

The Power of His Words!

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[0 : 00] All right, we're pressing on with Jesus' story in the Gospel of Luke, chapter 4. And if you have your Bible with you, please open it up. We're going to be picking it up here in verse 31.

Last Sunday, we saw how Jesus was outright rejected by his hometown of Nazareth. We heard about how he was received with excitement and honor in the synagogues of many other towns in Galilee.

But Nazareth was different. They were so furious that they tried to kill him. And we noticed in the dialogue there in Nazareth a reference to what Jesus had done in Capernaum.

Jesus said, and you will tell me, do here in your hometown what we have heard that you did in Capernaum. Well, now as we come down to verse 31, I believe Luke circles back to tell us about what happened in Capernaum.

My usual translation reads, then he went down to Capernaum. This is verse 31. And that word then kind of implies that there is a sequence. First Nazareth and then Capernaum.

[1 : 14] But a closer look at the language suggests that maybe that's an over-translation. This is another translation. And he went down to Capernaum.

And that's, I think, important. I don't know that sequence is intended by Luke because of what we heard last week about how this may be a little bit out of order here.

Let's just pause for a moment and consider why the Gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, sometimes present things in different orders. You don't have to read too much while comparing them to notice the differences.

Take Mark, for example. He has Jesus calling his first disciples right at the beginning of his ministry, even before what we're about to read today.

Luke doesn't talk about Jesus calling his first disciples until after what we're about to read today. We're still going to get to it in chapter 5 next week.

[2 : 19] Another example, if we look at our passage for today, we're going to hear about an exorcism and a healing of a mother-in-law. Here in Luke, they're just a verse apart.

And yet in the Gospel of Matthew, the entire Sermon on the Mount, multiple chapters is put in between these two things in his Gospel. Here's the takeaway.

There's more than one true way to tell a story. A strict timeline is one option. And generally, the Gospels do stay chronological.

Yet each writer at times may adjust the order in the way that they tell the story in order to shape the account and to tell the story in the way that makes the most sense to them.

Scholars largely agree that Mark is probably the most chronological out of the three synoptic Gospels. And that fits with his brief and less detailed way of telling things.

[3 : 22] Matthew, on the other hand, sometimes groups material by type and by theme. We see all the parables of the kingdom grouped together in some places. We see the religious leaders' dialogue with Jesus, all grouped in one section, and some other things.

Luke is similar to Matthew as well. Now, his account is orderly, and yet he is selective. Sometimes he tweaks the sequence to highlight a particular theme or to maintain a particular focus.

So far in Luke, we've seen that the focus is on Jesus and his identity. And then, as we've seen in the last couple weeks, it's now on Jesus' message and people's response to that message.

And so, we're going to hear about the miracles, we're going to hear about the disciples, but Luke wants us to hear about these things first. This shouldn't trouble us. I mean, even from our own experience, we know that there's more than one way to accurately and faithfully give an account of what happened in the past.

Especially if it was something where, you know, it was a very full and busy time in our lives. A lot of back and forth as Jesus' ministry was. But back to the story here.

[4 : 37] We're in verse 31. And Jesus went down to Capernaum, a town in Galilee.

And on the Sabbath, he taught the people. They were amazed at his teaching because his words had authority. So, the people of Capernaum have a completely different response than the people of Nazareth.

And Jesus kind of does the same thing, it appears. Just like he did in Nazareth, he goes into the synagogue in Capernaum. And he begins to teach. Luke says that the people there in Capernaum were amazed at his teaching.

That word amazed has become a very flat word in English today. We use it about almost everything. Utterly astonished. Perhaps better captures the meaning.

Astounded. Overwhelmed. Floored. There's a sense of shock in this amazement. Why?

[5 : 45] Luke says it's because his words had authority. What kind of authority did Jesus' words have that caused this reaction by the people?

Well, Luke's about to tell us what they heard that day from Jesus. Verse 33. In the synagogue, there was a man possessed by a demon.

An impure spirit. He cried out at the top of his voice. Go away! What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us?

I know who you are. The Holy One of God. Can you imagine this moment? I mean, imagine.

Here you are, sitting in church. Somebody just... I almost thought about asking someone to do this in the midst of the sermon here, but I thought, that might be a bit much. How would you feel if somebody just stood up and started shouting this in the middle of the sermon?

[7 : 01] Maybe the hair on the back of your neck would be standing. And look at the words that this man is shouting. Looking at his words alone, we see that he is repulsed by Jesus.

Go away! He shouts. What do you want with us? Have you come to destroy us?

Who's the us? Is anybody else in the room thinking the same thing? This man speaks using a strange mix of plural and singular pronouns.

Which fits the description that he was possessed by a demon. Jesus' words in Nazareth made the people furious.

But this is something totally different here. There is, Luke tells us, an impure, unclean spirit in the man. A demon. A demon.

[8 : 09] And if this is something that you've never heard of before, demons in the Bible are basically fallen angels. And they roam to and fro deceiving and oppressing and manipulating and trying to do harm to people.

The reaction of this demon. The reaction of this demon to Jesus' words and to his presence is shocking.

The demon wants Jesus to go away, to get away from him. Could it be that the man himself was engaged in some kind of internal battle with this evil spirit?

And had come into the synagogue to seek help from Jesus against the will of this evil spirit. And then this demon, it seems, goes ballistic.

Can you hear the fear in its voice? Have you come to destroy us? Now why would this demon, who's been having his way with this poor man, why would this demon have cause to fear Jesus?

[9 : 23] Why would this demon fear destruction from Jesus? Why would this demon fear?

Why would this demon fear? Why would this demon fear? Why would this demon fear? And this demon knows it. Jesus has the power to destroy this corrupt, fallen creature.

And the demon knows it. How does Jesus respond in this moment? Verse 35. Be quiet, Jesus said, stir.

Come out of him. And we'll put a more literal wording on the screen again here. And Jesus rebuked it, saying, Be silent and come out from him.

Note the word rebuked. Then the demon threw the man down before them all and came out without injuring him.

[11 : 01] All the people were amazed, astonished, and said to each other, What words these are! With authority and power, he gives orders, commands, impure spirits, and they come out?

And the news about Jesus spread throughout the surrounding area. So let's go back to that question that we asked at the top. What did Luke mean when he said that they were astonished at

Jesus' teaching because his words had authority?

Or, let me ask it this way. Why didn't the demon simply refuse to do what Jesus said?

Why didn't it just go on shouting? Why did it comply and come out of the man?

It had to. It had to. The demon complied because it had to.

[12:22] It did not refuse. Jesus' words forced it to comply and leave the man. This is the kind of authority and power Jesus' words had.

That's what astonished the people that day. Luke says, The news spread throughout the surrounding area. And this issue of authority and power in Jesus' words brings to mind another moment that Luke wants to tell us about.

Verse 38. Jesus left the synagogue and went to the home of Simon. We get the sense that this is later that same day. Now Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever and they asked Jesus to help her.

Who's Simon? This is maybe another clue that Luke has his material arranged a little differently and likely not chronologically at this moment.

If we look to all three of the other Gospels we see that Jesus began to call his disciples right away after his baptism. And Simon was one of them to whom Jesus gave the name Peter.

[13:37] One of the twelve disciples. But Luke at this point has just been so focused on Jesus as a teacher and a preacher and the response of the people that he's just getting to the miracles now.

And one of the early miracles was this healing of Simon's mother-in-law. And we're going to hear more about Simon and who he was in the next chapter.

Luke's going to tell us all about him and where it started with Simon Peter. But we learn from this miracle here in verse 38 that Simon Peter was married.

Luke says that Simon's mother-in-law so his wife's mother was at the home of Simon. The picture we get here is that Simon is already a follower of Jesus and he brings Jesus back to his house in Capernaum.

And there at his house is Simon's wife and his wife's mother. And Luke says that she was suffering from a high fever. Note the kind of fever.

[14:41] Not just a little feverish but a great fever. A high fever. So you can imagine her there lying in bed shivering and sweating and pale and weak just like anyone with a high fever is.

And they presumably Simon and his brother Andrew asked Jesus to help her. verse 39. So Jesus bent over her and rebuked the fever and it left her.

She got up at once and began to wait on them. Notice how Jesus heals her. Luke says he rebuked. There it is again. Same word. He rebuked the fever and it left her. Also notice how quickly she went from lying in bed shivering and sweating pale and weak to up and about serving the guests.

She got up at once. Luke is actually quite emphatic about this. This translation has kind of smoothed this sentence out a bit but quite literally immediately rising up she began to serve them.

[15:57] this is clearly a miracle and while Jesus will heal far more devastating illnesses than this it's still astonishing and especially the way that Jesus does it.

He rebuked the fever and it left her. What's a fever? I'm not a medical expert or a doctor but from my understanding a fever is an immune system response of the body which attempts to fight off infection caused by viruses or bacteria by raising the internal temperature of the body in an effort to hinder or kill the bacteria or viruses.

So what exactly did Jesus rebuke? With the demon it makes sense and you know it's a sentient self-aware creature with hearing the ability to speak and to reason it has a will it has a mind it can act but this sickness on the other hand is just not like that.

viruses and bacteria don't have brains they don't have ears they don't understand or speak human language the fever itself is the body's God-given defense mechanism and yet Jesus it says rebuked the fever he rebuked the sickness in her body and it complied I can't help but think the same words that they said in the synagogue earlier like what words are these with authority and power he commands sicknesses and they cease maybe it seems that the sickness in your body and he says stop it and instantly it's like you were never sick before you can sit up go on your way this is just the beginning this is just the prelude for the night the first healing of the evening verse 40 at sunset the people brought to

Jesus all who had various kinds of sickness and laying his hands on each one he healed them moreover demons came out of many people shouting you are the son of God but he rebuked them

and would not allow them to speak because they knew he was the Messiah what a night can you imagine this the sun is going down people are lined up all crowded around the house of Simon Peter the fisherman in Capernaum by now word spread rapidly what Jesus did earlier in the day at the synagogue not to mention how it's been traveling all over the region from his other visits to other towns and the whole town it seems and surrounding areas knocking on the door and they've brought all their sick loved ones and their friends to be healed by Jesus and he greets them one by one laying his hands on them and he heals them all of them

[20 : 10] Luke very specifically mentions that there were various kinds of sicknesses all kinds! and not only sicknesses but suddenly you know it's like the people who knew of others that were afflicted by demons brought them as well demons came out of many people that night says Luke and the demons themselves were shouting you are the son of God just like the guy earlier in the day at the synagogue they're declaring what they know about Jesus why they shout this it doesn't say are they trying to blow Jesus cover or reveal his identity before the time or are they just terrified and can't help but shout out the identity of the one that they feel threatened by and again we read the same word

Jesus rebuked them the many demons and would not allow them to speak here's an even clearer question answer to the question I asked earlier why don't they just ignore Jesus why don't they just defy Jesus and keep on hollering and stay in the person continue to torment them because they can't Jesus with his rebuke with his words does not allow them to speak who can restrain a fallen angel with mere words let the demons themselves tell you the answer the son of God Luke says that Jesus silenced them because they knew he was the Christ the Messiah it would seem that there's some sort of divine plan or timeline of God by which

Jesus will be revealed to the people as being the Messiah and who knows maybe the demons are trying to blurt it out and publicly make it known before the appointed time and somehow hinder the plan of God either way Jesus silences them he muzzles them with his rebuke now I know this may sound strange but put yourself in the demon's shoes for a moment can you imagine being told by Jesus to just shut up and not even being able to speak out in defiance against him try as you may you're driven out of this man or woman or child that you've been tormenting and being a wicked creature you're probably going to seek someone else to pray upon but even after this gathering is over there is this power holding your tongue keeping you from saying anything about the true identity of this man from

Nazareth who just gave you the royal smackdown what power is this what authority is this it's the power and authority of God himself which Jesus has and speaks with verse 42 at daybreak Jesus went out to a solitary place the people were looking for him and when they came to where he was they tried to keep him from leaving them but he said I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also because that is why I was sent and he kept on preaching in the synagogues you get the sense that all of this lasted well into the night that eventually everybody went home and whether anybody slept or not that night it doesn't say but

Jesus sneaks away at the first crack of dawn to a place where there is nobody and Mark adds the detail in his gospel that Jesus went there to pray to talk to God the Father and as this next day comes Luke says that the people were searching for Jesus they're going all over the place trying to find out where did he go where is he and it's not surprising I mean think about what just happened and when they finally find Jesus it says they tried to keep him from leaving them can you imagine this the people pleading with him to stay what is Jesus say verse 43 I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also because that is why I was sent that is why I was sent notice the word sent

[25 : 44] Jesus has a clear understanding of who he is he knows what his mission is what God has given him to do I also notice the words most emphasized in this statement here surprisingly in the original also the other towns also the other towns it's right at the front it's necessary for me to proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God there it's not that Jesus doesn't want to be with the people of Capernaum any longer it's not that he's overwhelmed by the crowds and feels worn out or that he just has itchy feet instead it's this keen awareness of the need for other towns to hear this good news that he's proclaiming from God and so I cannot stay he says and I imagine in that moment that front and center on people's minds is all the miracles the healings the exorcisms but notice what Jesus states as his mission he doesn't say I must go and heal people in the other towns too the healings themselves are not the main point rather I must proclaim the good news of the

kingdom because that is why

I was sent this is Luke's emphasis we're meant to see that more important than the miracles is the message they confirm the good news that Jesus is proclaiming the miracles set people free from illnesses and lifelong debilitating conditions even and they're good gifts of God they set people free from the control of demons as we just saw but the message has the power to set people free from death itself from spiritual captivity and bondage in the kingdom of this world and it has the power to prepare them for life in the kingdom of God that Jesus is proclaiming I love the way that Luke describes the good news of Jesus here I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also what is the kingdom of

God it's the rule and reign of God which has always been and is now coming closer with Jesus here and is yet to come in full measure over our rebellious world and authority and power the likes of which the world has never seen what better way to prove that this kingdom of God is real and that it is coming than by these miraculous words of power that Jesus declared think about this I have power control authority over the fallen angels but God alone Jesus speaks and with his words he forces them out and subdues them proving that he is the king the

Messiah of this kingdom who has power and control and authority over the stuff of the natural world things like viruses and bacteria and bodies God alone does Jesus speaks and with his words he heals!

He eradicates sickness and disease and disorder even at the cellular level in people's bodies proving that he is the king of God's kingdom one of the things that's come up over and over again and Luke's been pointing us to it is this truth that Jesus is the son of God and not just a man that's what the angel Gabriel declared before Jesus was born it was the thing God himself declared with an audible voice at Jesus baptism it was the thing the devil tried to call into question in the wilderness and here we see that even the demons can't help but acknowledge that that's who he is you are the son of God they said we know who you are when the most powerful enemies of Jesus are shouting it that's pretty compelling evidence that it's true especially if

[31 : 00] Jesus has the power to shut them up and drive them out do you see who Jesus is do you see what they saw that day do you hear what they heard that day for all who believe in Jesus our faith in him is well placed it's not just a blind leap of faith God has put the clear message before us and plenty of signs to confirm it all that remains is for us to bow the knee before God's chosen king and pledge allegiance to him put our full trust and faith in his message we're going to take time now to partake of the Lord's table together this what we heard today is just the beginning of the story but later on in the story

Jesus gives his life to set us free from the power of the evil one the power of sin he takes on himself the punishment that we deserve dying on the cross to atone for us to reconcile us to God he does this to cleanse us and to make us fit for life with him forever in his kingdom and so we want to remember that again now we want to give thanks for that again now by eating of the bread and drinking of the cup and if you're here and you believe this you believe in Jesus and have acknowledged him as your king your savior your then I want you to know that this table is for you as well please partake with us celebrate with us remember with us and if not please just allow the elements to pass you by we're going to take a few minutes now just to reflect and pray quietly and then after that we'll have the elders come up and pass out the elements and we'll wait until everybody wishing to partake has been served and then we'll eat and drink together all at once in unison