

A few years ago, a new TV show was introduced called "The Voice." It was and still is interesting because the initial judgement is made strictly on hearing a voice. Most of us don't realize how important a voice is, but there is so much importance in a voice, not only in the Bible as our scripture pointed out today, but also in our everyday life.

One of my favorite movies is the Indiana Jones movie The Last Crusade. It's the story of Indiana Jones and his father's quest for the holy grail, the legendary chalice, that Jesus used in his Last Supper with his disciples.

In one of the final scenes, the ancient temple they've found the chalice in is collapsing and people are running for their lives as the walls are falling and the ground opens. The grail falls into a deep crevice created by the earthquake, and Indiana Jones is hanging in the crevice by one hand, reaching with the other hand to grab the grail.

He can almost reach it, as he becomes entranced by allure of the grail. All around him rocks are falling, the ground is shaking, the temple is collapsing, but he's fixated on the grail. Finally, a voice breaks through the spell, the voice of his father, who says, "Indiana, let it go." Indiana climbs out of the crevice, and together he and his father escape just as the temple completely collapses.

Indiana's father used the power of a voice to break the spell of temptation. The power of his voice brought Indy back to reality.

Another voice that comes to mind is the commercial for an investment firm that said, "When E. F. Hutton speaks, people listen." What a clever commercial. You might remember when somebody said, "When E.F. Hutton speaks...", everybody became silent, perked their ears to hear what EF Hutton was saying.

Is there anybody in your life that speaks loudly enough and with enough authority that you perk up and listen when they speak? Maybe it's the voice of a parent. Whenever I had to holler at any one of my four kids, there was no doubt that they knew they were in trouble when my voice loudly used all three of their names. They stopped in their tracks and listened because they knew they were in trouble. My mother used that technique on me of using my three names and my guess your parents used it on you and in turn, you used it on your kids. Is there someone in your life now that causes you to listen just by hearing their voice?

Jesus' voice has the ability to break through our lives. Surely you have heard His voice in your life? It's almost like being chastised for doing something wrong. Jesus is like EF Hutton. When he speaks, people do listen.

His voice breaks through in a powerful way. We need to make sure we hear and respond to the Lord's voice in our own lives.

The scripture this morning talks about Jesus teaching in the synagogue. Synagogues came about and were built when King Solomon's Temple had been destroyed and the Jews were in exile. They survived by gathering together on the Sabbath to learn about their law and traditions. This was so useful that when they returned, they wanted to continue this so they began to build synagogues where they could gather together. These were built when at least 10 adult men in that

community gathered together and these synagogues were always either the highest building or placed on the highest ground.

In Jesus' day there were synagogues all over the place. They were all built around a similar pattern. Only the men entered the main door of the building; women entered through a separate door and sat in the gallery at the back.

At the end of the building, opposite of the entrance, was a curtained alcove where the cupboard containing the synagogue scrolls was kept. In the centre of the building was a stage with a pulpit where the prescribed portions of the law and the prophets were read and the sermon was preached. Those called to read ascended by the stairs nearest to them and descended by another set of stairs. The more important scribes and Pharisees were seated in what were called the "Moses Seats" which faced the congregation from the end of the synagogue by the cupboard.

In the normal service, psalms were sung, the Scriptures were read, and the sermon was preached. A time of questions and discussion followed. But, on this particular day in our scripture lesson Jesus was preaching, but He had an interruption.

A possessed man was in the synagogue. Now we don't know if this man in possession of an evil spirit attended these services regularly or if he just wandered in on that particular day. If he was a regular attendee, we know that this particular synagogue was spiritually dead. How do we know this? Because the man could attend services time after time and never be helped spiritually. It kind of makes you wonder how many people sit through a service but are possessed with an evil spirit and cannot be helped spiritually.

While Jesus is in the process of teaching, he's interrupted. Within a holy place of Worship, during a time of holy worship, an unholy presence makes itself known. The possessed man screamed out because he could not handle the purity of Jesus. The demon recognized that Jesus had come to destroy him. The demon identified Jesus. He said, "I know who you are- the Holy One of God."

Jesus admonished the unclean spirit. Jesus did not accept demonic testimony in his presence. The demonic spirit had entered the mental arena of this man. It was only his mental knowledge that Jesus was the Son of God. It was not of the heart nor of his will to follow Jesus.

This evil spirit speaks on behalf of all evil spirits when it asks Jesus, "What do you want with us? Notice he says "us". Have you come to destroy us?" This demon is speaking for all evil spirits, not just himself. Jesus silences the spirit and commands it to leave this man alone. With a shriek the spirit comes out, and the man is delivered from his bondage.

What power Jesus had. He casts the unclean spirit out. But how does he do this? By His voice, by simply saying, "Come out of him." The evil spirit obeyed and as he left the man's body, the man began to shake violently.

The people in the synagogue were amazed. What the people had witnessed was unbelievable. They whispered among themselves, "Who is this person? This stranger from a foreign land that speaks with previously unknown wisdom. This stranger willing to do things differently to get His point across. This stranger willing to spend time with people's questions to ensure they understand what He has to say. He's there to make His message known, and not just to hear Himself talk.

No one prior to Jesus spoke with the knowledge that this man had. He spoke on His own behalf and didn't rely on the wisdom of others to justify His position. Instead, He was confident in what He taught and that amazed the people. Some were even alarmed at how He spoke because it wasn't like the others that spoke before Him.

No one had to tell Jesus about the interpretations of previous Rabbis. He was the ultimate teacher. No one had to tell him what scripture had to say; He was there when it was written. Not only was He able to explain the word, He WAS The Word! His unique nature, put Him in a place no other human could've ever been. His authority came directly from God, because He was God.

His teachings were new ways at looking at scripture and God's word. They were new ways at addressing the teachings they already possessed. This was unprecedented. This was unknown. This was amazing!

They were amazed that this man had the power to rid evil spirits. This indeed was the power of the Messiah.

And everyone who heard him speak spread His fame everywhere. Can you imagine that they must have been like a bunch of gossipy old ladies and old men spreading the word throughout stores, businesses, homes, and streets as people traveled throughout the area and throughout the world. Can you imagine them saying to each other, "You'll never guess what happened in the synagogue this week?"

There are forces of evil alive and propagating themselves all over this world. There are still exorcisms going on today. People are still being possessed and harassed by demonic spirits. There is still a fascination of evil and the dark world today. Music, movies, ISIS, ouji boards are still perpetuating evil.

We all have our own demons to contend with. We may not be possessed with an unclean spirit, but we face our own problems. Where the man in the Gospel had a demon in possession of his body, we too might have sins that take possession of our lives and hate to let go. Thank heaven we have the voice of Jesus Christ to fight against the forces of evil.

Jesus has the knowledge and the voice to get us out of those difficult situations and back on the path toward the light. He has the authority over the demons in our life and can tell them to stay away from our fragile lives. He has the power to separate the light from the darkness, and keep us close to Him at the same time. He has the power to conquer any problems that we could ever fear to encounter, and a love to help us through even the most difficult of situations. He has the power to change lives and put people back on their feet.

To us today, Jesus' words and his voice are life and His actions are an example to us all. Through Him, all things are possible, even the conquering of our own demons.

Jesus is completely in control. As believers, we don't need to fear. We can rest secure knowing that He will be there to help us through our problems, help us with our demons, and help us enjoy the Grace that only He can offer. Amen and Amen