

*Read Mark 1:14-34. Check out the service at [www.fpcd.org](http://www.fpcd.org).*

Did you ever go to a store with a return and you got one of those stubborn clerks who refused your request? No matter what you said to justify receiving a refund, she wasn't buying it. But you know you are right.

But then a manager walked up to inquire, "What's the problem?" And he says, "I'll handle this." Then he gives you a full refund, no questions asked, and an apology.

His authority overrode the clerk's. His authority gave you a gift.

Did you ever go to Six Flags with a two-year-old, who looked big for his age? And you forgot his proof of birth, and were all worried that he wouldn't get in free because he looked too old? But the dad said, "I'll take care of it." He hoisted the child into his arms and carried him through the gate. No one questioned a thing.

His authority handled the problem.

There are those with authority; like the college coach who extends to a high school athlete that coveted invitation to sign a letter of intent? His authority provides a life-changing opportunity.

Or, you audition with The Voice. You get through, receiving a call-back card, beating out ten other singers whom you felt were actually better than you.

It wasn't you; it was the judge in charge with the authority who made it happen.

Jesus's first sermon caused quite a stir. Jesus was not your normal Sunday School teacher. He was different. The difference people noticed about Jesus was his authority.

He took teaching in the temple to a much higher level—he shot it through the roof because he had authority.

We are trying to discover in our Journey with God, *Who is Jesus?* We know that Jesus has interrupted the life of John the Baptist. We know that Jesus didn't meet John's expectations. We know that Jesus did not come simply to defeat our enemies as the primary focus of his ministry. Jesus came to:

Give sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, to heal the sick, raise the dead,  
And preach the good news to all people. (Mt 11:5)

Mark begins his gospel with evidence of these very things. You heard the story.

Notice that Jesus is no lone ranger. No sooner than he begins telling the good news, he sees some men in their daily jobs in the fishing industry and he simply says, "Follow me" and they drop everything and go. Authority.

I would be thinking, “What about my 401K? Do you have that? And paid vacation? And how many sick days do you give? Do I get reimbursed for travel expenses?” And, “Do you have liability insurance?”

Just what are your benefits, Jesus?

Jesus replies: “I’m going to say things you get yelled at (can get sued for) . . . But you just have to trust that it will be all good.”

That very thing happened in the synagogue when the man with the unclean spirit began yelling at Jesus. It was as if Jesus by his very presence opened a whole other world—a spiritual world, where evil spirits possess human beings. And, they know who Jesus is.

There are very real forces of evil in the world.

*“Why are you interfering,”* the spirit shouts at Jesus. *“Did you come to destroy us? I know who you are.”* The evil spirit recognizes Jesus’ authority.

Martin Luther called it “a world with devils filled, threatening to undo us.” (“A Mighty Fortress Is Our God” v. 3)

But Jesus fells the evil spirit in an instant with his words: “Be silent! Come out of him!” (Mk 1:25).

So his teaching was not so much novel or filled with new and encouraging ideas, but an exercise of cosmic power.

And the people were amazed! “What is this?” they said, “A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him” (Mk 1:27). It is cosmic, having authority in the spiritual realm.

The world is not perfect. In it are real forces of evil. Yet God’s Kingdom can be active here. It’s the wheat in the midst of the tares, the grass and the weeds growing together, good people and the wicked in an imperfect world; a world with devils filled. This man was trapped by an evil spirit and Jesus overcame it and freed him. Jesus said, “The time has come!”

**Halleluiah!** Jesus’ authority overrides all other authority. Jesus’ authority defeats evil. He calls us to turn around and repent—that means reverse course and follow.

This is astonishing. Do you know that you follow not a benign, distant, weak Savior, but a God with exceeding, overriding power that far surpasses the power of evil?

All the people in the room with him that day were astonished at his power. There was no disclaimer; no psychiatrist’s bill; no ‘come back in a week and we will see if you are better.’ And the news spread throughout the region like wildfire.

Are you praying to Jesus with that kind of lens or do you back down in fear and discouragement, thinking he brings little to your life?

Jesus' very presence rattles the world. The men with him must have had their own notions rattled and a whole new world opened up to them; a hopeful world of the presence and power of God.

You go new places when you walk with Jesus.

Sabbath worship was over. It was lunchtime. Jesus and his disciples left the synagogue and went over to Simon and Andrew's house for dinner. The house would have been a spacious complex with a courtyard surrounded by rooms to accommodate many people. In fact, if you go to Capernaum today, next to the synagogue is a structure that is identified as the house of Peter.

This story is so personal that Peter must have shared it with Mark, who included it in his gospel. How many times have you reminisced about something that happened to you? Something small, but significant? Have you ever had a "little miracle?" I think perhaps this is one of those first little miracles that was very precious to Peter.

They went next door to Peter's house. Only something was terribly wrong. It is a host's worse nightmare. Simon's mother-in-law was sick with a high fever.

Let's put ourselves in this picture.

If you were having house guests—and in that time multi-generations living in the same house were common—would you have told your guests? Perhaps not. After all, what could they do? And you might not want your guests to be uncomfortable.

But Peter had just met Jesus. And they were going to eat at his house. And his mother-in-law wouldn't be able to greet Jesus. Peter wouldn't want to offend this new Rabbi who had made quite an impression in church that day.

So Peter wants to be courteous. They walk into the courtyard. He immediately tells Jesus that unfortunately his mother-in-law is sick. Perhaps he is thinking that there won't be adequate food for his guests, or no one will be there to greet Jesus.

And as soon as Jesus hears about her, he went right to her. He didn't worry about her being contagious. He took her hand and she was instantly cured by his touch.

You know how when you recover from a high fever how weak you feel? You don't usually feel like getting up and eating, much less fixing dinner for someone else. But she felt good as new. She had no side effects or symptoms of her illness.

It was extraordinary.

The miracle was so great that the whole town came that evening to Peter's door with all their sick relatives, lining up, one by one, and Jesus, out of a great big, loving, sympathetic heart, healed every one.

The Kingdom of God is overlaid on our imperfect world and overcomes the troubles of the world even in the midst of great struggle.

- Are you turning and following Jesus, in recognition of his authority?
- Are you extending the same kind of loving care to others?
- Do you casually approach Jesus as if he has no power, or asking for His authority over your situation?

Who is Jesus? Someone with Authority. Turn to Him and follow Him fully.

AMEN