

Fifth Sunday after Epiphany – February 4, 2018
Good Shepherd Ev. Lutheran Church

Pastor Charles Heup

Mark 1:29-39

(Mark 1:29-39 NIV) As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew. 30) Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told Jesus about her. 31) So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them. 32) That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. 33) The whole town gathered at the door, 34) and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was. 35) Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. 36) Simon and his companions went to look for him, 37) and when they found him, they exclaimed: **"Everyone is looking for you!"** 38) **Jesus replied, "Let us go somewhere else--to the nearby villages--so I can preach there also. That is why I have come."** 39) **So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.**

Dear fellow believers:

Last fall, First Lady – Melania Trump was in South Korea to speak at a state-sponsored event for the forthcoming 2018 Winter Olympics. Posing alongside a group of teenage girls, Trump seemed relaxed and cheerful as she chatted with the teens. As the teens stood beside the First Lady, one of the girls began screaming in excitement. Trump smiled kindly at the girl then looked over her shoulder and realized what prompted the reaction: Korean pop star and actor Choi Min-ho was standing right beside her. When the rest of the teens realized who else was there with them, they too began screaming and clapping. Despite some perceived awkwardness about being upstaged, Melania stayed in good spirits, laughing and smiling alongside the teens.

As we heard in our sermon text for last week, Jesus upstaged the Scribes who regularly taught in the synagogue at Capernaum. ***The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, "What is this? A new teaching--and with authority!"*** (Mark 1:27 NIV) Our text for today picks up that theme and enables us to see that

Theme: Jesus has Divine Authority

1. Over sickness
2. Over the Devil
3. Over sin

The Sabbath service in Capernaum had come to an end. While the crowds were spreading the news about Jesus throughout the region of Galilee, Jesus and his companions, James, John, Andrew, and Simon Peter left the synagogue and headed to the home of Andrew and Simon Peter. Upon their arrival, they discover a troubling situation: **Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told Jesus about her.**

Luke, who was a physician by profession, explains in his Gospel that they asked Jesus to help her. (cf. Luke 4:38) When they told Jesus about Simon's mother-in-law's fever they were turning to him in faith – seeking the help of the one who had demonstrated his divine power by driving the demon from the man in the synagogue earlier that day. There was no doubt in their mind that Jesus would also have authority over this sickness. Their confidence is the same confidence that we are displaying when we seek out our Lord in time of illness or sickness in prayer. How often haven't we prayed for ourselves or our loved ones when sickness has entered into our lives? Lord, if it is your will; you can help and heal.

Filled with compassion Jesus bent over her and rebuked the fever (cf. Luke 4:39). Once again, it is Dr. Luke, who gives us those details. Mark, who may well have first heard this account from Simon Peter himself simply tells us that Jesus **went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them.**

In this case, Jesus simply used the power of his word to drive away the fever so completely that the one who had been flat in bed got up at once and began to serve them. The cure was instantaneous and complete – there were no lingering body aches or fatigue. The fever and all its ill effects was gone, chased away by the command of Jesus – the Son of God who called all things into existence by the power of his word.

With this miracle of healing, Jesus demonstrated his authority over sickness. That gives us confidence to ask him for help with the sicknesses that are part of our lives. Make no doubt about it, Jesus has divine authority over sickness; however, that does not always mean that he will bring about a miraculous cure to those who come to him in prayer. Sometimes that may very well be the case. At other times the Lord says to us as he did to the Apostle Paul, "*My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.*" (2 Corinthians 12:9 NIV) Jesus may allow the sickness to linger for a while as he holds it in check until he sees fit either to restore our health or to rescue us from the sickness by taking us to our glorious home in heaven. Or, he may give us the strength to cope with our illnesses without taking them away so that we may continually be reminded to lean on him.

No matter how Jesus demonstrates his authority over sickness in our lives, it is a comfort to us to know that he has authority over our illnesses. For this he is worthy of our honor and service. Simon's mother-law was eager to serve the one who had restored her to health as an expression of her appreciation. The one who has brought us into his family through the power of his Word and who heals all our diseases is worthy of our service and praise as our Psalm for today reminded us: *Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits* - (Psalm 103:2 NIV)

As soon as the Sabbath proper was over crowds of people came searching for Jesus. **That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. 33) The whole town gathered at the door, 34) and Jesus healed many who had various diseases.**

Once again, Jesus miraculously displays his authority over every sort of sickness. In so doing he shows that he is the promised Christ and Savior from sin. He perfectly fulfilled the words of the prophet Isaiah, "*Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted.*" (Isaiah 53:4 NIV)

At this point in Jesus ministry, the crowds are flocking to him and he is enjoying a wave of popularity. But, human nature is often fickle. In a relatively short period of time, crowds of people would turn against Christ when it became obvious to them that he would not use his authority to provide them with a life of ease in this world.

There's a warning here for us isn't there? Don't just look to Jesus as one who has authority over sickness. Rely on him as the one who has come to destroy the power of the devil and to rescue us from the sickness of sin. Perhaps these thoughts don't jump right out at us as we as we read our text for today but they are there. Jesus has divine authority over the Devil and over sin.

He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was. It's only a single sentence but it's an important one. The demons – agents of the Devil – were on the offensive. They had come with a show of force and power – foolishly thinking that that they could stand their ground in the face of the one who had been sent to crush the Devil's head.

Demon possession was real at the time of Jesus. It wasn't just some sort of unexplained malady. The devil actually took control of people – abusing them for his own evil purposes. These demons knew who Jesus was – they understood that he was the Son of God, the Christ; the promised Savior. If Jesus would have allowed them, they would have been more than happy to shout it out in an effort to discredit him and overshadow him. But, Jesus would have not of it! He would not let them speak. He would drive them out of their victims. When God's timetable arrived he would indeed inflict the "death blow" to Satan triumphing over him by the cross. The Apostle Paul says it so eloquently: ***having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.*** (Colossians 2:15 NIV)

Jesus' authority over and defeat of the Devil is significant because it assures us that he cannot harm us. Luther's well-known Reformation hymn reminds us of this wonderful truth as it encourages us to rely on our Savior God and to rejoice always in his victory.

***Though devils all the world should fill,
All eager to devour us,
We tremble not, we fear no ill;
They shall not overpow'r us.
This world's prince may still Scowl fierce as he will,
He can harm us none. He's judged; the deed is done!
One little word can fell him.*** (CW 200)

At the name of Jesus – the demons will cower and flee along with their evil temptations. We read in the book of Acts that when Paul was in Philippi, a young girl who was possessed by a demon kept following Paul and was undermining his ministry but at the name of Jesus, the demon left her. ***She kept this up for many days. Finally Paul became so troubled that he turned around and said to the spirit, "In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!" At that moment the spirit left her.*** (Acts 16:18 NIV)

Today it is much more likely that we will experience the devil's temptations and accusations as he tries to lead us away from Christ and his forgiveness. The fact remains that Jesus has authority over demons and therefore they no longer have power over us. Jesus became one of us to defeat the devil for us so that he can no longer have power or control over us. Hebrews 2:14-15 (NIV) assures us: ***Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death--that is, the devil-- 15) and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.***

Sin is what makes us afraid of death but Jesus has authority over demons and over sin. The next day, our text tells us, that after going off alone to pray that Jesus invited Peter and his companions to join him as he traveled through the surrounding villages to preach the good news.

Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. 36) Simon and his companions went to look for him, 37) and when they found him, they exclaimed: "Everyone is looking for you!" 38) Jesus replied, "Let us go somewhere else--to the nearby villages--so I can preach there also. That is why I have come." 39) So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.

Our text for today has provided us with an opportunity to see Jesus authority over sin and the Devil as it reported for us the numerous miracles of healing and numerous instances of casting out demons. The words of Jesus himself remind us that he did not come primarily to be a miracle worker or an exorcist (one who casts out demons). Jesus explains in our text: **"Let us go somewhere else--to the nearby villages--so I can preach there also. That is why I have come."**

Jesus' mission was to redeem the world from sin, to seek and to save the lost. It's no wonder he felt the need to press on with his message of repentance and faith. He had to let others know he truly was God in human form and that he had come to take away the sins of the world. His miracles offer proof of his divinity and authority but faith doesn't come through seeing it comes through hearing the message of Christ. And so, Christ would preach to demonstrate his authority over sin.

Isaiah the prophet foretold the wonderful way in which our sins would be removed from us: **5) But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. 6) We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.** (Isaiah 53:5-6 NIV)

In the next chapter of Mark's Gospel, Jesus will tell a paralyzed man that his sins were forgiven – and then he would enable him to walk so that people would know that he had authority on earth to forgive sins. That account helps us to understand the reason why Jesus performed his miracles. He did them to demonstrate that he was the one who had Divine authority over sin.

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Praise the LORD, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. 2) Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits-- 3) who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, 4) who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion ... 10) he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. 11) For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; 12) as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. (Psalm 103:1-3,10-12 NIV)

Amen.