

Deuteronomy 18:15-20, Psalm 111, 1 Corinthians 8:1-13, Mark 1:21-28

GRACE PEACE AND MERCY FROM GOD OUR FATHER AND OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST
AMEN.

Sermon for the Fourth Sunday after Epiphany

This morning I would like to start out in Luther's Small Catechism and refresh our memories about why we are here. (hand out copies of the third commandment with meaning.

Let us read the third commandment. "Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it Holy."
What does this mean? "We are to fear and love God so that we do not despise preaching and His Word, but hold it sacred and gladly hear and learn it."

After Jesus had called Simon Peter, Andrew, and James and John from their fishing boats by the Sea of Galilee they went to the Synagogue on the Sabbath Day, which may have been early Saturday Morning. Now that was the natural thing to do on the Sabbath day, to go to the synagogue to gladly hear God's Word and learn it. Now in order to have an official synagogue you needed at least ten members. Later on in Jesus' ministry that number would be reduced to two or three who gladly gather in His name to hear God's word and learn it. So they enter the synagogue on the Sabbath and the people are gathered there to eagerly hear God's Word taught and expounded on.

Now Jesus, it is apparent that His reputation has spread, is invited to speak on the appointed lesson for the day. And when Jesus preached the people were amazed. Some translations have astonished. Usually when the religious leaders spoke on the word they would quote commentaries and or other famous rabbis. At least when the prophets spoke, they said, "Thus Saith the Lord..." When Jesus spoke, he said, "Truly, truly, or Amen, Amen, I say to you, I am the way, the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father except through me," or "I am the living Bread from Heaven and all who eat of my flesh shall have eternal life." They had not heard anything like this before.

When the scribes spoke, you could get mad at them for what they said, and you could separate the message from the person. Don't shoot the messenger they might of said. I heard a preacher say one time, don't get mad at me, it is right here in the Bible. It was as if he was apologizing for the word that he had to preach.

Jesus is different. He spoke to them with Divine authority that had been given to Him from Heaven. You could not separate what Jesus said from who He was, because Jesus

is the Word made flesh who dwelt among us. The Word He spoke was intimately connected to Jesus. Inseparable!

When Jesus spoke, he never asked anyone to make a decision for Himself, but when He did speak it did compel a decision. You would accept Him and His words and trust them and put your faith in them. When you heard Jesus, He was more than a great teacher.

"They were amazed at His teaching!" That can be tricky. Sometimes this amazement with Jesus' teaching was not a positive reaction. One time in the synagogue in HIS hometown of Nazareth, Jesus was teaching that the Spirit of the Lord was upon Him to bring good news to the poor and release to the captive, and so on. The crowds were so amazed that they were ready to throw Jesus over the cliff. His words upset them, and disturbed them. They came to worship like we do, maybe to get some advice to be a better person or to help their week go better. But when we hear that we don't measure up to God's standard, that we are not saved by being a good person that can be very disturbing. All of our good qualities don't measure up. We all fall short, even me your preacher. Jesus' teaching was the type of teaching where either you wanted to have Him crucified, or you were ready to call Him Lord and master of your life. That just may be the point, He would need to be crucified so that we could call Him Lord. But we are getting ahead of the story.

Well, there was a parish nor who was disturbed by Jesus' teaching that day in Capernaum. "Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an unclean spirit cried out, 'What do you have to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are-the Holy one of God.'" Yes, the unclean spirit knew exactly who Jesus was. When heard Jesus speak, it was the same voice of the Lord who spoke to Adam and Eve in the Garden that He would send savior to stomp the head of the serpent and in stomping the head of the serpent He would have His heel bruised. This was the same voice who spoke to Moses in the burning bush to go and lead Israel out of slavery in Egypt to the Promised Land. Right here in the house of worship, disrupting the people who gladly come and hear God's word and learn from it is the man with an unclean spirit recognizing Jesus as the Son of God.

"I know who you are," is not a confession of faith. It is a statement of fear. This unclean or evil spirit by naming His foe, "Jesus of Nazareth, the Holy One of God, was some way of trying to gain control of Jesus.

Just because the unclean spirit names Jesus the Holy One of God is not a confession of Faith. James the epistle writer says that even the demons know the Lord and they shudder. The Unclean spirit shudders back at Jesus, "You have come to destroy us."

Jesus commands the Evil spirit, "Be quiet! Come out of him." And with a shriek, shaking the parishioner violently expels the evil spirit.

I suppose that man in our gospel today is no different than the rest of us. This man had through the years learned to control this unclean spirit in His life. At least he could manage it where no one else would notice anything wrong. And if they did notice the others kept quiet about it because they had their own personal unclean spirits to deal with and try to control. So they would all say it is best that we all try to get along the best we can.

But then one day Jesus, the Light of the World came to town. He spoke as one having authority from heaven. And the Darkness did not like it one bit. "You have come to destroy us." And Jesus sent this one packing. But later, in fact the darkness would try to overcome Jesus the Holy One of God. By having Him crucified on the cross. But that did not work either. The true light has overcome the darkness, Jesus stomps the head of the evil one, and Jesus is risen from the dead. He is the one who drives away all the demons that haunt our lives. He makes us clean by water and Holy Spirit, and calls you by name.

And that is what we do each and every Sunday as we come together for worship. To come, I hope and pray, to gladly hear the Word of God preached and to learn it. Though we do not worship of the seventh day Jewish Sabbath, we come together on the first day of the week because that the day that the crucified and buried Jesus was raised from the tomb. And we can give thanks for what God has done for us in Jesus Christ by giving us new life and the release from all our sins as we come to Him with repentant hearts and minds and the hope of eternal life. Amen.