

“Be Amazed By Jesus”

Do you get excited about coming to church? Or is it something that you do because of habit or because it seems to be the right thing to make the effort to do it? Are you eager to get into Bible Class to dig deeper into the Bible, and to ask your questions and help answer others? Or is Bible Class something you fit in when you can, but rarely make a priority? And I could ask the same questions about confirmation class or about Sunday School or even about home devotions and personal Bible study. Do you ever find yourself thinking that you have heard so much about Jesus that you’ve maybe started to take him for granted? Is he not always such a big deal to you because you’ve always known that he’s around when you need him?

Maybe it’s time to hear from Jesus again as if for the first time. Maybe it’s time to put ourselves in the shoes of the synagogue members at Capernaum when Jesus came with his newly called disciples and taught them. Maybe it is time to hear their reaction, and along with them to be amazed by Jesus.

²¹ They [Jesus and his disciples] went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. ²² The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law.

What amazed people so much about Jesus was that he taught with authority. They were used to hearing their teachers or rabbis recite the opinions of other teachers and rabbis. They found the Scriptures to be full of messages so complex that it was impossible to settle on exactly what it would mean for them. But Jesus was different. He explained Scripture to them. Clearly, concisely. He didn’t rely on the opinions of others, but spoke on his own authority. After all, he was the one about whom the Scriptures testify.

Mark doesn’t record for us exactly what Jesus taught, but in general, we know what Jesus would have taught the people. He would have convicted them of their sin and of their sinfulness. He would have shown them how they failed to live up to the demands of a holy God. And, whether directly or indirectly, he would have pointed them to him as the answer to their sins. Jesus is the prophet about whom Moses testified in our Old Testament lesson today. He spoke the very Word of God, especially the gospel message that weaves its way through all of Scripture. He told the good news that God was sending a Savior to take away sins. And he spoke with authority as the Word of God in human flesh.

And Jesus still teaches with authority today. We don’t see him or hear him speaking directly, but he teaches us through his Word in the Bible. He stands behind everything that is written there, and we can rely on everything that it says. And Jesus teaches through those he has called to faith and called to share his Word, especially the good news of the gospel. He remains active as the great Prophet even now.

And we ought to be amazed. Every word he has spoken holds true. Every promise he made he has fulfilled or will fulfill.

People who are amazed by Jesus want to hear his Word. They want to hear his voice of authority in their lives. They want to be reassured that he has given them the forgiveness of sins. They don't just listen to him when it is convenient. They don't let other cares and concerns get in the way. They don't allow personal feelings to cloud or obscure his words. They simply listen. They hold to what he says. They search out every opportunity to hear him speak.

And they share what they have heard. People who are amazed by Jesus tell others about him. Mark reports in our text, **“News about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee.”** In their amazement, the people of Galilee just couldn't keep the message of Jesus to themselves. Neither can we – not when we're amazed by his love for us. Don't we want to tell everyone we can about our Savior and their Savior?

Of course, the people were amazed once more when they saw what Jesus did. Jesus displayed his authority for all to see in the synagogue that Sabbath day. A man possessed by an evil spirit was there, and Jesus demonstrated his authority by freeing the man from the demon's control.

Be aware that many people today try to discredit the idea of demon possession. They claim that modern science can explain away what less sophisticated societies once thought was demon possession. They look at symptoms of possession and instead diagnose illnesses or disorders we are familiar with today. But make no mistake: the Bible clearly teaches that there are spiritual forces at work around us. As surely as God sends his angels to watch over and protect us, the devil and the demons who with him rebelled against God are at work to destroy us.

Our text records: ²³ **Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an evil spirit cried out,** ²⁴ **“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 demon possessed man knew exactly who Jesus was, and announced it loudly. It was true that Jesus is the Holy One of God, but this was not the way Jesus intended for that message to be shared. It was not appropriate for the demons to determine when and how Jesus would reveal himself.

Furthermore, Jesus had compassion on the man who was possessed. He was not about to allow the demon to remain in control of him and his life. ²⁵ **“Be quiet!” said Jesus sternly. “Come out of him!”** ²⁶ **The evil spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek.**

²⁷ **The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, “What is this? A new teaching—and with authority! He even gives orders to evil spirits and they obey him.”**

Once again the people expressed their amazement. They were still impressed by the authority of his teaching, and they recognized that the miracle reinforced and supported and confirmed the message of Jesus.

And the miracle clearly showed the spiritual battle being waged by Jesus. This was one of many times the Bible records for us battles between Jesus and his followers and Satan and his demonic followers. But the Bible is also clear that each time, Jesus comes away with the victory. And the battle raged on throughout the life of Jesus as Satan did all he could to position himself to drag sinners to hell. But Jesus has compassion on us sinners, and did not leave us to be controlled by Satan. He did not allow the schemes of the devil to succeed. He cast out the devil and his plans by defeating him on the cross. By taking away our sins, he has taken away the power of Satan to accuse us. He has demonstrated his absolute authority over Satan and his compassion for us who were previously in his grasp.

People who are amazed by Jesus recognize this absolute authority over Satan and all evil. They understand that it is only through his power that we remain free from Satan, who still prowls around looking to devour us. People who are amazed by Jesus flee to his Word while fleeing away from the very real schemes and temptations of the devil. When personal feelings and opinions prevent us from working together to share the gospel, when hurt feelings make us unable or unwilling to forgive, when doubt and worry fill our lives, the devil is still at work right in our midst. When the world around us begs us to get with the times or to change our teaching to meet the changing interests of our culture, Satan is behind it, trying to undermine the power of the Word of God.

But the Word of God endures because Jesus continues to speak to us through it. He continues to exercise authority even over spiritual forces of evil. What a wonderful blessing it is for us to have so many opportunities to hear and read his Word in the Scriptures. Though we may be tempted to think that it is commonplace, or that we have heard it all before, the Word connects us to the power and authority of Jesus himself. And that is reason to be amazed. Every day. Be amazed by Jesus.