

Speaking with Authority

[Mark 1:21-28](#)

Today's gospel lesson shows Jesus and his disciples entering the synagogue on the Sabbath. According to the gospel of Mark, this appears to be Jesus' first trip into Capernaum, yet the other synoptic gospels show that Jesus had made several trips to this area. This time as Jesus entered the temple, he took on the role of teacher and did so with authority. Mark 1:22 says the people were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes.

That's interesting. The writer of this gospel seems to infer the scribes of Jesus' time taught without authority. Perhaps the difference comes when Jesus puts the words he speaks with actions that reflect his authority. The scripture goes on to tell us that a man with an unclean spirit, or demon, appeared and the demon cried out, '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.' Even demons recognize Jesus' authority.

Perhaps the scribes were only reciting history - previous experiences from the children of Israel. If they were not interjecting action or some actual teaching, perhaps they would not be seen as having authority.

Teaching with authority - this implies power. This implies action. This implies a connection between the speaker and the listener. Anyone who has been in a position of teaching knows that sometimes what is said and what is heard are very different things. As listeners we may be distracted or concerned about something to the point where we miss the message. The disciples often didn't understand Jesus' teachings. At times, we too may not be able to connect the words we hear with their true

meaning. I wanted to share this story with you. A child was asked to write a book report on the entire Bible.

The Children's Bible in a Nutshell

In the beginning, which occurred near the start, there was nothing but God, darkness, and some gas. The Bible says, 'The Lord thy God is one, but I think He must be a lot older than that.

Anyway, God said, 'Give me a light!' and someone did.

Then God made the world.

He split the Adam and made Eve. Adam and Eve were naked, but they weren't embarrassed because mirrors hadn't been invented yet.

Adam and Eve disobeyed God by eating one bad apple, so they were driven from the Garden of Eden.

Not sure what they were driven in though, because they didn't have cars.

Adam and Eve had a son, Cain, who hated his brother as long as he was Abel.

Pretty soon all of the early people died off, except for Methuselah, who lived to be like a million or something.

One of the next important people was Noah, who was a good guy, but one of his kids was kind of a Ham. Noah built a large boat and put his family and some animals on it. He asked some

other people to join him, but they said they would have to take a rain check.

After Noah came Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Jacob was more famous than his brother, Esau, because Esau sold Jacob his birthmark in exchange for some pot roast. Jacob had a son named Joseph who wore a really loud sports coat.

Another important Bible guy is Moses, whose real name was Charlton Heston. Moses led the Israel Lights out of Egypt and away from the evil Pharaoh after God sent ten plagues on Pharaoh's people. These plagues included frogs, mice, lice, bowels, and no cable.

God fed the Israel Lights every day with manicotti. Then he gave them His Top Ten Commandments.

These include: don't lie, cheat, smoke, dance, or covet your neighbor's stuff.

Oh, yeah, I just thought of one more: Honor thy father and thy mother.

One of Moses' best helpers was Joshua who was the first Bible guy to use spies. Joshua fought the battle of Geritol and the fence fell over on the town.

After Joshua came David. He got to be king by killing a giant with a slingshot. He had a son named Solomon who had about 300 wives and 500 porcupines. My teacher says he was wise, but that doesn't sound very wise to me.

After Solomon there were a bunch of major league prophets.

One of these was Jonah, who was swallowed by a big whale and then barfed up on the shore. There were also some minor league prophets, but I guess we don't have to worry about them.

After the Old Testament came the New Testament. Jesus is the star of The New. He was born in Bethlehem in a barn. (I wish I had been born in a barn too, because my mom is always saying to me, 'Close the door! Were you born in a barn?' It would be nice to say, 'As a matter of fact, I was.')

During His life, Jesus had many arguments with sinners like the Pharisees and the Democrats.

Jesus also had twelve opossums.

The worst one was Judas Asparagus. Judas was so evil that they named a terrible vegetable after him.

Jesus was a great man. He healed many leopards and even preached to some Germans on the Mount.

But the Democrats and all those guys put Jesus on trial before Pontius the Pilot. Pilot didn't stick up for Jesus. He just washed his hands instead.

Anyways, Jesus died for our sins, then came back to life again.

He went up to Heaven but will be back at the end of the Aluminum. His return is foretold in the book of Revolution.

As they say, out of the mouths of babes! Clearly, what we hear and understand can be very different than what was delivered as the message. It seems at times we need something to get our attention in order to fully grasp what is being said to us and what meaning we need to pull from what we hear. Jesus seems to exude authority which definitely gets people's attention. Once our brains and our ears are in harmony, we can truly receive the message the speaker is sending. Many of you may be familiar with the little experiment where someone whispers something to the first person, and it is whispered on down the line. Often the original message doesn't even come close to what was heard at the end.

Jesus has a way of grasping and holding our attention. Speaking with authority – the scripture tells us, “In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the

word was God.” Jesus was the embodiment of the word of God. His words and actions presented a message that definitely got people’s attention. It reminds me of the old commercial for an investment advisor E.F. Hutton (remember, ‘when E.F. Hutton talks, people listen’). Some of you may have actually heard and felt God speaking to you. I can say from personal experience, it definitely gets and holds your attention!

I wanted to share some quotes as examples of those to whom we as Americans presented authority by way of the role of President. See if you recognize the speaker of each of these:

- “No people can be bound to acknowledge and adore the Invisible Hand...more than those of the U.S.”
(G. Washington)
- “Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection.” (A. Lincoln)

- “Much has been given us, and much will rightfully be expected from us.” (T. Roosevelt)

- “The only thing we have to fear is fear itself...” (Franklin Roosevelt)

- “How far have we come in man’s long pilgrimage from darkness toward the light? Are we nearing the light...?” (D. Eisenhower)

- “Ask not what your country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country.” (JFK)

- “We are a proudly idealistic nation, but let no one confuse our idealism with weakness.” (J. Carter)

- “For a new breeze is blowing, and a world refreshed by freedom seems reborn...the day of the dictator is over.” (George H. W. Bush)

How is God trying to get our attention today? Do we still recognize God’s voice as God speaks with authority, power and

wisdom for us today? As we come into our time of communion, I invite you to spend some time in prayer, listening for the word of God to touch your heart in a special way. Jesus embodied the word of God to bring a powerful message to a people desperate for hope. When God speaks – lives are changed forever. Let us be in a state of mind to hear and receive God's word for us today. Amen.