

Theme: Powerful Words

Mark 1:21-28 (EHV)

²¹ Then they went into Capernaum. On the next Sabbath day, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. ²² They were amazed at his teaching, because he was teaching them as one who has authority and not as the experts in the law. ²³ Just then there was a man with an unclean spirit in their synagogue. It cried out, ²⁴ “What do we have to do with you, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!” ²⁵ Jesus rebuked the spirit, saying, “Be quiet! Come out of him!” ²⁶ The unclean spirit threw the man into convulsions, and after crying out with a loud voice, it came out of him. ²⁷ Everyone was so amazed that they began to discuss this with each other. They said, “What is this? A new teaching with authority! He even commands the unclean spirits, and they obey him!” ²⁸ News about him spread quickly through all the region of Galilee.

Words are powerful. How often do we think about that fact? How often are we aware of that fact when we use words in our lives—whether writing them or speaking them. Words are powerful.

Words can build people up, or tear them down. Words can express love, or contempt. Words can bless or they can curse. Words can inspire and ignite hearts and minds, or they can crush hopes and dreams. Words can set amazing things in motion, or they can shut them down. Words can bring people together—as they do us again this morning—or they can tear us apart.

Words are not just powerful in and of themselves. Oftentimes their power and effectiveness has a great deal to do with who is speaking them. An “I love you” spoken by someone you don’t really care for doesn’t have the same kind of meaning as when it’s spoken by your spouse, or your child. “I promise” means a whole lot more when it comes from someone we know well and trust completely than when we hear it coming from someone a little less trustworthy (like a politician in an election year, perhaps?). The command to “Do it!” carries a lot more authority when it is spoken by a high ranking military official or the leader of a nation than it does when it’s spoken by a bossy 5 year old.

As parents you hope your words carry some authority with your children. As spouses you hope your words mean something to your husband or wife. As a pastor I hope that my words have some impact on the people—young and old—that I am serving, teaching, and preaching to each week.

As powerful as our words can be no one’s words carried more meaning, more authority, and more impact than the **Powerful Words** of Jesus. His words are what bring us together here again this morning. His **words** reveal (“Epiphany”) Himself to us and validate Him as the Son of God, true God Himself.

The **words** of our text tell us that Jesus “**was teaching them as one who has authority**” (v. 22) and that people were “**amazed at his teaching**” (v. 22). Why? That same verse tells us that it had a great deal to do with the contrast between Jesus’ **words** and those of the other religious teachers of His day: “**He was teaching them as one who has authority and not as the experts in the law**” (v. 22).

The messages of the scribes’, the “experts in the law,” were notoriously “boring,” we might say. They were usually not much more than the reciting of sentences and man-made precepts and laws passed down from past rabbis. Their teaching and preaching was filled with insignificant discussions about ceremonial washings, the proper lengths of the priestly garments, and even “the particular quarter of a second when the new moons and Sabbaths began!” (Lenski, quoting Farrar, p. 49, *Interpretation of St. Mark’s and St. Luke’s Gospels*).

The worst part was that the teaching of the scribes was not only “boring,” it was spiritually dead! It was legalistic to no end and wasn’t even usually based on the Law of God, but rather on the hundreds of man-made laws that the Jews had developed over the centuries. Yes, some of their teaching might have been very wise, it may have even been very moral advice, but there wasn’t anything in their speech that helped heal the *soul*! No wonder Jesus pitied the people of Israel to whom He had come to preach His Word. In Matthew we are told, **“But when He [Jesus] saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd” (Matthew 9:36-38).**

Now, think of the contrast on this particular Sabbath when Jesus was invited to teach and preach. Here was the very Word of God in human flesh preaching His Powerful Words to the people! He Himself was the ultimate authority, and He, no doubt, preached and taught with the same authoritative conviction. He had no need to quote past rabbis on their interpretations of man-made ceremonial or religious laws. He was the author of God’s Law itself! Even more importantly, He was the author of the Gospel itself—the “Good News” about God’s love and salvation in Him! While the scribes prattled on about how many steps was it lawful to take on the Sabbath and other man-made rules, Jesus came preaching words like these: **“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls,” (Matthew 11:28-29 NKJV)** and **“I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep” (John 10:10-11 NKJV).** That is the difference between the words, thoughts, and opinions of man, and the authoritative, powerful words of Jesus—the words of God Himself!

Now, just because Jesus preached with the authority of God’s Word doesn’t necessarily prove that He is true God. We too have been given God’s authoritative and powerful Word by Jesus Himself, but that doesn’t put us on the same par with Jesus. A few years ago I was teaching some younger children at the church and school I served in Nebraska, and we were going through the account of Jesus calming the storm from **Mark chapter 4**. It was snowing while we were doing our devotion that morning and I asked them if they thought I could stop the snow from coming down if I stood up and said, “STOP!” **“Peace, be still” (Mark 4:39)** like Jesus did. And do you know what happened?!?!... Absolutely nothing. ☺

Jesus, on the other hand, proved that He was the Son of God that day by showing with His words that He had power over nature. And in our text He showed that His words have power even over Satan and his demons. Notice that when Jesus casts out this **“unclean spirit,” (v. 23)** or demon, from this man He doesn’t have to perform some elaborate incantation. He doesn’t call on the power of someone else to cause this demon to come out. No, our text tells us, **Jesus rebuked the spirit, saying, “Be quiet! Come out of him!”²⁶ The unclean spirit threw the man into convulsions, and after crying out with a loud voice, it came out of him. (v. 25-26).** The people who witnessed this incident in the synagogue seemed to understand that there was a connection between the power of Jesus’ preaching and the power of His expulsion of the demon. We read in **v. 27** of our text, **Everyone was so amazed that they began to discuss this with each other. They said, “What is this? A new teaching with authority! He even commands the unclean spirits, and they obey him!” (v. 27).** In Luke’s account of this incident he records that the people also said, **“What a word this is! For with authority and power He commands the unclean spirits, and they come out” (Luke 4:36).**

Yes, **“What a Word this is!”** There are no words more authoritative or more powerful than Jesus’ words. The amazing thing is that Jesus, our God and Savior, has given us His very words—words of power; words of forgiveness, healing, life, and salvation. We speak the truth of the Words of Jesus; therefore, we can speak with His authority—not in weakness or uncertainty like the opinions, or false teachings, and false religions of man. We speak about Jesus and how He lived and died to pay the punishment of hell for our sins. We also speak the very words that Jesus spoke—the all-powerful words of God Himself. The devil still cannot stand against the power of these words that Jesus has given to His Church. Jesus told Peter and His disciples, **“the gates of hell will not overpower it.” (Matthew 16:18).**

Jesus' Word can still cast out the “**unclean spirits**”—the “demons”—from our lives. It can expose the lies that Satan has led us to believe and gives us God's Holy Spirit and the power to overcome our sinful flesh, which Satan is constantly using to try and make us his own. Through the power of God's Spirit the Apostle James reminds us that we can, “**Resist the devil and he will flee from you**” (James 4:7).

We began our sermon by thinking about the power of words. That fact should remind us to use our words carefully. As you go about your day today and your week this week think carefully about how you are going to use your words; how you are going to wield their power. Are you going to use your words as an instrument to build up, encourage, and heal? Or will you use them as a weapon to tear down and destroy?

Most importantly, as you go about your day and your week remember the amazing fact we've been reminded of again today: You have been given Jesus' **Powerful Words**! Think carefully today and this week, not just about how you are going to use your words, but how are you going to use Jesus' words? And remember to use them! There are people in your life and people you will run into this week who need to hear His Words—both believer and unbeliever alike. Jesus' words give hope, they give forgiveness, and they give life! No words we can speak have more power, more meaning, and more authority than Jesus' **Powerful Words**! And so we pray:

*Dear Jesus, help us to speak Your **Powerful Words** which you have given us today and everyday. Amen.*