

The True and Greater Authority

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 07 November 2021

Preacher: Rev. George Sinclair

[0 : 0 0] Father, we give you thanks and praise that we can gather together here in the Ottawa Little Theatre to come into your presence. We give you thanks and praise, Father, that our brothers and sisters, our friends, can join in to worship through YouTube and electronic means.

Father, we ask in the name of Jesus that if there is anyone present, or if there is anyone watching this right now, or who will be watching it in the days to come.

Father, if there are any here who are harassed, or bound, or oppressed, or even demonized by unclean spirits, by demons.

Father, not in our own power or in our own righteousness, but Father, in the name of Jesus, washed in his shed blood, made yours by adoption and grace.

In the name, the strong name of our Lord Jesus, we ask, Father, for any demon that is speaking that would be silenced by you. Any demon interfering in our lives, that it would be bound by you.

[1 : 0 3] And that those silenced and bound demons would be taken far from this place and far from any person that the demon is harassing. That the demon would be taken to the abyss, prepared for it before its final doom.

And we ask, Father, for those of us who are Christians, that you would make us more trusting of Jesus, more secure in the gospel. And if there are any here, Father, who have been harassed by demons, that you do not leave them empty, but that you bring them to a saving faith in Jesus.

That they would have that true and final protection from all demonic presence and power. And we ask, Father, so that we will be in your presence, where Jesus is Lord.

And that you would tune our hearts and move our hearts, that we might receive grace from you this morning and respond to you in a worthy manner. And we ask this in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen.

Amen. Please be seated. Some of you might be a little bit surprised by that prayer. You know, one of the problems...

[2 : 0 8] Actually, it's going to fit into it, because those of you who are paying attention to the reading, the demons are mentioned a lot. One of the problems is that in our world, people seem to alternate between two poles.

They either act like atheists, as if all of reality is just swept of any type of angelic or demonic presence. Or we act like pagans who see spirits everywhere.

And you see that reflected in Christian congregations. There's a lot of Christian churches that basically just act like they're atheists when it comes to stuff like this. And then on the other hand, you see some that act more like pagans.

They see spirits everywhere. And we need to come to have some type of a godly balance about all of that type of stuff. But that's a bit of a... Anyway, there you go. That's a bit of a... I wasn't expecting to say that.

I have to always be careful when I say things I wasn't expecting to say. I can get into trouble. Some of you have heard this story before. Maybe many of you have heard it before. But for many years, I was part of the Anglican Church of Canada.

[3 : 05] And I was an Orthodox pastor in the Anglican Church of Canada. And one of the things that meant was that whenever Anglican-y type things going on, or even like ecumenical or political type things going on, guys like me would never get invited.

Just the way it worked used to bother me. But after a while, it didn't bother me. That was just the way it was. That people like me wouldn't get invited to speak. But occasionally, people like me would get invited to speak to some of these things.

And I would observe what would happen. What would happen is that people like me would... I don't really like this analogy, but I can't think of a better one. They'd pull their punches. They'd try to act really like they were like all of the others.

And not really bring out that Orthodox distinctiveness and that Gospel distinctiveness. And they'd often just talk about, you know, basically just be nice type sermon. And I know that they did it because they hoped that if they could sort of prove that they weren't knuckle-dragging mouth breathers, that maybe they'd get invited back.

But what always happened is they never got invited back. Like, never. So, you know, fast forward a few years. I get invited to this thing that I'd never heard of before I get invited to the Parliament Hill Christian Fellowship.

[4 : 17] I probably got invited because of a person who's here in the room today. But I didn't really know her that well back then. And anyway, I get invited to the Parliament Hill Christian Fellowship. So I just sort of assume, I don't know, that it's going to be a liberally type of thing.

And so I'm praying about what to do. I was honored. I said yes to the invitation. I thought, I'm not going to be like all of those other people who pull their punch. But what will I speak about? So I decided that if I'm going to get a chance to speak to staffers on Parliament Hill, I'm going to talk to them about the fear of God, the last judgment in the gospel.

Because I'm never going to get invited back. So why should I try to do something to get invited back? I might as well give them this one shot. And you know, the fact of the matter is, I'm not picking on Parliament Hill staffers, by the way.

The fact of the matter is, is that, you know, my favorite line, it came from John Maxwell. Well, people don't think they have a problem with money, but they spend money they don't have to buy things they don't need to impress people they don't like.

Doesn't that describe a lot of society? Yeah, there we go. And amen. Money we don't have, buy things we don't need to impress people we don't like. Anyway, that's just, you know, we're taught, you know.

[5 : 30] But, you know, so I know on Parliament Hill, they're looking at polls, they're looking at how to vote, they're looking at, they care about what the CBC or CTV or Global News, like, they care about all of those things. And I just want to say, if you're Christians, what you need to remember is that one day you're going to appear before the judgment seat of God.

And that, therefore, you need to take that into account when you make your decisions and rules. Anyway, they invited me back for, like, 20 years. I'm not saying that's a good policy, although, you know, if you do that, you'll get invited back.

Most of the time, you probably won't. But, you know, if you're just going to have that one shot, like, give it to them, but as it turned out, that's what they wanted. They wanted somebody who would talk about hard type of things. And I was speaking on Parliament Hill up until the COVID thing, and I don't know if they've met again, and I'm off their speaker list, or they'll reboot.

You should pray that it gets rebooted. And it's in God's hands whether I get invited to speak or not. But anyway, there you go. So all of this fits in, actually, believe it or not, both my weird prayer, my little aside about demons, and this whole thing about people in government with the text that we have before us today.

In fact, it touches upon very, very profound human issues. So if you get out your Bibles, we're looking at Mark chapter 1, and we're going to begin at verse 21. I just want to continue to encourage you, whether it's here or online, we will put the words to the Scripture up on the screen, and most of the time I stick with it.

[6 : 48] But there is something about having your own Bible and being able to follow along. And, you know, in fact, it's a very, very good thing if afterwards you say, George, you didn't connect this verse to that verse or whatever, or you told me I voted.

I never want to, quote, take anything out of context. So it's good to have your own Bibles, to be Bereans, where you search the Scriptures yourself to see if what I'm saying is true. That's a bit of an in-house Bible analogy.

Anyway, here's the text. And they have already explained to you, though, about how that's the Jesus and four of his disciples. They went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath, he entered the synagogue and was teaching.

Now, just a bit of an aside, Capernaum is going to come across a lot. Actually, this is a thing for some of, you know, two weeks in a row now, I've talked a little bit about differences in the Gospel.

And this is a third way to understand some of the differences that happen in the Gospel. The thing that's interesting about Galilee is that Galilee was a mixed area. It was an area where Jewish, the majority of people were Jewish, but there was a significant non-Jewish population.

[7 : 50] And the non-Jewish population wouldn't have spoken Hebrew. They might have spoken Aramaic, but most likely they spoke Greek, which was sort of like the lingua franca of the world. And Capernaum's an important town, actually, relatively important town in those days, because on one hand, it's on the Sea of Galilee, and in those days, there's lots of fish in the Sea of Galilee.

In the ancient world at that time, the main protein source for people other than beans was fish. Not meat, not goat or chicken or beef. It was fish.

And there's, in fact, archaeological records to show that the fish from the Sea of Galilee were exported as far away as to Alexandria and Egypt and as far away as Damascus in Syria.

And, in fact, Capernaum is on the main trade route that goes from the Mediterranean Basin up to Damascus. So this was, in a sense, on one level, it's a bit of like a backwater type of place, but it's an important regional commercial centre.

And because it would have had traders going back and forward, it would be a place where you would expect many people to know many languages, not just Hebrew or just Aramaic.

[8 : 58] When you go to Montreal, for instance, most people that you would meet in Montreal speak French and English, as well as if they're new Canadians, whatever other languages from their country of origin. It's not unusual.

In areas like that, where there's lots of people from many nations coming around. When I was in Namibia, I'd ask, I had to take a cab twice, once to get, both to come to, to get to and from the airport.

And I'd made, I'd just ask the cab drivers, how many languages do you speak? And the first one spoke seven. The second said he spoke ten. Now, I have no idea whether they were just giving me, you know, blowing smoke at me to impress me.

I didn't know any languages to test them. But they spoke lots of languages. Now, I mention this. This is a Bible difficulty thing. Because one of the things that people don't often think about is that Jesus definitely knew Aramaic and Hebrew.

We know that. But because of the fact that where he was based, he probably knew Greek. And because there was a significant Roman garrison there, he also probably, he might have known Latin. And so what people often say, they'll look at a Bible thing where they seem to have three, like slightly different wording, and some people get really bent out of shape.

[10 : 08] And scholars write things that kill lots of trees to try to figure out these problems. But sometimes it could be very simple. When I had the privilege to be in Angola, on the edge of the Kalahari, I got to be able to speak, you've heard this before, I got to share, to preach to a group of semi-nomadic tribespeople who had only had the gospel come to them very recently.

And when I spoke, I spoke in English, and beside me was a man who spoke Portuguese, which was the colonial language, and he would translate my words into Portuguese.

And beside him was another man who also spoke not only English and Portuguese, but he spoke the tribal language. So I would say, da-da-da-da-da-da, and then you would hear, da-da-da-da-da-da in Portuguese, and then you would hear, da-da-da-da-da-da in the tribal language.

And for people who were listening who spoke all three, it would be very interesting. In fact, some of the missionaries told me a little bit about how they had, you know, whether they didn't always agree necessarily with how the Portuguese guy translated me into Portuguese.

But the point is, what we don't often think about is if you went back in a time machine, you might see Jesus speak in Jerusalem and say, A, B, C, D. And then he says A, B, C, D in, he says it in Hebrew, he says A, B, C, D in Aramaic, and he says A, B, C, D in Greek.

[11 : 30] And then maybe even, this is a fourth time in Latin. And people who are recording it, the wording's going to be a little bit different, right? I mean, this is just the third thing. There's lots of reasons why you should trust the historical reliability of the New Testament.

But minor changes in wording, especially when they, there's lots of ways to explain it, but even something as simple as that, that Jesus could have been saying the same thing in two or three times, maybe even four times in different languages so that all of his hearers could hear, is in fact a very reasonable way to understand the dynamics of what was going on in his ministry.

Anyway, that's a long aside just on Capernaum, but hopefully it helps you when you read the Bible to have confidence in the New Testament and have confidence in the Gospel. But let's get to the real existential point using a big word, existential.

Verse 22, Now, this touches on what I did with the Parliament Hill Christian Fellowship.

There's no real way to translate into English this word authority in the original language. In English, when we use the word authority, it's basically a completely secular idea or concept.

[12 : 43] I have authority to perform weddings in the province of Ontario. That was given to me by the state. I have a marriage license with a number. I'm registered with the state.

I can do wedding ceremonies. You know, people get authority from acts of Parliament. They get from professional associations, but they're all completely and utterly secular. And that's just how we understand the word.

But if we understand the word that way, we're misunderstanding the word in the original language. Because in this word, there is a very, very clear connection to the supernatural, to God, to the transcendent.

It's not merely that there's some human authority. It's not, there's not saying that he has an authoritative manner, that he has a deep, booming voice, or whatever. Maybe back then they thought, hi, squeaky voices are authoritative.

Like, we don't know. But it's not as if he was able to have the right type of voice, to wear the right type of dress, to look the right way, to somehow or another act authoritative. They have this sense that there's something about him which is authoritative.

[13 : 46] And for them, that word authority, and all the times you see the word authority in the New Testament, it always includes that divine, supernatural, transcendent dimension.

Interestingly enough, even in our secular world, and Canada is, in some ways, a rabidly secular society. Parts of the elite culture is rabidly secular.

secular. But even in our rabidly secular culture, people with authority like to try to invest themselves with something transcendent.

We're not just the prime minister. I'm saving the planet from climate change. I'm not just the prime minister. I'm saving us from having horrendous COVID things.

I'm not just the prime minister. I'm part of a progressive, political way. The whole culture is moving. Something bigger than me that's transcendent, that's planet big, that's history big, history transformative.

[14 : 44] And it's a regular feature of authority that they want to try to sneak in, that they're connected to something divine, something moral, something transcendent, something big.

And while Canadians, and it actually sort of shows for a second, if you think about it, why is it that it's very, very hard for secular people to just purely say, well, this is just human?

Like, why is that hard? Like, why is it that they don't want to just say, well, it's just that way because I decided it? No, they want to say that somehow or another that there's something more.

But the ancients didn't hide around that. They directly come up with a word that says there's something supernatural. There's something of God. There's something of the heavens involved in this type of human authority.

And that's the word that's going on here. They're recognizing something more than human in Jesus when they say he has authority. Now, how on earth would you ever possibly know that?

[15 : 50] And why on earth should any of you who aren't, if you're here as a seeker or a skeptic or a scoffer, if you're watching this as a seeker, a skeptic, a scoffer, you know, hopefully this isn't the case, watching to see if there's some reason you can cancel me or something like that, which has happened to some churches lately in the Ottawa area, at least one that I know of.

Somebody watching their services to try to get something naughty to see if they can get them canceled. Sorry, I have to watch what I'm going to say.

So why should we believe that? Just because it's in the text. Well, it's very interesting what happens in the text next. Look what happens in verse 23. And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit and he cried out.

Now, an unclean spirit is in Mark's gospel there's going to be two different ways they refer to demons. One is just the word demon and the other one is the word unclean spirit. And they're going to show up at different times.

The devil has already showed up earlier than this and there's going to be demons. And immediately there was in their synagogue verse 23 a man with an unclean spirit and he cried out this is the man who's who has an unclean spirit connected to him.

[17 : 07] Basically, he's possessed. He's demonized. And he cried out what have you to do with us Jesus of Nazareth? Notice how he says what? What have you to do with us? The man and the demon have become so intertwined that it's a plural.

What have you to do with us Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are the Holy One of God. But Jesus rebuked him saying be silent and come out of him.

And the unclean spirit convulsing the man and crying out with a loud voice came out of the man. And they were all amazed so that they questioned among themselves saying what is this?

A new teaching with authority. Remember what I said about authority. He commands even the unclean spirits and they obey him. And at once his fame spread everywhere throughout all the surrounding region of Galilee.

Now, at the earlier service there's a semi-retired professor here who, or there's a person here who used to do lots of social research. So, in social research and I had a bit of a discussion with him between the services and there's various ways to talk about it but very simply put often in social research whether it's political science or psychology or sociology they know that there's things going on.

[18 : 28] There's variables about, you know, things with intelligence things with, you know, emotional investment. There's things going on in the culture and in the society and they try to measure it and the things that they're trying to measure can't be measured directly.

And so what the social scientists do is they have a theory they have hypothesis they have an understanding of what's going on and what they try to do is they try to develop an indicator of the reality and the indicator is something that they can measure.

So they don't say necessarily that if this is the reality and this is the indicator they don't say necessarily that the indicator is the whole thing of the reality. They're trying to get at this real thing and they can't get at this real thing because it can't be measured and they want to be social scientists.

They want to be able to do path analysis and cosine analysis and they want to be able to measure it in some way and show what's going on but they come up with this way of thinking about that there's these indicators that can be measured and that if you get at the indicators you're getting at this you're taking a step at getting at this underlying reality.

In an interesting way that's what's going on here in the gospel. You get an indicator so there's no way of proving whether or not Jesus has that type of supernatural authority not directly but what you can have are indicators of it and one particular indicator of it it's going to show up more than once in this series of stories that we're looking at today we'll see if I read all of them a second time but one indicator of that type of authority is whether Jesus can cast out a demon and it's very interesting of how he does it.

[20 : 05] He doesn't perform an exorcism. He doesn't do like the pagans would do in a case like that which they would try to invoke different gods. He doesn't use anything that he doesn't try to cast a different type of spell using so-called white magic against black magic.

He doesn't do what a devout Jew would do which might use not only what we would call maybe liturgical things like holy water and stuff like that but that they would have a period of prayer asking God to do something.

What he does is he just merely says what does he say just merely says be silent and come out of them. He doesn't appeal to a higher authority doesn't appeal to any other types of authorities.

He as authority merely speaks and the demon flees. He doesn't pray he doesn't do anything he just speaks and the demon's gone.

In fact actually at a level that you can't tell at from here but scholars will say that one of the things which is very interesting about all of the stories like this that take place in Mark's gospel is that if you go back to the ancient literature of the same time in the same language there's many apparent miracle type stories like this but in fact at a literary level the miracle stories that Mark writes and Luke and Matthew and John are qualitatively different than the same stories written by the pagan literature.

[21 : 32] That in fact all of the cases but Mark's a very very clear example of us they use fact language. They use dispassionate we would almost say scientific language descriptive language whereas the other type of language is couched with seems like and other types of flowery types of things that shows that the writers are trying to blur the whole realm between poetry and imagination and myth making and what actually happened but none of that is here it's a very type of factoid language which is used and so in this story which is just sort of very matter of fact Jesus just merely expresses he just merely says and this is what happens and so the implication is if Jesus can do that he is authority and so therefore these other things that he says are it's authority itself in fact not authority itself it's authority himself speaking authority himself present amongst us now let's just be very frank if this is true if it really happened the world is very different

I've said this before but we can't say it enough if this actually happened the world is very different than the world presented by CBC CTV Global News the Supreme Court of Canada the Prime Minister's office the office of the official opposition and the NDP and the Green Party and the Bloc Québécois the official view of the academy if this is actually if this actually happened the world is very different than the way we're being told it is and if you think about it for a second we have all of these clues even within literature and even within those realms of discourse we have all of these clues that what they talk about isn't actually you know it's a little bit like it's a little bit like if you go to some sources that are a bit skeptical about mass mandates and stuff one of the things they love doing they love doing is taking like there's a little while ago the Democratic Caucus was about to make some announcement they didn't realize there was somebody taking a picture and they took a picture of it one minute before the announcement and the minute before the announcement none of them were wearing masks but in the official picture they're all wearing masks right like it's a bit of a sign that they don't really believe what they say about masks right just as sorry I have to stop okay just stop George by the way this is a human problem okay it's not a political problem it's a human problem we all talk one thing and do different things it's a human problem right human problem not political but what I'm saying as is that even in the world that talks about at rapidly secular that there is no higher meaning and just as I said it's hard for politicians to not want to try to add as if there's a higher meaning same it is actually with us like the fact of the matter is is that the idea that the world is completely and utterly devoid of meaning that in fact all that happens is that you know we just sort of pretend that there's some meaning because if you pretend there's some meaning then it's easier to live life that you don't really think that there's some type of a meaning which is greater than you and separate from you that there's actually what happens if you notice if you look at a very very elderly woman smiling with all their wrinkles and you think that there's something beautiful about that and something wonderful about that it's not just something you've put on her but that you're actually recognizing something that's real that if you hear a spectacularly beautiful piece of music that just deeply moves you it's not just that you've created some type of emotion to put on that but you have a sense that you're recognizing something which is real that if you see a beautiful sunset you know if you're off in the Rockies and you see a sunset you see the Rockies you see the ocean and you just your heart is just filled that there's something there which is just wonderful and if somebody says no you're just putting that on that but hard of you know that there's a clue that you're not just putting that on that you recognize something which is there which is separate from you that you say it doesn't matter if you're a Muslim a Buddhist an atheist it doesn't matter if you're gay or straight you should think that that is beautiful and so we see these clues that there is a there's a beauty that there's a a meaning that there's a a type of glory that we don't impose on the world but that we recognize on the world and that if you do that if you recognize that that there's a bit of a clue it's a clue that the Christian side of the conversation is the right side of the conversation to be on

Jesus has authority if you have a sense that there must be meaning to life that there must be well if you have a sense that gosh it really is the case it must be the case it has to be the case that love is stronger and deeper and more pure and that which we should choose over hatred if you have this sense that they're not just two equal and opposed things you know you can flip a coin I'm going to choose hatred well I'm going to choose love I'm going to choose hatred I'm going to choose love but then no no no no no no you have to choose love there's something deeper and truer and realer about love than hatred if you have this sense that love has to be that life has to be stronger than death that there's something offensive of death that life and death aren't equally just merely natural biological processes that make no difference except the fact that we invest some difference and meaning to it but that when we recognize that life has to be stronger than death that there's something offensive with death that we're not creating that imposing that but we're recognizing that that is a clue that you should be on the Christian side of the conversation on this issue though what we see in the person of Jesus who has authority which is something of the supernatural and what he's doing he's revealing what that supernatural reality is that he's revealing that in fact health is what we were made for not sickness clarity of mind and heart not being demonized is what we were made for that life is what we were made for not for death that love is what we were made for not hatred that justice is what we were made for not injustice that compassion is what we were made for not oppression and if you have a sense that those things are true then you are on the

Christian side of the playing field whether you recognize it or not in fact you know even you know you know secular scholars mainly English and European scholars have been doing work over the last decade to try to reveal these are secular thinkers coming to an understanding that a lot of the stuff that we think is just reason and is just secular reason in fact comes from Christianity because you see you think about it for a second here we have authority itself in the room and authority in itself in a room is confronted by a demonized man and when authority itself is in the room confronted with a demonized man authority uses its authority to heal the man and don't we all have a sense I mean go back to that mask thing and you know you can catch you can catch all the parties do it okay

I'm not making any political I really am not making a political point about this I really am not it's a human problem right but where does that inclination and that insight that moral insight come from in secular society that people in positions of power and authority that they should use it for good not for bad they should act with some type of sympathy for the weak and not oppress the weak like where does that insight come from in the Hindu and Buddhist mythology there's caste you deserve that caste that's why people like Mother Teresa were so radical like they deserve that they earned that status no for Christians they don't earn that status human beings have dignity and worth and don't you have that sense that authority real authority real power should have some degree of love and compassion in it that that's what it's really designed for you look at atheistic states that's not necessarily there it comes from the Bible it comes from being formed by stories like this that we have this sense it's not something that emerged just from purely secular like read Nietzsche

[31 : 18] Nietzsche doesn't say that Nietzsche would scoff at people who say that they'd just say he'd say you're Christians and for him to say that it means you're stupid and so even so much of the secular world that rejects the Christian faith is in fact living off of the fumes the residue of this formation that's come from stories like this about the proper exercise of authority but there's more to this story than that and if I don't get to the other stories that's fine this is sort of woven all the way through the rest of them actually you know what a cute thing let's just jump ahead this is really really key in terms of how power works and everything like that because that's one of the things which is so important to this story just keep reading verse 29 and immediately he left the synagogue and entered the house of Simon and Andrew with James and John now verse 30 Simon's mother-in-law lay ill with a fever and immediately they told him about her and he came and took her by the hand and lifted her up and the fever left her and she began to serve him notice that he doesn't pray he doesn't give her medicine he just takes her hand and she's healed who's Jesus it's been revealed that he's not like what is this supernatural authority what is this divine authority the divine authority is the one that frees you from the demonic what is the divine authority divine authority is properly to restore human beings to a proper freedom and control of their faculties it's to deliver you from sickness that you may be whole but look it gets really cool it's something it's only in the original language you can't see it in the

English that evening at sundown they brought to him all who were sick or oppressed by demons and the whole city was gathered together at the door and he healed the many okay in a literally way and he healed the many who were sick with various diseases and cast out many demons and he would not permit the demons to speak because they knew him but that verse 34 and he healed the many in the original language you know what that word is some of you don't know this word because it's but it's *hoi polloi* you know how in elite circles it'll talk about the *hoi polloi* are people who work at Tim Hortons it's the working it's the it's the common people who don't really know or understand anything and who does Jesus heal the *hoi polloi* the many but you see here's here's a couple of things which are so important about this particular story you see what is it that's being revealed in this type of story and the story is shaping us to understand that true authority real authority authority which is connected to the divine should be an authority which works for healing for freedom for deliverance for justice that that's in fact what real authority that's what

God is ultimately really like and it's even it's shown in the fact that that the beginning of the whole thing it says remember that all of the gospel of Mark can be understood as the time is fulfilled the kingdom of God is at hand repent and believe the gospel and so that actually there's a riddle in there like what is the kingdom who is the kingdom how do you get in and what this entire story from these texts on in terms of how Jesus deals with the sick how he deals with the *hoi polloi* how he deals with the demonized I'm not going to maybe have time to look at it but how does he deal with the leper the social outcast how does he deal with them the kings of the earth send people out to die so they will receive glory but what we see here is that Jesus loves people and dies for people for their glory it's a complete reversal of the general pagan and religious understanding of how authority is to work you see the fact is that when

Jesus says the time is fulfilled the kingdom of God is at hand repent and believe the gospel there are in a sense on one level there's nobody in that kingdom right now on one level you don't want to get into old testament saints and all that but on one level the new kingdom hasn't been inaugurated yet it's not inaugurated until he dies upon the cross and rises from the dead and in the kingdoms of the world the king sends soldiers out to die for their glory in Jesus' case he will die for people so that they will be free and be part of his kingdom he dies to create citizens who are freed up by his grace to be part of his kingdom we also see something else which is really important in this particular story one of the things that Mark does at a literary level which is very interesting in the first couple of chapters and he does it in different places he doesn't only do it but people will ask a question where does his authority come from how can he do something like that and the answer is given by the demons you think about this particular story you know they're astonished at his authority and at the end they're astonished that he could do it but the answer is given by the demon that he's the holy one of

God now this is profoundly important for us as Christians and for those who are outside the Christian faith who might be considering becoming a Christian there's a world a universe of difference between saying Jesus is God or saying Jesus is a savior and saying Jesus is my savior there is a universe of difference it is as different as the east is from the west the north is from the south to say that Jesus is a savior and say that he is my savior that Jesus is an authority and saying he is my authority see the demons can say the first but they're still doomed if you read the book of revelation they will eventually be cast into the lake of fire for a final annihilation but God desires so much more for you and me the bad things in our lives are not the final word that

[38 : 11] God wants to have about you and me the times in our lives that we have been demonized is not the final word that the Lord wants to have about you and me the ways that we are unclean the ways that we are like a leper the ways that we are sick the ways that we are ostracized the ways that we are broken the ways that we are shamed the ways that we are belittled are not the final word that the Lord wants to have about you and me see he wants us to sow and look and say here is the man who will touch a leper here is a man who will address the demonized here is a man who identifies with sinners here is a man who knows all of this does not have to die you come to the conclusion as you read through the gospel of Mark that that old Christian saying is that it wasn't the nails that held Jesus to the cross but his love for you and me that held him to the cross Jesus could cast out a demon how on earth could he ever be hung to a cross we're going to see him fill the storm and feed the 5000 he could only do that if when he dies upon the cross he's dying out of love for you and me he does it willingly he is not a king who sends his pawns out so that he will triumph and live he is the king who comes amongst his pawns and dies for the pawns that the pawns might become kings and queens now some of our response just as we close is that

I remember many years ago talking to a person who was struggling with alcoholism and he came to the realization that he was probably an alcoholic and had to do something about him and one of the things he said to me is he said George if I stop being an alcoholic my life will be ruined I don't have a single friend who's not an alcoholic I'll have nothing to do any night I'll have nothing to do on the weekend I won't have any friends see one of the things which is so interesting is we hear about this and instantly there's part of us who says no no no if Jesus comes into my life even though he died for me if he comes into my life see one of the things which is the final thing which is so remarkable about that story is that when the demonized man says what have you to do with us Jesus Nazareth have you come to destroy us the demonized man is expressing how every person is in regard to key sins in their lives the person who's completely and utterly consumed without recognizing that they're consumed with money the person who's completely and utterly consumed without realizing that they're consumed with power or with their appearance or with having sex or with envy or just with food or like with whatever it is and it can be more than one thing there is this sense that if

Jesus comes into your life he's going to destroy us because I've become so consumed and so identified with my search for money even though my search for money is messing up my life like if you become consumed with making money you will actually rarely be happy because you're going to be worried about every downturn in the stock market you're going to be worried about the people who have more money than you you're going to feel insecure I remember the man who was very wealthy he was worth a lot of millions of dollars and he said he didn't know if he had enough money yet to retire he said I can't figure out when I have enough money money and I thought to myself you have like a hundred times more a thousand times more money if I had your money I'd but you see when money comes to take upon you your identity is insecure and you don't realize that your identity is being formed by gripping onto this type of thing and so it is when Jesus says if I come to you

I will come to save you I will come to free you and part of you says no no I might have to give some of that money away I might have to tithe I'm going to have to give to the poor and so we say to Jesus if you come to destroy us if you come to destroy us see the demonized man is expressing how we relate to sin to our pride our autonomy our ability to control ourselves even though all these things just make us more and more fragile not anti-fragile but fragile more and more dependent upon what other people think about us more independent about having the money having the car having the clothes having the sex having the relationships having the profile having the reputation having the position all of these things and they just make us at a fundamental level anxious and insecure and so we say to Jesus yes I know that you come and you will make the leper clean

I know that you come and you will make the sick whole I know that you come and you will take the demon eyes free but I think you're coming to destroy me and all I can say to you is look at what the Bible says he really does come to free you he really does come to free you he really comes to bring to open your eyes to the meaning of life to the beauty of life to the goodness of life to choosing generosity over greed choosing forgiveness over recrimination choosing love over hatred choosing freedom over being bound he has died for you to know that freedom to know him who is authoritative freedom please stand for those of us who are Christians one of the things every Sunday is to recommit to him not to become saved again to recommit to him and say

[44 : 33] Jesus you are my savior Jesus you are my lord yes Jesus it's worth it to choose generosity over greed it's worth it to choose forgiveness it's worth it to choose love it's worth it to choose life I recommit and every Sunday when we gather for those who have not yet given your life to Jesus there's no I worry that you'll destroy me but I trust what I just saw in your word that you will subvert those sinful power dynamics and idolatrous things in my life you'll subvert those but I trust you Jesus that you will subvert and deconstruct those but fulfill actually the real deeper longing of my heart because in the depth of my heart I know that I'd rather on my death bed than a greedy person a forgiving person than one who never forgives a loving person rather than one who hates one who shows compassion for every race rather than a racist that is really the deepest longing in my heart and all

I can say to you is to silence the demonized aspects in your sin and there's no better time than right now to say Jesus please be my savior and Lord and trust that you will free me and heal me that's the path you will put me on let's bow our heads in prayer father we thank you for Jesus we thank you that he is the king who died for the pawns so the pawns can be kings and queens under him we thank you father that you are on the side of life that you are love that you are life that you are goodness that you are beauty that you are joy that you are wholeness that you are freedom and that you father sent your son to die on the cross to take our place to do for us what we could not do for ourselves to make us your children by adoption and grace not weighing our merits but pardoning our offenses we thank you for Jesus and we ask father for in his way for your glory for the good of this city for the good of the world and father if there are any here who have not yet done that may father your holy spirit bring that work of miraculous work in their lives so that they for the first time might commit to him we ask all these things in the name of

Jesus and all God's people said amen