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St. Luke 4:31-34:

So What Does This Have to Do with Us?

- I. The Word
- II. The Demon.
- III. The Authority and Power.

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St. Luke 4:31-34

Dear Friends in Christ,

It was 58 years ago when a fellow by the name of Calvin D. Linton wrote an article for "Christian News" in which he stated the following regarding Satan:

The Adversary's most successful method of deception has always been imitation. His packaging has always been almost indistinguishable from The Real Thing, with such ethical knee-jerkers as Religion, Piety, The Golden Rule, and Virtue freely used in prominent places (Satan makes reference to these points in order to deceive). Only a close reading of the small print reveals the missing ingredients - chiefly, everything having to do with sin and redemption, heaven and hell.

Over these years I have been consistently reminded of how easy it was for a number who were awakened to God's Word, "...the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin (I Jn.1:7b).", and then were pulled away by The Modern Church that avoids, as Linton wrote, "the missing ingredients . . . sin and redemption, heaven and hell." Plus, Jesus' words don't soothe the contemporary soul: "And whoever does not take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me (Mt.10:38)."

And here we are this morning with our Savior, the Lord Jesus, in a synagogue, a Jewish place of worship. And look at what's there in a place of worship and study: a demon, one who hates God.

SO, WHAT DOES THIS HAVE TO DO WITH US?

I. The Word

And he went down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee. And he was teaching them on the Sabbath, and they were astonished at his teaching, for his word possessed authority (vv.31-31).

We know the purpose of words. They tell us something. They reveal. It's been said before, what John wrote: "...the Word was God...And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us...(Jn.1:1,14a)." That's who was teaching at the synagogue; the Word revealing Himself with authority.

This is not intended to be sarcastic but there are Bibles in the back of every pew here. The Bible is the Word of God. He speaks to us. Don't you find it disturbing that so many churches have spent so much time looking for something new and exciting while sacrificing power and authority of God's Word?

Maybe you recall these words of Jesus in His High Priestly Prayer to His Father concerning the first Disciples: "For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you, and they have believed that you sent me (Jn.17:9)." He then prayed, "Sanctify them in the truth (the truth of who Jesus is); your word is truth (v.17)." Three verses later He prayed, "I do not ask for these only (the first Disciples), but also for those who will believe in me through their word (that is, the Word the Father gave Jesus, who gave it to the first disciples who gave It to us)." It's the Word, what we call The Holy Bible, the Scriptures.

It is, as Paul wrote: "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness (2 Tim.2:16)." It's the inspired, inerrant, authoritative Word of God. And it's this: "Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path (Ps.119:105)." It's about living, dying, death and eternity. It gives sound instruction for decency, common sense, caring for others, respect, marriage, family. And, most of all, it's this: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel (the good news of God's Word, Jesus), for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes (Rm.1:16)."

Listen, unless Christ returns, we're going to go through dying and death! But in Christ, we have salvation. The condemnation for our sin will not be held against us, though the struggle with it. And so, we're reminded, "they were astonished at his teaching, for his word possessed authority."

What I truly love about liturgical Lutheran worship is this: It is the Word of God from Invocation to Benediction; everything in between, including the hymns which teach, comfort, and reinforce. But in this fallen world there's always someone who wants to challenge the Word of God . . .

II. The Demon

And in the synagogue there was a man who had the spirit of an unclean demon, and he cried out with a loud voice, "Ha! 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 (vv.33-34)."

The man was possessed by a fallen angel, a minion of Satan. It's the letter of Jude that states, "and the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling (that is, with the Eternal, Triune God), he (God) has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day...(v.6)." "Chains of gloomy darkness," that is, they are limited in the havoc they would otherwise reap.

To date we have not experienced "the spirit of an unclean demon" in our sanctuary. But over these years we have experienced a number of people who wished to create havoc. Some who insisted that the pastors did not have the Holy Spirit. Some who asked why we wouldn't preach on something other than sin, death, hell and heaven. Yet, Jesus taking our sin unto Himself and paying the punishment for our sin so we wouldn't wind up in hell from the very heart and soul of Scripture. And there were those who wanted to move from liturgical worship. They ached for something more entertaining. We should know how it works: "...for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light (I Cor.11:14)." He mimics God and can truly deceive...and does. But here's the issue . . .

III. The Authority and Power

But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent and come out of him!" And when the demon had thrown him down in their midst, he came out of him, having done him no harm. And they were amazed and said to one another, "What is this word? For with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits, and they come out (vv.35-36)!"

"With power and authority he commands" - everything. You know, over these many years of the Lord in my life I have thought about the fact that while this world thinks it controls its steps and destiny the reality is that it controls . . . nothing. As Isaiah wrote, "All the nations are as nothing before him, they are accounted by him as less than nothing and emptiness (Is.40:17)." Have you ever - ever - studied the history of this world? He allows it to move on, calls out His people, and will bring it to its final moment.

Over these many years I have experienced the horrible battles and struggles of the sin that is still in me. I think so many times of Paul's words from Romans 7: "For I do not do what I want (as a Christian; what our precious Lord commands), but I do the very thing I hate (my miserable, ugly, sin) (v.15)." And the words that hit the hardest are these: "For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being (the *born again* me), but I see in my members (the flesh) I see another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death (this present body of sin and troubles and dying)?" And then these words of comfort and truth; "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind (I want to do everything He commands). But with my flesh I serve the law of sin (the disgust of sin is still there) (v.25)."

And then the most powerful and eternal life giving words that have everything to do with us and for us: "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Rm.8:1)." When Christ took our sin with Him and then was nailed to the Cross for our sin crimes, suffered the hell we deserve, then cried, "it is finished!" the condemnation for our sin was removed, we are forgiven, and whoever believes has eternal life! But one last word . . .

IV. The Report of Him Went Out.

"And reports about him went into every place in the surrounding region (v.37)." You know, we are going to die at any moment. Job expressed the reality in these words: "Man who is born of woman is few of days and full of trouble. He comes out like a flower and withers; he flees like a shadow and continues not...his days are determined, and the number of his months is with you, and you have appointed his limits that he cannot pass...(Job 14:1,2,5)." Amazing, isn't it, the realities: "few days...full of trouble...like a flower and withers (here and gone)...days...months...appointed limits." Nothing about years, or decades, or scores. Very brief.

You see, we know Christ. And what will we do with this knowledge as we live out our lives in this world - as we come into contact with family and friends who don't know, or who are skeptical, or who have never really, honestly spent time with the Word of God? Should we not make reports about Him to others?

It's quite an experience, isn't it, to find ourselves in a Synagogue at Capernaum and to witness the Word made flesh, our Jesus, speaking the Word in order to save a demon possessed man; reaching out to save his soul. Well, the fact is, this moment has everything to do with us.

Amen.

Pastor Bill Abbott