

Two Responses to Jesus's Authority

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Good morning, church! If you're in kindergarten through the third grade you're dismissed to go to children's church at this time. We're going to start our reading in Mark 4 this morning.

That's on page 890 in those black Bibles in the pew rack in front of you. To be transparent with you, I believe this is the longest text I have ever preached as part of an expositional sermon series. I have preached overviews of whole books, but I don't recall ever preaching a text this long before. And I'm going to endeavor to not make it the longest sermon I have ever preached.

And in case you haven't been with us, this isn't our typical expositional sermon series. Based on the way we normally do things it would take us 50-60 weeks to get through Mark. This summer we are doing it in about 16 weeks. It's still expositional, though, in that the point of every sermon is the same point that Mark is making in the passage. We're just taking a 10,000-foot view and picking up the big picture themes of Mark.

As we read Mark 4:34 all the way through 7:23, there are probably 10 sermons just waiting to be preached in there. And over the course of those 10 sermons somewhere I hope we'd tease out the theme we're going to concentrate on today.

Mark is making a statement about the authority of Jesus in the section we'll be studying, and when we're zoomed in to our normal paragraph-level view it would be easy to miss. And we need this statement because we have a complicated relationship with authority, don't we?

We live in a ruggedly individualistic culture and bucking authority is one of its hallmarks. The immortal philosopher Ferris Bueller summed it up well:

"Authority figures are like diapers. They're necessary to a baby's development but the sooner you can get out of them, the better."

You might not put it that way. But so many of our heroes in literature and pop culture have authority issues. From Jean Valjean and Holden Caulfield to Katniss Everdeen, Maverick, and Han Solo, whatever your jam is in the world of fiction there's going to be a hero who has authority issues.

Scripture calls Jesus our Lord repeatedly.

1 Corinthians 1:9

God is faithful; you were called by him into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Acts 10:36

He sent the message to the Israelites, proclaiming the good news of peace through Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all.

1 Peter 3:15

but in your hearts regard Christ the Lord as holy, ready at any time to give a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you.

That word is *kurios* in the original language and it means master. Church, those of us who are saved *belong* to Jesus. He's our master. He's the Lord of our lives, and that means that He is now our authority. And He's the one authority that we come to recognize we must never push back against or ignore.

When we started this series I told you Mark's primary purpose for writing was to paint Jesus as the Messiah who came to serve and to save.

But make no mistake about it, Mark's Jesus is the King. He is Lord. And as Lord, He demonstrates His authority in amazing ways. In this passage we'll see Jesus's authority displayed. Then we'll see two responses to that authority: rejection or reflection—and we'll close by seeing the difference in those two responses lies in the heart of man.

First, we'll see Jesus's authority on display. We'll read from Mark 4:34 through the end of chapter 5 and we'll stop and pray.

Read 4:34-5:43

Pray

Jesus's Authority Displayed

There are three scenes in the text we just read: Jesus calming the storm, Jesus driving out demons, and Jesus healing a woman and raising a little girl from the dead. I love what Mark does here.

If God's Word is spiritual food, there's a full meal in all of them. There's plenty to chew on for a week. But when we group the three together we see something really exciting.

And as Mark structured his gospel narrative, the Holy Spirit led him to use groupings of three to make a point. There are three boat scenes, three passion predictions, three times Jesus discovers the disciples sleeping in Gethsemane, and three times Peter denies Jesus. Anytime you see that, it's Mark making a point.

The point with these three scenes, and—listen, I know some of ya'll are struggling. A relationship with Jesus is not a golden ticket that guarantees an easy life. There are people in this room going through some remarkably difficult things. And from a human standpoint, there is not a lot of hope to be offered.

But Mark takes three miracles and illustrates how Jesus has authority over whatever it is that is that is trying to wreck your life.

Jesus is the servant King who has, first,

Authority over nature

Mark shows us that in 4:35-41. Jesus and the disciples were trying again to create some space. Everywhere Jesus went these massive crowds continued to gather and I have to believe it was exhausting. While on the Sea of Galilee a dangerous storm popped up.

We know it was major because the disciples were terrified. They thought they were going to die. Now, do you remember what many of these guys did for a living before Jesus called them? They were fishermen. They spent their lives on boats. If you're ever on an airplane and there is turbulence, notice that the flight attendants never freak out. They go through it all the time. But if something happens that scares them? It's probably time to be concerned.

This was panic time for the disciples. Not for Jesus. He spoke, and the storm stopped. Mark reminds us that Jesus really is God made flesh. He speaks and creation responds just like it did in Genesis 1.

But in the big picture, He's showing us Jesus's authority over nature. There's no cause in nature, no storm or earthquake or natural disaster of any kind that God is not sovereign over. And Jesus demonstrates that sovereignty here.

This is where insurance companies get it right. They call catastrophic events like this acts of God. They're at the very least acts God allows. We don't always understand them. And some of you might struggle with that here today. Know that you're in the same boat, if you'll allow me a pun, you're in the same boat as the disciples. Because they end this scene confused. They're wondering what is going on. Their direct question is 'who is this man?' That question will be answered clearly in chapter 8 at the hinge point of Mark's narrative.

But at this point, they don't have all the answers. They just know Jesus has authority. And if we can rest our hope at that same place, church, we're going to make it.

Jesus has authority over nature. He also exercises His authority over evil in this passage.

Authority over evil

We see that in 5:1-20.

Here, the evil is a collection of demons who go by the name Legion. And Legion had destroyed—absolutely destroyed—this man's life. He had no human contact. No comfort. No peace, not even when he was alone.

Evil had destroyed him. Church, we probably don't talk about spiritual warfare enough but we need to recognize that evil is real. Satan and his demons are real and they are dangerous. But, praise God, they are no match for Jesus.

It's most likely that Satan has used people to afflict you with evil instead of demon possession. All evil is demonic, but it often comes filtered through the hands of other humans. It comes in the form of physical, verbal, and mental abuse. It's backstabbing, gossip, lies, manipulation, and all other manner of evil that we perpetrate against one another.

That's the suffering that can be the most painful at times—especially when the perpetrator is supposed to be someone in your corner. It's a parent, a spouse, a supposed friend.

Find comfort though, church, in the truth that Jesus has authority over what ever kind of evil you run into. Proverbs 11:21 says be assured the wicked will not go unpunished.

Jesus has authority over evil. And if your suffering isn't caused by nature or by a direct evil that you can identify, maybe you're just being hammered by the failure of your own human body.

Mark reminds us in 5:21-43 that Jesus has

Authority over disease and death

Here we have a woman with an illness and a young girl who had died. It's hard for us to shift our cultural mindset and realize how hard this woman's life was.

She has tried everything. The medical care available in her day didn't help, it only made matters worse. She has had this issue for 12 years. And no matter how painful it is or uncomfortable it is for her to live this way, it's worse than just this physical stuff.

This condition would have caused her to be isolated. Because she's actively bleeding, she's ceremonially unclean. She would have had virtually no human contact through all those years. She—like the demon-possessed man we've already talked about—would have been isolated. It's not the big picture idea, church, but don't miss this truth here that God will not have his people lonely.

Isolation is now how God designed His people to live. There are no lone ranger Christians. Belonging to a community of believers called a local church is not some American idea we cooked up. When God draws people out of their sin, He draws them toward one another. Jesus didn't just heal her body here, He brought her back into community. He gave her back to her family.

The same with the second miracle in this scene. This girl was dead. As the great Jerry Clower used to say, she was graveyard dead. So dead, in fact, that the people in verse 35 said you're wasting Jesus's time.

Yet, once Jesus speaks life into her she pops right up off her death bed.

Jesus has authority over disease and He has authority over death.

In these three scenes, Mark has illustrated that whatever it is you're struggling with. Whatever it is that could possibly be trying to draw you away from Jesus or to wreck your life that He has authority over it.

Whatever difficulty you're facing falls under the realm of Jesus's authority and with a word from Him it will evaporate. That doesn't mean it's going to. You might still have to suffer with it. That woman suffered 12 years! Jesus had authority over and knowledge of her issue for all 12!

But we trust that Jesus has authority because Mark shows us that Jesus has authority. So we do we do with that knowledge? There are really only two responses and we see them both in chapter 6. We can reflect it or reject it.

Jesus's authority was rejected in Nazareth. That's 6:1-6a.

Jesus's Authority Rejected

Read 6:1-6a,

Jesus returned to His hometown. Up until this point most of His major ministry had been centered around Capernaum. Now, He's in Nazareth. He teaches the same Truth in Nazareth that He taught in Capernaum. There, the crowds were amazed. He taught with an authority we've never heard before, they said. He performed miracles there.

In Nazareth, though? Jesus's teaching results in the people being offended and Jesus amazed at their unbelief.

What's the difference? And don't miss this, church. Nazareth thought they already knew Him. We know this guy. That's Mary's kid. He grew up here. I know His mama and them.

I already know Him, but *now* you're telling me I have to live under His authority. Family, if we were to find anyone in these pages reflected in the pews of churches like ours today, isn't it the people in Nazareth? They knew Jesus, they just weren't very interested in living under His authority.

We saw the difference between the people in the crowd and the people in the Kingdom last week and submission to Jesus's authority is the dividing line.

The people in Nazareth rejected it. Maybe it was because they didn't fully understand it. Maybe they had tried to follow Him before and it didn't go well for them. They would have had to leave everything behind and decided it wasn't worth it. Maybe they simply didn't believe this person they had known their whole lives was God made flesh.

So they refused Jesus's authority.

That should be sobering to those of us who grow up in an environment familiar with the idea of Jesus but often starved for the reality of a life devoted to Him.

And know this: they weren't rejecting Jesus for no authority. Everyone lives under authority. Mark illustrates that in a tangent about King Herod. Scholars struggle to know what to do with that passage because it doesn't seem to fit in the narrative. John had been dead for a while now.

But I think Mark included it to show us what evil authority looks like. Look, you can live under the authority of a good King. Or you can continue on under the authority of the king who committed a gruesome murder just to impress a girl.

You can reflect Jesus's authority or you can reject it. The 12 Apostles reflected it perfectly in the middle of chapter 6.

Jesus's Authority Reflected

Read 6:6b-13

They did what Jesus did. They blessed people. They, too, exercised authority. That doesn't mean necessarily that you and I will have those abilities today. But when we're saved, the Bible teaches that we're given certain spiritual gifts to use to bless others and glorify God.

Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12 list spiritual gifts that are born in us when the Holy Spirit brings our dead hearts to life. And in using those gifts we're reflecting the goodness of God back to His creation. That's what the 12 do here.

The authority of Jesus is reflected by His people when they're obedient to Him. It's also reflected in them as they're blessed by Him.

The end of chapter 6 records one of the most famous miracles in Scripture. It's the only miracle recorded in all four gospels. There were 5,000 men not counting women and children, so in all likelihood over 10,000 people were fed with five loaves of bread and two fish. And don't think huge loafs of modern sliced sandwich bread. This was someone's lunch—a little boy, according to John's gospel. These were probably more like a handful of pieces of pita bread.

Yet, Jesus feeds the whole crowd with them.

Under Herod's authority, innocent people are murdered. Under Jesus's authority, everyone is blessed. Sickness and death are reversed, and everyone is taken care of. And He reveals Himself to them. At the end of chapter 6, Jesus does two things. He spends time alone praying for His people, and then He reveals His authority to them in a new way by walking on water.

So what do we do? Do we reject it or reflect it?

The answer lies in the heart. Authority is an issue of the heart. Chapter 7 reintroduces us to a group of people who appeared to have put their lives under God's authority. But an interaction with Jesus reveals that is far from the truth. Look at chapter 7:1.

Authority is a heart issue

Read 7:1-23

The Pharisees come from Jerusalem again, we already know from a few chapters back that they're plotting to kill Jesus. So they're not putting themselves under His authority.

No, they've put themselves under the authority of the Law and the human teaching that grew up around it.

Here's the problem. They didn't even do that right.

For example, they designate property as Corban, meaning "dedicated to God," so that they do not have to use it to help their aging parents, and break the commandment to honor your parents.

God's Law is good. It's what men did with it that was evil. But that's what sin does. It takes what God made good and corrupts it.

Whether it's the Old Testament Law or some tradition we've made up on our own. Even a good thing, like church membership, if it is not accompanied by submission to Jesus's authority in all parts of our lives is going to leave us devastated.

You see, here's the problem, church. We all reject Jesus's authority by default. Because our heart is evil. The evil of the world doesn't need to corrupt us, we come corrupted from the factory.

We try to be our own authority or find one we like better—one that is easier to follow.

Listen to Jesus again in verse 20:

20 And he said, "What comes out of a person is what defiles him. 21 For from within, out of people's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immoralities, thefts, murders, 22 adulteries, greed, evil actions, deceit, self-indulgence, envy, slander, pride, and foolishness. 23 All these evil things come from within and defile a person."

This is where a biblical worldview and the prevailing cultural worldview come to a head. The world looks inside for the answer. 'Follow your heart, live your truth, you do you, etc.' But the Bible teaches that when you look to the heart you find evil, immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, deceit, self-indulgence, envy, slander, pride, and foolishness. You find Hell.

We recognize there is no salvation when we become our own authority.

It's only by submitting to Jesus's authority that we can ever have a relationship with Him.

Romans 6:23—For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Lord, there, means authority. Under His authority, Jesus has power over whatever it is that afflicts you, church. And the only way to find peace is by submitting yourself to His authority. Let's Pray.