

31 And He came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and He was teaching them on the Sabbath; 32 and they were amazed at His teaching, for His message was with authority. 33 In the synagogue there was a man possessed by the spirit of an unclean demon, and he cried out with a loud voice, 34 “Let us alone! What business do we have with each other, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!” 35 But Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be quiet and come out of him!” And when the demon had thrown him down in the midst of the people, he came out of him without doing him any harm. 36 And amazement came upon them all, and they began talking with one another saying, “What is this message? For with authority and power He commands the unclean spirits and they come out.” 37 And the report about Him was spreading into every locality in the surrounding district.

I'm excited this morning about the truths and the opportunities this passage of scripture has for us. I think this will be amazing. I hope so.

I have to share just a tiny bit how God works. Tuesday was a special day out at work and since we had a 4:00 AM duty call I had gone to bed early. I think I was in bed by 7:30. But I was up at 1:00 and after that I tossed and turned until about 10 after 2:00. AM. And then I got up and figured, I may as well go make myself some coffee and begin my study of this passage while it's peaceful before the day starts.

An hour later, I had the basic ideas scribbled on a piece of scratch paper that I hope to form into a cohesive message. God just opened up in my brain, what this is about.

As I read the passage over and over, I noticed two words repeated two times.

Vs. 32 *and they were amazed at His teaching, for His message was with*

authority

And Vs. 36 *And amazement came upon them all, and they began talking with one another saying, "What is this message? For with authority and power He commands the unclean spirits and they come out."*

The first word is message, and I got curious about the greek word that the translators translated into our word message. So, I quickly looked it up.

The message had authority. And the message had authority over the demons. The message had power to accomplish spiritual things. Demons move because of the message. What is this message? And the greek word, as some of you may have already known, is logos. Logos.

Strong's greek concordance says in an utter economy, *a word, The word.* As in a single word, but also as in combined words that create a message or doctrine. Words that form truths, ideas.

Logos in classical greek is perhaps most simply stated as reasoning expressed by words. Reasoning expressed by words.

Ideas. Truth. Doctrine. And many other words seek to define the concept that; God has given humans the ability to reason and understand, concepts, truths.

Logos, words, ideas, concepts, truths, communication is what sets humans, who have the dignity of the image of God, apart from animals.

It doesn't take babies very long before they start saying words. And the little light comes on in their eyes and they associate the meaning of the words they are learning. Daddy. Momma. Hungry. NO. Don't touch. All of that is so easy and normal for babies and before long they're arguing with you!

We have been given by our Creator the ability to think and communicate and learn and share, ideas, truths, lies, language, understanding, intellect, beliefs, all of it is tied up in the greek word Logos.

But, there's a problem. Fallen man has a problem. The theological term, and I've taught it from this pulpit in the past, is called the noetic effects of the fall.

When man fell into sin, captured in sin by Satan, removed from the presence of God, the ability to do all those things didn't cease. But the ability to come up with truth did.

Without God, man is hopelessly lost and can only churn up regurgitations of the same wrong answers. His ability to reason and come up with correct answers is broken.

And so we are faced in our day with an endless stream of answers and answers and answers and all of them are relative, nothing can be declared true, because truth is impossible to nail down.

Pilot, talking to Jesus 2000 years ago had come up with the same conclusion all of the worlds best philosophers had already said before him; *What Is Truth*. You've got your truth, I've got my truth. It's relative. It's a vapor.

Seperated from God, with broken ability to reason, truth is an impossible dream. It's a vapor reached for that can never be held. Everything is relative and open to question and re-evaluation. Truth keeps getting re-assigned. We keep hearing the radio say, "Experts *now* believe; such and such . . .

Paul says; *Ever learning but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth*. That's a perfect description of fallen man. Everything is relative.

The only thing absolute, is Vodka. Absolut Vodka. That's where man ends up. Weary of the search, but Vodka eases the pain.

But what happens if God sticks His finger into that fallen mess and begins to reveal truths that are in fact absolutes. Always true. Always absolute. Always right. Un-arguable because God, who spoke everything into existence with words, and who ultimately owns everything; said so. Truths that anchor us to solid ground.

What if God reveals truths that never change. Heaven and earth can pass away, but His logos, His truths remain. Constant. Absolute. Always. And that's what He did.

*Hebrews 1:1 God, after He **spoke** long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, 2 in these last days **has spoken to us in His Son**, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. 3 And **He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and **upholds all things by the word of His power****. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high*

God, broke into the darkness, the lostness of His creation that He loves and revealed Himself. He revealed truth. God communicates with us.

And the author of Hebrews says He did that in the past through the fathers and the prophets. Revelation. Write these things down. This is true. There's no other way to find these things out, except he tells the fathers, and the prophets. Inspired revelation from God of very God.

Moses writes the law. A mirror that shows us what God is like, and what we are like. The prophets explain why we are lost, and what God has planned to take back this lost planet.

And ultimately, the writer to the Hebrews tells us Jesus is the Logos, the

word spoken. An idea, a representation of the truth of God and who He is and what He is like in human form. He is the walking talking revelation of truth about God.

Jesus is the radiance of Gods glory and the exact representation of His nature. Jesus is not only a walking picture of God, He is a talking representation of absolute truth. He is the Logos. The Word. The message.

In the beginning was the logos, and the logos was with God, and the logos was God Jn. 1:1

And then the author of Hebrews tells us about His authority. His logos, His words have power and authority. He *upholds all things by the word of His power*. His logos, His words are the nuclear glue that holds everything together. Atoms would fly apart except for the power of the authority of the Word, the logos. *and upholds all things by the word of His power*.

And thus in a world that is careening out of control in confusion that they know is confusion but they must adhere to the confusion to be consistent with confusion, there is in fact truth available that is absolute authoratative truth. Always true. Forever true even when this heaven and earth pass away, still absolutely true, and that is this book.

Every word of this inspired canon of words is logos, words from God and absolutely true. Always true, and in fact it is the standard by which everything else is measured to find out if it is true, or false. It speaks clearly and definitively on moral issues. It defines how fallen humans are to dwell with and treat each other. This book holds all the authority of the same logos, the same word that holds all things together.

And so, when Jesus went to Capernaum and taught on their sabbath day it is no wonder at all that they were amazed at his teaching. Because like

He did at Nazareth, He taught the scriptures with the authority of author. Author of the universes.

31 And He came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and He was teaching them on the Sabbath; 32 and they were amazed at His teaching, for His message was with authority.

The author of the book can tell you exactly what the book means. Other folks, like me, have no authority to speak as author. I can study and compare truths from all over the book with each other, and bring what historic fathers have said about it into the discussion, but I can never claim, as Jesus did, this is what is meant here, as the very author can.

Only He has that authority. All the inspired words, from Moses, to the fathers to the prophets, every word in this book is inspired, and He is the source of that inspiration. He is author of it all! So when He shows up and teaches in your synagogue, it's different from anything or anybody else teaching.

The meaning isn't different. The authority behind the meaning is different. He's the author. And that's why we search the gospel records to find out what Jesus said about Adam for instance. Was Adam real or is he a fairy tale. Jesus speaks of him as very real. The first created man. Jesus, the author, believed that.

Jesus speaks of Noah and the flood. He speaks of the order and number of days of creation. Males and females and marriage, and children that result from marriage and adultery and murder and lies and all of these things already defined by Moses and the prophets. He re-inforces all of it, as author. We translate the words of the book as literal truth, because the author did.

In Nazareth He claimed that same authority and they ran Him out of town. But in Capernaum he begins to back up those claims by having

the authority that He claims when He speaks and teaches the book.

Let's stop for a moment and consider the word authority. Exhousia. And it literally in classical greek means a delegated authority to act. In Jesus case the God of the universe, His Father, has delegated ALL authority, all exhousia, power over everything, including Satan and all of the world systems, to Jesus.

Authority is a concept that our current generation has jettisoned. We are the generation of autonomy. No one has authority. I AM in authority. I rule over me, and God help you if you bring any judgement from any other source to question my authority over me.

Everyone's favorite verse is *judge not lest ye be judged*. Most quoted verse in the Bible. But what that verse does not mean is that you are autonomous and no one has authority over what you do or don't do.

When this passage says Jesus taught with authority, it means He has the authority of the King of the Universes to command you to adhere to His words.

This book, this Logos, represented by the walking talking representation of God of very God who created everything for His own glory, has the authority to command you to do what His words say.

He also has the authority, as owner of everything, every molecule, every atom and sub-atomic particle belongs to Him and is held together by His word, and as such He also has authority not only to tell you what to do and how to live, He also has authority to judge. Everyone. He holds authority to bless and to curse.

I'm not sure we believe that any more. That is so foreign to our way of thinking. In our culture, I AM god. I decide how to live and what to do. I have displaced Creator God and rejected His authority.

Think about that. There's a word for that. It's called rebellion. Now think about the wrath that is building up like a storm that has never ever been seen before that is about to be unleashed on this world!

And we're worried about cow's belching? Mercy! God's about to bring some climate change that is going to be awesome. Apocalyptic. And there's only one thing to do. Fall under His authority and beg for His forgiveness of your grievous rebellion.

How do we know any of this is true? Is there any evidence that Jesus actually does have ultimate total authority over everything? Show me some evidence, please.

33 In the synagogue there was a man possessed by the spirit of an unclean demon, and he cried out with a loud voice, 34 "Let us alone! What business do we have with each other, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!"

Hmmm. Here is a created being, a dis-embodied spirit an angel if you will, a person who has intellect, and this spirit has taken up residence in a man. This is a demon. A fallen angel who rebelled against God and has been cast out of heaven, and this evil created spirit resides inside this man.

Demon possession. We don't believe that too much these days in our secular society. It doesn't occur to our secular culture that there might be other reasons for a young white man to walk into a black church and start hosing people down with an ooze.

We were sitting and laughing with some co-workers out at work the other day, after the work day was over and the topic of San Francisco came up. My immediate supervisor had gone to San Francisco for a holiday.

And one of the other guys related that he and his wife were sitting in a sidewalk cafe one morning in San Francisco having coffee and from across the street a large man appeared with a 3 sided pirates hat, pirates boots, and waving a giant sword, and that was his complete costume. Hat, boots sword.

Hello? Anyone think the demons are still here? Still possessing people? I guess my first question would be why would anyone go to San Francisco . . . on purpose?? Do you like stepping over human remains and feces on the sidewalks?

This guy was in the synagogue! I think demons have a giant role in modern evangelical christianity. They're pretty smart. You don't go around in boots and pirate hat with a sword if you're a demon on the inside of modern evanelicalism. Give them some credit. If you're that kind of a demon, go to San Francisco.

What about all the headlines about friendly church men who get a little too friendly with your daughters. And your sons. This demon was in the synagogue! We've got them today. Trust me.

Any ways, Jesus was teaching. Authoritatively. And I guess it was too much for this demon. Maybe Jesus kept staring at this one guy. We'll never know, but the demon totally freaks out and blows his cover!

and he cried out with a loud voice, 34 “Let us alone! What business do we have with each other, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!”

Let US alone? Turns out more than one demon can indwell a single human. This may indicate multiple demons. In the demoniac at Gergesa there was enough for a whole herd of swine. Let *us* alone.

Jesus could see what was going on inside this and every other person. Maybe he was giving those demons the look. *What business do we have with each other, Jesus of Nazareth?*

That's the language of confrontation. You leave me alone, I'll leave you alone. Back off Jesus. I'm behaving, leave me be. Don't mess with me, Jesus. *Have You come to destroy us?*

Whoa! Not only does this demon acknowledge Jesus authority he knows and acknowledges that authority includes ultimate punishment. In one of the gospels the demon says, *have you come to destroy us before the time?*

Demons have good theology. They already know and have known that this book speaks of their ultimate destruction forever in torment in hell. They know that. But this demon says; Why are you messing with me!? It isn't time yet for that.

No questions about authority though. The question is on a technicality. *I know who You are—the Holy One of God!* The demons know exactly who Jesus is. They know He has full authority over them both current and ultimate. And they know He is the Holy One. The sinless messiah of God.

35 But Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be quiet and come out of him!”

Shut up and get out. 2 commands from the Commander who commanded the universes to **be**, ex-nehilo, out of nothing. Same voice. Same authority. Be quiet and exit this poor man. Come out of him.

And the demons never do it quietly. They seem to be like a 3 year old having one last tantrum to show you who's boss. Wipe all the other kids stuff off the table and onto the floor and pour out the crayons before you go sit in the corner. I'll show you!

And when the demon had thrown him down in the midst of the people, he came out of him without doing him any harm. The demons have to align with God's limits. In this case apparently they were not allowed to harm this guy. They throw him down though. Got to have some drama.

In Job's case no harm was allowed at first, and then God actually did allow harm. Boils and sores. Nasty stuff. But always within the limits God had set. Job can be miserable, but not dead.

In this case they leave with maximum allowable drama. A temper tantrum, and then they leave and ultimately, no harm to the man. Exactly as the Commander has ordered. Their obedience is immediate and complete.

36 And amazement came upon them all, and they began talking with one another saying, "What is this message?"

We'd be amazed if some demon shouted out in the middle of our service and the one preaching starts talking to the demon and orders them out. That would get your attention.

These guys who are always ordering the demons around acting tough don't impress me. I get impressed when the demons speak back and then have to obey. That impresses me. Rightly so, and it also impressed these folks! *"What is this message?"* What is this doctrine. What are these words. What is this logos? Who speaks and demons listen and obey? Who does that??

Well, we have 20-20 hindsight and the completed canon of scripture and so we know the answer. Those words were spoken by the same person who spoke the words, *let there be light, and there was light.*

Same mouth. Same voice. Same authority. Do you think perhaps we

should listen and obey when He speaks? The light obeyed. The demons obeyed. Immediate obedience. With drama. Maybe He allowed the drama so they would know it actually occurred! Perhaps He commanded *that* too.

What is this logos? Word Message *For with authority and power He commands the unclean spirits and they come out.*” Who IS this man that we heard was Joseph's son who has authority to command demons and they obey?

Now at this point people have some decisions to make. We'll see later, at the story of the Gergasene demoniac where the demons went into the pigs and drove them over a cliff, that people have to do something with that.

What do you do with a guy who can order demons around? Well, in that case, actually in every case, it freaks you out. All of a sudden you're very uncomfortable with all of it. Demons are here. Someone who controls demons is here. We're at the mercy of demons, mostly. Add that up.

If we can't control demons, but someone shows up who can, where does that leave you, in your comfort zone. That freaks people out and mostly, mostly, people don't want to deal with that. Can we just get stuff back to normal, please. Normal wasn't that bad. This is freaky.

At Gergesa they entreated Him to please leave. Notice they didn't order Him to leave. You don't order someone who has authority over the spirit realm to do anything. They entreated Him. Sir, we'd be happier if you would go somewhere else and we can just get back to normal.

Demon possessed people can live in the graveyard and bang their heads until they're bloody, and we'd actually be a little more comfortable with that than someone who cost us a lot of money in our pig business who

orders demons to do things and they have to obey. Please.

And that's how it goes, right down to today. Christians are happiest when Jesus is doing nothing. Mostly. We're easily freaked out.

But I want to put some of these ideas in perspective with a current event from last week. Pam always gets nervous when I leap to the current days news activities.

Last week, the second largest old line denomination in the USA, the United Methodist Church, voted on something that has been wreaking havoc from within for several years now.

A little history first. The Methodists had followed most of the old line denominations into a christian liberal view that denies just about everything, beginning with what we've talked about this morning.

Scriptural inspiration and authority. Are these words, this logos, inspired by God, and do they then have authority over us. Do we actually have to do what it says?

Or is this book the result of flawed human authors working with the knowledge base and reasoning of their own times that was available, and we know a lot more and better now than they did then.

And for a century and a half the Methodists have believed the latter. To the point that none of it means anything. Jesus was a fine teacher, and when His teaching agrees with your belief system, you quote Him.

But the other stuff, what Moses said and what Paul said, (and if they were honest, what Jesus crystal clearly said) well, that's open to interpretation as we progress in our knowledge and science and experience. It's all very selective.

And that is the base line where you ultimately come up with no virgin birth, no miracles, no resurrection, Jesus was not God, and all of this is just a very nice book that people try to pull some good ideas out of to add to the other good ideas that we're learning progressively as we go.

But something happened in the last 25 years or so. The Methodists opened their arms wide to what we call the global south. African christians. South American christians wanted to be Methodists, they wanted that identity because, well, the original documents were pretty sound. Pretty solid.

So now you've got a very conservative group of global south methodists who are holding tenaciously to the original sound doctrines, and they outnumber the liberal methodists in this country.

And for several years now they've been in dis-agreement about the whole LGBTQ and other moral issues, even to divorce and re-marriage. The silly global south methodists think the logos, the revealed word of God, has authority over them, and that's how God expects them to live.

While the outnumbered northern methodists can tolerate women preachers, gay preachers, gay marriage, and even an atheist lady preacher. The guy in the pirate hat and boots and nothing else, would fit right in, as long as he leaves his broad sword in his car I suppose.

In the northern hemisphere, the doctrine that has more authority than the Bible is written by Cole Porter in 1934. *Anything goes*.

And so it was a historic shock when . . .

Last week in St. Louis at the special general conference, by a very decisive, though thin majority. The United Methodist Church through its delegates to the General Convention upheld the church's historic teaching that homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching.

It upheld its law, a discipline of the church that says that openly gay ministers may not be ordained and may not serve and that the church does not recognize marriage as any other relationship than the union of a man and a woman.

How did the Methodists, or any other group that claims to be christian get to the place where such a vote was even necessary? Because the book is clear. The doctrines are crystal clear.

The answer is within our passage this morning. Does Jesus have, or have not, the authority to reign over not only His people, the church, but also over everything else in the creation?

And the answer is, it doesn't really matter how the supreme court rules, or how the Methodist's vote. Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords, and He himself stated that not one jot or tittle would change from the words, the logos, of this book we hold in our hands.

How did the Methodists arrive at such a liberal place in this country. The answer is very interesting and has its roots all the way back to John Wesley. Wesley's philosophy of doctrine for the church was what he called the Wesleyan Quadrilateral Method. In other words church life grows out of a quadrilateral or four sided foundation. Scripture, reason, experience, and tradition.

Having studied what we studied this morning, I hope it is patently ridiculous to ever believe that scripture is equal to and only one of four sides of a quadrilateral philosophy which puts human reason, human experience, and church traditions on an equal basis.

The Logos trumps all of the others. Human reason, human experience, and church tradition are either correct or incorrect based solely on the words, the logos, contained in this book.

So the more amazing thing was how many good years they enjoyed, in spite of their weak foundation. Everything, above and below, bows down to the authority of the words of this book.

That's the foundation we build our faith upon. Everything must withstand the scrutiny of the logos, the words of this book. When the book is clear, human reason, human experience, so called science, human traditions, or anything else anyone can argue can not over-rule the words of this book. This is our ultimate authority over life and also judgement after death.

37 And the report about Him was spreading into every locality in the surrounding district.

People are hungry to experience a Jesus with real power, a Jesus who is counter cultural to this current world, as He always was, and that Jesus is in this book. All we have to do is share Him exactly as the book portrays Him.

The authority and power He exhibited to this world are still alive, well, and available, in the words of this book. Same Logos. Same authority.