Mark 1:21-28 Then they went into Capernaum. On the next Sabbath day, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. 22They were amazed at his teaching, because he was teaching them as one who has authority and not as the experts in the law. 23Just 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!” 25Jesus rebuked the spirit, saying, “Be quiet! Come out of him!” 26The unclean spirit threw the man into convulsions, and after crying out with a loud voice, it came out of him. 27Everyone 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!” 28News about him spread quickly through all the region of Galilee.

 I want you to take a moment and think about all the Scripture readings that we had for today. I want you to see how those readings work to support each other and work to guide in a common theme for this particular Sunday.

 Take the Deuteronomy lesson, our Old Testament lesson. It is really a prophecy concerning the Messiah to come. It says this to us: **18I will raise up a prophet for them from among their brothers, like you, and I will put my words in his mouth, and he will speak to them everything that I command him. 19Anyone who will not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name, I myself will call him to account. 20Any prophet who presumes to speak something in my name that I have not commanded him to speak or who speaks something in the name of other gods―that prophet shall die.”**

 Now as you look at those words, one thing should become clear. The Lord is going to send the Messiah and the Messiah is someone we need to listen to because he carries and bears the very Word of God! And note what the Lord says of those who will not listen. Note also what the Lord says of those who presume to preach and teach his Word and do so falsely, note what the Lord says there! Actually pretty sharp words. I bring this up because again, as is clear, this is a prophecy about Jesus. So we are literally being told that to ignore Jesus or to teach falsely about Jesus is going to cause you clear problems. Simple question. So how do people who think they can decide what is what in the realm of religion not grasp the importance of these words? And the answer is: Because they do not believe these words or the Word of God, which is the very word of Jesus! Shouldn’t that be the measure of the church we go to?

 Look at the Epistle text. The Epistle is a bit harder to fathom simply because we don’t grasp the situation. This is the Roman world, the old world. There are all sorts of temples and gods and so forth, found everywhere. The issues was whether or not you could eat the “food” that was sold by these temples, food they claimed was for the gods, but that they sold to make money. Because some, who didn’t fully grasp the truth of God, thought of this food as “food sacrificed to idols” and therefore some sort of unholy or unclean food, there was a problem. Those who knew the truth knew that before the Lord it didn’t matter because false gods are false gods and nothing anyway. But those who didn’t grasp this truth thought of eating this food as being wrong. So when you really look at this lesson you learn: There is only one God, the true God, follow him and him alone! That means: follow the Word and revelation of God and Jesus and the Bible because it is all one and the same.

 Now let’s turn our attention to the Gospel lesson. What is it we are to learn from what happens here? That’s what we will do. We will learn more about Jesus and who and what He is. Our theme will be: **THE ONE WHO HAS AUTHORITY!**

 So here is Jesus. We are at the very beginning of his ministry. Clearly he has already been doing miracles but for right now, it is what Jesus is teaching, what Jesus is saying that seems to have the greatest impact on people. So think of a few things first. Already, there are a number of disciples, each called to follow Jesus and to become the disciples of Jesus who will later on spread his message to the rest of the world. As we heard last week, these men readily and willingly left their professions, their family businesses and put their entire life into Jesus.

 Why would you do that? Because it is clear to these men, now disciples, that there was something totally and absolutely awesome about Jesus. He was different. His message was different. His message, though based on the Word of God they had and learned in their lives, was not one of work righteousness and the personal earning of God’s favor. Jesus spoke of grace, forgiveness and salvation as the work that God will do, as the hope that God will provide, as the sure and certain point of what God had already revealed in his Word. Jesus helped people hear the “good news,” the news about a Savior that was of and from God. A savior who would save completely. A savior who fulfilled everything that was found in God’s Old Testament and was foreshadowed in all the ceremonial trappings of their Jewish faith. That’s what Jesus taught and pointed to.

 We can see the impact of Jesus on the people of the synagogue in Capernaum. Before any miracle is done or witnessed by these people what do we hear of them? The text says, **“They were amazed at his teaching, because he was teaching them as one who has authority and not as the experts in the law.”** What Jesus was teaching was a wonder. What Jesus was teaching contained nothing of wishy-washiness, hem hawing and pious guessing. What Jesus was teaching had authority and I will tell you, the ring and facts of truth! So far, all of this just because the people listened to Jesus!

 So I wonder, what is our problem? Why don’t we have the same wonder and awe over Jesus? Do we think he has no more authority? Do we think that somehow his Word has been diminished? Do we not grasp that this is God’s Son, the very revelation of God’s saving truth and salvation? Oh, wait a minute, maybe there is the problem.

 Is that what we think? Jesus has come and so it doesn’t matter anymore what we say or do or whether or not we think anything of him? Let’s kind of think this idea through. If Jesus and what Jesus is about doesn’t matter, then why did God send Him? Now, if God didn’t send him, then why do we care anything about anything at all? Because if Jesus is not from God, then we know nothing of God, in truth, there is no God and also in truth, it doesn’t matter what goes on. Right and wrong is only a majority opinion. There is no god, no heaven and hell no nothing but the end of life somewhere down the road. So if I want to take all of your stuff, so what? If I want to pillage and kill and do whatever I want, so what? Only the strong survive, only the mighty get what they want! It a free for all world and who is to say any different? Unfortunately, though this idea is totally and absolutely false, please note that I think a good bit of this world now actually thinks this way!

 If there is a God and he did send Jesus and the implications of sin don’t matter, then why did Jesus have to suffer and die? Why the death on the cross and all of that other stuff? If God is just some sort of old lovey dovey entity who has no sense of justice and who doesn’t care if you sin or don’t sin, then again why all of this stuff that Jesus endured? Why the cross? Why the resurrection? Why the call for faith? Why the call for repentance? Back up even more. Why even give us a list of right and wrong, good and bad?

 But that is just it, there is a God and Jesus is the very representation of who and what God is. It is clear that Jesus cares about sin. It is clear that Jesus has a sense of right and wrong, of justice and judgement. Jesus so cares about all of that, that Jesus is willing and actually does go to the cross for you and me, there to pay for our sins. The end result is that you and I have the call in this world to believe in Jesus, to grasp his truth and wonder. To understand his message of grace and life and love and salvation. In other words, Jesus truly and absolutely does have a purpose and a message that we need to know and hear. Better yet, it is a message that we need to believe. And in believing that message, it is made clear in God’s Word that true faith in Jesus will produce the fruits of faith, the first of which is repentance, all in keeping with the wonder and joy of God’s Word.

By the way, don’t miss the importance of what is said in our Epistle reading. It said, **“We know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. 2If anyone supposes that he knows something, he does not yet know the way he ought to know. 3But if anyone loves God, this person has been known by him.”** Now, just to make this easy on you, here is the note on this verse found in the EHV study Bible. It explains: *”The person whose knowledge leads him to boast about himself and then acts without love toward others around him is one whose knowledge is off track (verse 2) because God acknowledges only the person who loves him (verse 3) and consequently also loves his fellow Christian (1 John 4:19-21).”* The lesson here is absolutely wonderful. You can’t claim to have God’s Word and then act contrary to that word. You can’t claim truth from God and then hate your brother, or if you grasp God’s Word even be filled with anger at your fellow Christian. True faith grasps this joy of salvation and it changes us in every way.

Now, let’s just take a brief look at how the Lord affirms his authority and makes it clear He is someone to be believed in. We are told there was “an unclean spirit” in the synagogue. Just to help you out, recognize that we are speaking of a man who has been possessed by a demon. If you have been in my Bible classes you know why this is happening, the Son of God is in the world and there is out and out warfare, spiritual warfare going on between the Devil and Jesus. Notice that this “unclean spirit” makes a startling confession about Jesus. It is recorded this way, **“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!”** Make no mistake, this demon is there to challenge and oppose Jesus, even though he really doesn’t get a chance. He doesn’t get a chance because Jesus immediately shuts him up and commands him to leave. That is exactly what happens. This demon is quieted and is forced to leave simply because of the word and command of Jesus!

A few things perhaps we should notice. This demon clearly grasps who and what Jesus is! This demon understands the purpose of Jesus! That Jesus has come to destroy their work, to put an end to the tyranny of Satan’s hold on souls and in that sense, yes, to destroy them. There is no doubt at all that this demon is terrified at the man Jesus before him. Next grasp what the demon clearly states, **“I know who you are—the Holy One of God!”** Again, I will tell you this demon was up to no good, but Jesus immediately puts a stop to his plans. And yet, this demon has made a statement that we need to take note of, Jesus is the Holy One of God, Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of God, the One who has been sent to crush the Devil’s head and in doing so the One who will open the doors of heaven to all who believe! The demon makes it clear he grasps and knows the authority and power of Jesus. And when Jesus commands, the demon leaves because of the authority and power of Jesus.

What did the people see? Nothing! They heard the exchange. Perhaps they knew of the man’s problem with this demon, but the text doesn’t make that totally clear. In Luke it speaks of how the demon will throw the man down and then the demon is gone without any harm to the man. But again, listen to the impact all of this had on them, “**27Everyone 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!”**

I submit that we should be in awe of all of this. There is a synagogue full of people who clearly give witness to the power, the authority of Jesus, yes, the amazement of Jesus! I think we can believe their testimony. If this were a courtroom and these, let’s just say 40 people recount to you this wonder and awe of Jesus, you don’t think you would want to believe? Yet we have more than that. We have the entire New Testament that testifies to the wonder and majesty of Jesus. We have the promise of the very Word of God that Jesus is the Christ, God our Savior. We have seen his in God’s Word, his message, his wonder, his suffering and death. We have been witnesses of his life, his actual and physical return to life and then we have witnessed his ascension to heaven. We have seen and witnessed far more than these people in this synagogue and I submit that each and every one of us should be filled with awe, wonder and total confidence in Jesus as the Lord and Savior, as the “Holy One of God.”

May God grant you faith so that you be filled with this amazing Jesus! He is your Savior. Amen.