also have authority in the Church, vested in the Bishops and the National Church, but ultimately belonging only to the God we serve with sometimes brave and sometimes faltering steps. Our lessons this morning can teach us something about genuine authority, and I found the effort to learn it very worthwhile. I hope you do too.

When the congregation of the synagogue pronounced that Jesus spoke with authority, not like the Scribes, they were not saying the Scribes were bad at their job. It was their role to speak in quotations, to write and speak the words of the Prophets. They claimed no direct link or connection with God for themselves. They did not claim to personally know His word for the nation. But Jesus did. He spoke new words. He proclaimed a new Kingdom, a new order of things. That is why they said He spoke with authority. He wasn’t speaking just new information, He was speaking new truth. And they listened.

Here's an example of the difference. Aristotle was held for centuries to be the absolute authority on physical science. He taught that if a heavy object was dropped from the same height as a lighter object, the heavy object would hit the ground first. And everybody believed him. He was the authority, after all. They could have checked anytime, but it took almost 2000 years before in 1589 Galileo dropped a ten pound object and a one pound object from the Leaning Tower of Pisa. (you can barely see the two dots falling at ring four, with the crowd waiting below) They both hit the ground at exactly the same time. Surprise! You'd think that everyone would grasp the new truth. But they didn't. The scientists refused to believe the proof of their own eyes and stuck with Aristotle. He was the authority.



And Galileo was dismissed once more with snickers and sneers. Galileo had presented new truth. It was received as additional information, and it was discounted because someone years before had spoken what they believed to be truth. Galileo was not perceived to speak with authority.

So far, we have seen that knowledge and truth are not the same, and that belief and credibility are not the same. We now move to another common idea about authority. We see it as power.

The Gestapo had power. The terrorists on 9/11 had power. Desmond Tutu had power to bring peace. Nelson Mandela found the power to bring an end to Apartheid. The United States is now in turmoil trying to redress years of the abuse of power. Power works some things that are very good, and some things that are very bad. How do we judge what type of power comes from genuine and holy authority?

We go back to our Gospel. Jesus demonstrates His authority with an act of power by healing a man everyone present believed to be possessed with an unclean spirit. We don't talk about that much any more. But back then, they believed that demons were the cause of hysteria, epilepsy, paralysis and sometimes other physical disabilities especially when such things were marked by outbursts of violence or inappropriate behaviour.

Jesus ordered the unclean spirit to be quiet, to be still, and then to come out of the man. After a convulsive episode, the man was left peaceful. We need to look deeply at what this man said, and what it could mean in our time. The man identified who Jesus was... "the Holy One of God." Jesus often ordered those who knew who He was to keep quiet about it. "Go and tell no one" (eg. Mark 1: 44). This time Jesus said "Be Still". To the sick man's words "have you come to destroy us?" Jesus says "Come out of him". Jesus had compassion on this man's fear. He feared that God, in His son Jesus, would destroy him. He feared rejection, isolation, hatred and death. Now that doesn't sound quite so unfamiliar, does it? Jesus called that fear, whatever it's source, right out of the man by His own will and power and above all, by love.

John the disciple of Jesus wrote in His first letter, chapter 4 verse 18 "Perfect love casts out all fear". The only authority over fear is perfect love. The only authority worth obeying and copying and holding fast to is perfect love. And we know that God is Love. That Jesus Christ speaks love to the whole world. That His perfect love caused Him to accept death rather than abandon His plan, His dream, His mission to bring love and healing to our world, and to our hearts.

Authority in the Christian life is not based upon knowledge. It is not based upon power. It is not based upon talent or accomplishment. It is based on how well we live out Perfect Love.

When we are afraid, we need to remember Jesus words "Be still." Not, however, in the sense of telling no one.....we often find release in speaking our fears to friends or counsellors, but rather in the sense of calming down (as in "Be still and know that I am God"- Psalm 46:10) We also need to remember that He says " Come out of him or out of her" and trust that He will help us to live without fear. That it cannot control us forever. We need to remember that nothing inside us or outside of us can ever, ever cause Jesus to stop loving us with the perfect love that casts out fear and leaves us well. Knowledge, as Paul says, Puffs up...makes us big-headed. Power, as we all know, can so easily corrupt. Love is the only

authority which God has stamped as genuine and holy. The authority of love brings hope and healing.

Jesus said: “Fear not little flock, for it is the Father’s good pleasure to give you the Kingdom”. May we all be blessed with such peace. Amen.

(Please note: sometimes self-disclosure is necessary! I am among those believers in Jesus who do not believe that any form or expression of mental illness or psycho/neurological disorder is connected to demons or to possession. There are other believers in Jesus who do believe that some rare situations call for exorcisms. I am not the final authority on anything as complex as this- My only authority, a grace endowed by the Holy Spirit upon my ordination) is to proclaim the love, mercy and forgiveness of God , to rightly set forth the Word of God, and to honour and praise and affirm the total sufficiency of Jesus for our redemption and sanctification.)

Prayer: O God, it is your will to hold both heaven and earth in a single peace. Let the design of your great love shine on the waste of our wraths and sorrows, and give peace to your Church, peace among nations, peace in our homes, and peace in our hearts: through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen (BCP pg 677)

Help us, Holy Spirit, to entrust ourselves to true authority; to our God, to our Lord Jesus, and to the Truth of the Word of God. Help us to discern the proper authority of earthly powers, institutions and reason. Guide us according to the Law of Love, knowing that that which is not of love, cannot be of God, for God is love. Teach us to recognize both the

limits and the honest scope of our own authority in dealing with our brothers and sisters of faith and kinship and community. In all things, we acknowledge that You are God, and You alone are fully worthy of our worship. May we walk in love, that we may walk with You. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Blessing: May the God of infinite goodness scatter the darkness of sin and brighten your hearts with holy love; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit be among you and remain with you always! Amen.

“Let your Light so Shine”Judie+

