

Authority Song

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[0:00] Well, good morning. As Mike shared, my name is Dave, and it is a pleasure to be here this morning.

When I first met Mike, I immediately knew that I was going to like him. His heart for the Lord and for his people is evident, but despite my last name, Cartwright, which is English, my mom is Italian, so I knew I would like him just based on his name.

And coming into Kenosha this morning, I actually have not really spent much time in Kenosha. And driving through, it's just like Italian restaurant after Italian restaurant, so I will take recommendations afterwards of where I should go.

I would appreciate that. Oh, okay, we already got one. It's a privilege to be here. It is good to get to be together with brothers and sisters in the Lord just a few miles away.

It's a unique privilege of working for the Simeon Trust that we just get to see the way that God is moving in so many different local congregations. Be encouraged of the work that the Lord is doing simply in southeastern Wisconsin.

[1:15] You might not always see it, but great things are being done. Our passage this morning is in Matthew 8. I'm going to read it in its entirety, Matthew 8, 23 through 9, 8.

Afterwards, I'll pray and then we will jump in. So if you want to turn there, Matthew 8, starting in verse 23. And when he, being Jesus, got into the boat, his disciples followed him.

And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea so that the boat was being swamped by the waves. But he was asleep. And they went and woke him, saying, Save us, Lord, we are perishing. And he said to them, Why are you afraid, O you of little faith? Then he rose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm.

And the men marveled, saying, What sort of man is this that even the winds and sea obey him? And when he came to the other side, to the country of Gadarenes, two demon-possessed men met him coming out of the tomb so fierce that no one could pass that way.

[2:33] And behold, they cried out, What have you to do with us, O son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time? Now a herd of many pigs was feeding at some distance from them, and the demons begged him, saying, If you cast us out, send us away into the herd of pigs.

And he said to them, Go. So they came out and went into the pigs, and behold, the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned in the waters. The herdsmen fled, and going into the city, they told everything, especially what had happened to the demon-possessed men.

And behold, all the city came out to meet Jesus, and when they saw him, they begged him to leave their region. Getting into the boat, he crossed over and came to his own city.

And behold, some people brought to him a paralytic lying on a bed. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, Take heart, my son, your sins are forgiven.

Behold, some of the scribes said to themselves, This man is blaspheming. But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, Why do you think evil in your hearts?

[3:48] For which is easier to say, Your sins are forgiven, or to say, Rise and walk. But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.

He then said to the paralytic, Rise, pick up your bed, and go home. And he rose and went home. When the crowd saw it, they were afraid, and they glorified God, who had given such authority to men.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you for your word. We thank you that in the midst of all else that is going on in life, your word draws us back to you. It comforts us. It challenges us. It gives us a picture of who you are. In your majesty, in your glory, in your love.

And so, Father, as we come here this morning, we pray that you use your word to shape us more into the image of your Son. We pray all this in his name.

[4:52] Amen. Despite all the emotional turmoil that it has given me over the years, I can't help but absolutely love the NFL.

It is one of my favorite hobbies. It's one of the things that I enjoy most in the world. It's sitting down on Sunday and watching football. Now, I'm not originally from Wisconsin, so I kind of dread actually bringing this up in conversation when I'm initially meeting somebody.

Because they will, of course, ask, well, do you follow the Green Bay Packers? And to my shame, I say, no, I'm not from Wisconsin. I do not follow the Green Bay Packers.

And they're a little distraught at my response. And they have the follow-up question, which I dread even more. Well, then, who do you follow? It is with great shame I come before you this morning and say, I follow the Dallas Cowboys.

I know. That's the response. That's why I hate this conversation. And then after people collect themselves, they ask the follow-up question. Why?

[6:05] Why do you follow the Dallas Cowboys? I wish I had a good reason. I wish I could say something like, you know, it was a family team that was passed down from father to son.

And that's why I passionately follow the Dallas Cowboys. I don't have a good reason for why I follow the Cowboys. Simply, I was born in the 90s. I was a frontrunner.

They were the best team, and I followed them. And I've stuck with them, and I have paid for it ever since. I do not have a good reason for following the Dallas Cowboys.

I admit it. The question I have for us this morning is pretty simple. Why do you follow Jesus? I mean, why do you follow Jesus day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year? In good seasons, in bad seasons, when life is full, when life is full of disappointments, why do you continue to follow Jesus?

[7:14] Perhaps you're here this morning, and you're not actually a follower of Jesus. So the question for you is, well, why should you consider even following this Jesus?

Matthew is going to answer this question for us this morning. And if I could put Matthew's argument of why we should follow Jesus into one simple phrase, let me say it like this.

Follow the one who has all authority to fix everything. That's why you and I should follow Jesus.

That's why you and I should continue to follow Jesus.

Because he's the one who has all authority to fix everything. As we go through our passage this morning, we're going to see three scenes.

Each scene has a different arena, a different realm, in which Jesus is going to bring his authority into to fix, to realign things.

[8:25] He's going to use his authority, his prerogative, and his power to bring into order, to bring into perfect alignment that which has become absolute chaos.

The first arena we see is the natural world. We see this in 8.23-27. The disciples decided to follow Jesus.

They decided to get onto this boat with him. And very quickly, it becomes a lot different than perhaps what they expected. We thought following Jesus was going to be fun.

We thought it was going to be easy. Now all of a sudden, he's downstairs taking a nap, and we're in the middle of a storm. Most of these men were fishermen, so they probably had some experience in storms, but not like this.

They did everything they knew how to do to keep the boat up, but even them, at a certain point, realized that there was no hope for them.

[9:30] And so they run down to where Jesus is sleeping, and they stir him awake. And in verse 27, or I'm sorry, then they say to him, Lord, save us.

They cry out, and he's right there, but they're still not confident that he's actually going to be able to save them.

Now for us, on this side of the cross, sometimes it's a little easy to poke fun at the disciples, isn't it? I mean, how foolish of them, how silly of them. They have Jesus in the boat, and they are losing their minds.

But don't you and I do the same thing? Life can become chaotic, and all of a sudden, we're screaming out, Lord, save us.

And we're wondering, is he even listening? Is he even there? Or is he just asleep at the wheel as life becomes chaotic? Jesus wakes up from his nap, and with one word, that's all it takes, he calms this storm.

[10:48] And the disciples, their response in verse 27, look at it again. They marveled, saying, what sort of man is this that even the winds and the sea obey him?

Indeed, what kind of man would have authority over nature? From a Jewish perspective, it can only be one thing, one person.

It would have to be God. The Jewish faith saw God as the creator. He was the only one who had power over nature.

Psalms 107, verse 28 and 29 put it this way, they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, and he brought them out of their distress.

He stilled the storm to a whisper. The waves of the sea were hushed. So what Matthew is showing us here in this little scene is Jesus demonstrating his divine authority over nature.

[12:02] This act is nothing less than his declaration of I am fully God. And while this act leaves these men in a state of confusion, they don't know what to make of it.

I mean, who is this man that the seas even obey him? You and I are not to be left in a state of confusion as they were.

You and I have the benefit of being on the other side of the cross and of Jesus' resurrection. And when we see Jesus and his divine authority over the natural world, despite all the chaos that we still see present in this world, rather than leading you to confusion of where are you, Jesus, let it bring you to a place of comfort.

That Jesus is indeed in control. That he does indeed reign over this world. I don't think I need to convince anybody in this room that this world is in need of fixing.

We could talk for hours about the chaos that we see as we turn on the news. Natural disasters, disease, mental health problems, tragic accidents.

[13:34] The world is a deeply broken place. It's in need of some serious repair. And you and I can easily get caught looking at it and simply say, is this ever going to get better?

When you think of it, it makes you a little frantic. It makes you a little uneasy and you get why the disciples and we would say, Lord, save us.

But rather than confusion, let it drive you to comfort, knowing Jesus' divine authority. That one day, even though your heart will stop and my heart will stop, one day, Jesus will come back and all who have followed him will have eternal life, that he will bodily raise us from the dead.

In this fallen world, nature is distorted, it deteriorates, it groans, it causes damage, but one day, when Jesus returns, he's going to perfectly restore and bring harmony to the natural world as it was always meant to be.

and you and I will live in that wonderful paradise. The ailments, the fragility, the diseases that plague our earthly bodies.

[14:56] One day, when Jesus returns, he says that there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain because he, praise God, will make all things new.

I don't know what your struggle is this morning. I don't know what chaos in your life is wreaking havoc.

Maybe it is a disease. Maybe it is the damage that somehow you have endured through a fallen relationship.

but we are not to be confused about who is in charge. Find comfort.

Don't have little faith because chaos does not rule the day and it most certainly will not win. You and I know the one who has divine authority and who has the power to restore our world as it is meant to be.

[16:01] that is why we follow him. But of course it is not just that the natural world is out of order. We can see that in the next scene Matthew 8 28-34 here we see it is not the natural world that Jesus is setting back to right but the spiritual realm.

Jesus enters into this land which is actually outside of Israel. It is one of the few places in the gospel accounts that Jesus goes outside of Israel outside of the promised land of God's people.

It is as if Jesus is literally entering into enemy territory. And he enters in and gets out of the boat and he encounters these two demon possessed men.

He thought the storm was powerful of the natural world. Well look at these two men in this spiritual realm. The text says in verse 28 that no one could even get past them.

But in verse 29 notice what they call him son of God. Even these two men are recognizing Jesus' divine nature and the authority that he carries.

[17:18] Now of course when we come to a text like this our minds immediately ask like okay well does this still happen today? Like I mean are spiritual forces still active in this way?

Let's start with the idea that 100% they are still at play. Listen to me as I read from Ephesians 6 this is the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 6 verses 12 through 13.

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood but against the rulers against the authorities against the cosmic powers over this present darkness against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

Therefore take up the whole armor of God that you may be able to withstand in the evil day and having done all to stand firm. The Apostle Paul is very clear that these spiritual forces are not passive.

They are still very much active. And they are opposed to God and to everybody who would desire to follow him. And they love attacking God's people.

[18:36] Their tactics are pretty simple. They bind, deceive, and they entice into sin. And the result that we have is the world that we see. It's not one of natural order becoming chaotic but are spiritual one, are moral one.

We see this as legitimately the problem of evil that affects every single one of us, every human that has ever been born, the pain and destruction that sin brings.

But as powerful as they are, they legitimately are no match for Jesus. Once again in verse 32, Jesus simply says one word, go.

That's it. It's not some giant struggle, it's one word, and that carries enough power, enough authority, enough weight that they immediately are vanquished.

What Matthew is showing us in this scene is that Jesus not only has authority to set right the natural world, but he has authority to fix the spiritual one as well.

[19:55] What does this mean for you and I this morning? I would say simply this, you no longer have to walk as you once did.

We don't have to walk in sin, we don't have to walk in the patterns of life that cause so much damage to ourselves and to others, you are free to walk in the newness of life that Jesus alone provides.

You don't have to be living as a citizen of the domain of darkness, but you are now freed, you are now liberated to live as a citizen of the kingdom of God.

So my question for you is, which kingdom are you living in? I want to speak to those of us this morning that perhaps are feeling especially weighed down by sin, feeling defeated by a particular sin that has seemingly held you captive, that as much as you try, as much as you pray, it seems that you can't get free of it.

I want to sin. The idea that this sin will always have you in bondage, that is a lie.

[21:25] We see it simply here. Jesus has the authority, he has the power. He has overcome that which binds you. It's another lie straight out of hell that you will never be free of sin that binds you.

I think for a lot of us, it is simply a matter of believing this truth, that Jesus' authority actually has conquered the spiritual binds that are so easily around us and entangle us. take hope. This is the beauty of the gospel, that though once we were in the kingdom of darkness, we can now live in the kingdom of light.

Why do we follow Jesus? Simple. He's the one who's liberated us. He's the one who has freed us and defeated the evil spiritual forces.

What's interesting in this little scene, though, is the town's response. The town sees what Jesus has done and they're not really impressed.

[22:46] They're not rejoicing that these two men that have been bound by this evil spirit have been freed. And they're most certainly not interested in following Jesus either. They just want him to leave.

Seeing Jesus demonstrate his divine authority over nature, that left the disciples in confusion, but seeing his divine authority over the spiritual realm, that left the town simply wanting to dismiss him, refusing his authority.

We want nothing to do with you. We just want to live as we want to live. Don't come in here and mess it all up. Go away. It reminds me of Jesus' words in the gospel of John in chapter 3 when he says, the light has come into the world and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.

You might be here this morning and confess Jesus, but realize that it's not simply that you're caught up in sin, but you're actively participating in it, that you're voluntarily giving yourself to it. you're dismissing his divine authority over your life. Or maybe you're here this morning and you've just never put your faith in Jesus at all.

[24:09] Maybe you're here this morning and you've never actually responded to him as the one who is Lord and Savior. And now you're seeing that Jesus actually has come, yes, as the one with authority, but the one who uses his authority for your good.

To free you from the power and bondage of sin. To bring life where sin has only left death. This is the Jesus that Matthew says is worth following with everything.

And if that is you, I would plead with you this morning to talk to myself, talk to Mike, talk to whomever brought you here this morning about what it looks like to believe and follow Jesus. does beg the question though, because at some point we've all actually rejected Jesus' authority, right? We know that.

So it begs the question, well, if I recognize that I have rejected Jesus' authority, when I come to him, will he accept me?

[25:21] Or will he just cast me out? Matthew moves us into his last scene. We see that Jesus not only has authority over nature, not only over the spiritual realm, he has authority to repair our hearts.

The last story is a unique one. A man hears that Jesus is in town. undoubtedly, this man had heard of Jesus' ability to heal.

And so, being a paralytic, he makes sure that he ends up in front of Jesus. He gets some of his friends to help him. And he's lowered down, and the initial words that come out of Jesus' mouth are certainly not what he expected to hear.

He was looking for a physical, miraculous healing. He was looking for the ability to walk again. Instead, Jesus says something very strange.

Son, your sins are forgiven. Now, I want to be clear, it isn't that Jesus is unconcerned with our physical condition. It's not that Jesus is unconcerned with our physical well-being.

[26:41] In chapter eight of, or, sorry, in chapter seven of Matthew, you, we see Jesus healing again and again, compassionately going towards those who are sick, who have diseases.

Jesus is very concerned and compassionate towards our physical state. At the same time, Jesus knows it is not our biggest problem.

Jesus knows that there is something in much more need of repair than our physical bodies. It's our hearts.

The question becomes, if the human heart is in need of repairing, who can actually do it?

This is what Jesus does for us. So, who does he choose to heal though? Whose hearts does he repair? We see it right there in verse two.

[27:49] When Jesus saw their faith. That's it. That's all it takes. It's that simple. Jesus sees this man's faith and he exercises his authority to forgive sins.

It doesn't matter what you've done. It doesn't matter what you will do. Jesus responds to those who come to him in faith to forgive their sins.

Our story doesn't end there though. Usually you would think that the story would end there. This man came, his sins were forgiven, everybody goes home happy, but the story doesn't end there, does it?

I actually like the fact that it doesn't end there because if you're anything like me, Jesus declaring this forgiveness over this man, you question.

How do I know? How can I be confident that Jesus actually does have the authority to forgive my sins? I mean, can I be confident? Can I rest assured that Jesus actually does what he says he does?

[28:59] A few other people had the same question. In verse 3, the scribes and religious leaders, they hear and see what he's done and they say this man is blaspheming. And there's a clear reason why they would say this in their understanding, only God can forgive sins and Jesus is not God.

So, he is usurping God's authority and putting himself in position of God. Of course that's blasphemy. And let's be clear, if Jesus wasn't God, if he didn't have this divine authority, this divine prerogative and power to do such a thing, they would be absolutely right.

So, Jesus turns to them and he's like, fine, I'll play your little game and I'll prove it to you. I'll prove to you that I have all authority to forgive sins as I have said that I do.

What's easier to say in verse 5? Your sins are forgiven or rise and walk? You have to love Jesus' move here.

It's quite genius. Because what is easier? To say your sins are forgiven or to say rise and walk?

Well, anybody can say your sins are forgiven. You can't really see it.

[30:17] You can't show it. But rise and walk to a paralytic? That's undeniable proof. And so, Jesus is going to give them the proof that they so desire.

this indisputable proof. And I love the way that he says it, so that you may know. Again, how can you and I be certain?

How can we be confident? How can we rest assured that Jesus actually does forgive our sins? That he does have the power and authority to do so? Well, we see it in this healing.

we can be confident that Jesus means what he says when he says your sins are forgiven.

And this is the Jesus that Matthew is imploring you and I to follow once again, day after day, week after week, year after year. We all sin.

[31:22] We all have guilt and shame. And that guilt and shame tells us a narrative about who we are, about how God and Jesus feel about us.

Church, don't let that story that comes from your guilt, that comes from your shame, have more power and more authority than the words of your Lord and Savior.

Let those words sink deep into your soul, that you who have placed your faith in Christ can be confident that he has forgiven you of your sins.

God does not want us as his people to doubt what he has done for us. He doesn't want us to go through life wondering, is he still actually mad at me?

Does he still hold it against me? He doesn't want us wondering whether or not we will face his wrath when we come before him face to face. He wants us to be confident in his divine authority to forgive our sins.

[32:50] And he has this authority because he's the one who went to take those sins on our behalf. As we read earlier in Isaiah 53, he bore our sins so that we might be healed.

And then to prove that his death was sufficient for our justification, on the third day he rose again. An even greater miracle for us to witness than the hearing of the paralytic.

So church, be confident that your Lord and Savior, when he says you are forgiven, you are indeed forgiven. This is why we follow Jesus.

He has all authority to fix everything, the natural world, the spiritual world. Most importantly, me, you.

He has the ability, the authority to forgive us and fix us. The crowd's response is a little different in this last scene.

[34:05] It's not confusion, it's not dismissal, it's one of celebration. they lift their voices in thanksgiving and praise because finally somebody has all authority.

This world needs to fix all of its problems. songs. I love anthem songs. An anthem song being, you know, when you're at a barbecue, it comes on and everybody sings along to it, right?

It just, like, everybody knows it and it captures some universal experience and emotion. Something like Piano Man. We didn't start the fire.

Apparently, I love Billy Joel. I love anthem songs. One of my favorite anthem songs is Authority song by John Mellencamp.

It captures this rebellious spirit of American youth. In it, he writes this simple line, I fight authority and authority always wins.

[35:17] I fight authority and authority always wins. It's a great anthem. I particularly enjoy listening to it on the way to work, in my car, just screaming it out.

I fight authority and authority always wins. Brothers and sisters, for you and I, if we are following Jesus, we have a very different anthem in our hearts.

Our anthem is one that celebrates his authority. authority and thank God that his authority always wins. Let's pray.

Jesus, we thank you that you indeed do have all authority. Lord, in that you use your authority not just to serve yourself, but to serve us.

as you said, the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve. And so, Lord, we pray as we look at your authority, we don't look at it as something that is confusing to us, but something that comforts us.

[36:35] Not as something to dismiss, but something to accept. And something to be confident in. that your authority, your death and resurrection are sufficient to cover all our sins if we put our faith in you.

Amen.