

An expert is one who knows his field very well, and whatever he has to say on the subject will be received as authoritative. When a news story breaks on TV, they always seek out an expert in that field to explain what has happened, or what likely will happen next. For example, when a company is about to release a new COVID vaccine, they look for an expert to explain what their results mean and how that might affect us. And most people listen to them because they are the experts in the field. There is a difference between when an expert speaks, and when someone speaks who is just repeating what others may have said. The words which they speak just do not carry the same impact as an expert. That is sort of what was experienced by the people in the Word of God before us this morning. After listening to Jesus, they were amazed because JESUS TEACHES WITH AUTHORITY. It was something different for them, so much so that it really caught their attention. It should also catch our attention when we hear Jesus speak, for JESUS TEACHES WITH AUTHORITY. I. His Words have the power of God behind them. In fact, II. His actions also have the power of God behind them.

In Jesus' day, the people gathered at the synagogue on the Sabbath day. They would have one of the scribes, the professional teachers of the law, read to them from the Old Testament, and then give their explanation of what that meant for the people. In other words, their worship service had many of the same elements in it that one of ours does today. There was nothing wrong with their order of service, but the problem arose because the scribes, or the teachers of the law, had lost the main teaching of the Bible. Instead of pointing the eyes of the people to the coming Savior of the world, they were stressing more the works of the law. They not only read the commands which God had given them for their worship and civil life, but they went on to add all of the man-made laws which the old rabbis had invented as the only proper way of doing what God demanded in His Word. In other words, the people were left with little hope, and a lot of rules and regulations from the old rabbis which governed their outward lives. But that was all that they had ever known, and that was all that they ever expected, for it was the learned teachers of the law who were telling these things to them.

On this occasion, when Jesus came to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, He began to teach them. Almost immediately, the people recognized that there was something different about Jesus. **“The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law.”** (22) Obviously, the words which Jesus spoke were different from what the people were used to hearing. They heard Jesus speak of the love in the heart which would motivate all actions of love for their God in heaven. Jesus would have told them of God's perfect love for them, a love so great that He sent a Savior Who would wash away all of their imperfections so that they would be made holy in God's sight, even as He required. What different words! Words of hope and of life they were hearing, and probably for the first time! No wonder that they were amazed at Jesus' teaching!

But it was not just the words, for it was also the manner in which Jesus spoke those words. He spoke as One Who had authority. He was not speaking some possible theory that someone else dreamed up. No, for His Words were filled with power and certainty, certainty which came from the fact that He was God Himself. The Words which He spoke were God's Words to His dearly loved children. What He spoke were divine truths which God wants all men to know and to understand. What He spoke was a message of love and forgiveness to fallen sinners. This was so different that the people were not just amazed, but were actually dumbfounded at Jesus' Words. He spoke as One Who had authority.

Even though we are not privileged to hear Jesus speak audibly to us as He did to those people at Capernaum, we still do have His Word which He spoke. As you read, or hear the Word of God read to you from the Bible, recognize the difference between that Word and any other novel or book which you have ever read. Even if you have read a book written by an expert in his field, there is a great difference between the way in which Jesus speaks to us, and the way that all others speak. Of course, Jesus's Words have the authority of God behind them because He is true God. But He also has the love and compassion of God in those same Words. We have heard them so often that we may begin to take them for granted. If that is the case, we need to listen even more closely so that we begin to marvel again at the love and

compassion which the Lord has revealed to us in His Word. These Words fill us with hope and certainty. We know that God loves us, even though we daily sin much. We know that Jesus came to win us back for our heavenly Father. We know that He will take us to be with Him forever. We have His Word on it, and that word has the power of God in it.

Jesus also showed His divine authority in another way that day. Not only did His Word have the power of God, so also did His actions. **There was man at the synagogue who was possessed by an evil spirit. The spirit took control of him so that he began to cry out, “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!”** (24) What this man proclaimed was true, but it was not the time or the way in which Jesus wanted to reveal Himself. Satan knew this, and was seeking to counteract the wonderful teaching which Jesus had just given to the people.

So Jesus stepped in to stop this evil spirit. **“Be quiet! Come out of him!”** was the response which Jesus had to this outburst. And the evil spirit had to obey because Jesus had the power of God behind Him. Both His Words and His actions presented the same message to the people that witnessed what happened at the synagogue that day. Both said that Jesus had the power of God. And the people recognized this.

The news about what happened that day spread like wild-fire. The people were amazed at both His teaching — one with authority, they proclaimed — as well as the power over evil spirits. Soon the whole region had heard about this Jesus of Nazareth.

But sadly, just hearing of this wonderful news does not seem to have been coupled with faith. They heard and saw something wonderful, but it does not appear that they put their faith and trust in the One they heard about. Sure, it aroused their curiosity so that they wanted to see Him with their own eyes and hear Him with their own ears. There were a few who did believe, but it does not appear that it was many.

So the question needs to be asked about us: what is our reaction going to be to this wonderful thing? Are we going to go away from church today just remembering what wonderful things Jesus did in the Word of God before us, or are we going to go away with our faith nourished and strengthened, knowing that the One Who spoke these words of love to us is the same One Who continues to wash away our sins, and Who has promised to use that almighty power on our behalf each and every day, now and throughout eternity?

If we put our faith and trust in Jesus, then how are we going to show Him our love and thankfulness that fills our hearts. Are we going to let Him take over our hearts so that we strive to put all sins behind us, and to live as His holy, blood-bought children in this life? That would show Him that we have taken to heart His words, and we are not just standing around marveling at what wonderful things He has done, and the power of His Words.

Jesus is not just an expert, but He is One Who has the power and authority of God Himself behind everything which He says and does. That brings us great comfort during this Epiphany season, for we know that His love and concern for us will never falter. Let us listen carefully as Jesus teaches us with the full authority which He has as God Himself, and then take comfort in all of the many promises which He makes to us in His Word.