



8. Authority and Power (Luke 4:31-44)

You'll remember if you were here last week that Luke sets out who Jesus is in the early chapters of his gospel. From the outset of his gospel, Luke wants to establish the point that Jesus Christ is in authority. He is Lord over all, and thus the proper response to Him is to submit to Him and do what He says. We found three statements about Jesus that sums up Luke's message about who He was and is.

- He's the Son of God.
- He's the Messiah long foretold.
- He was going to be a light to the Gentiles.

As we then look at subsequent stories, we see a picture of Jesus emerging which shows all those attributes. Firstly he goes into His Father's business - His heavenly Father's business - when He's twelve. Then at His baptism He's openly revealed as the Son and the Messiah. He sees Satan off and then starts His ministry with preaching and miracles in Galilee. In His hometown of Nazareth He clearly sets out His stall by reading these words from Isaiah's prophecy. They are words of authority that applied to Him.

61:1 The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, 2 to proclaim the year of the LORD's favour

He confounded the citizens of Nazareth by claiming that those words - which Jews knew were referring to the Messiah - found fulfilment in Him. And they would not accept Him and desired to kill Him because they were not going to submit to the lad from town. He walked away and as we read this morning, went to Capernaum, where the reception was quite different. In fact these verses in chapter 4 that follow the incident at Nazareth serve to show that the words Jesus spoke in Nazareth were true, because He proceeded to fulfil them.

Most scholars and commentators agree that Capernaum seems to have been home for Jesus during His public ministry. I use home loosely as He's clearly given up whatever home and business He had to become a travelling rabbi. As I observed last week, He most likely plied trade in places like Capernaum and it may well have been home prior to His ministry as much as it was during. People knew Him there. He was accepted. So when the miracles came, they were amazed by what He did but accepted Him. And the miracles flowed and the reputation came.

In fact, at this stage, they had no problem with Him doing whatever He did on the Sabbath, such was their acceptance of Him. He proved His application of Isaiah 61 as He freed those who were in captivity to demons. He healed Simon's mother in law. He astonished people. His words had authority - and power. As I have said previously, people had more problem with accepting Jesus as the Son of God than they did the long-foretold messiah. Messiah was no problem - they were looking for one of those. But it was inconceivable to Jews that God would Himself take on mortal flesh and walk through the towns of Galilee. But here He was.

The demons did not have any problem with accepting who He was - they just said it as it was. *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.* The demon was commanded to be silent. In fact, Jesus generally silenced demons who knew who He was. Because they knew that in openly proclaiming Him, they undermined His ministry by latching into the people's unbelief about His Sonship. It was a big sticking point which intensified into major controversy with the Jewish hierarchy which of course led to betrayal, trial and crucifixion - according to the purposes of God. But in these early days Jesus silenced them because it was His and His Father's prerogative to reveal His Sonship as and when. but Luke gives it to us here to demonstrate from the start, that it was clearly being revealed, even by

the opposition, that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the Living God.

And He spoke with authority and acted with authority. And Capernaum was buzzing with excitement. It wasn't just good news to those in captivity to demons. It was good news to helpless people. Like Simon's mother in law. On that day in Capernaum, she was sick. Jesus visits the house and rebukes the illness and she's healed. Jesus had authority and this was reflected in his power. It was not a case of Him saying words and people did them and followed Him. He had real power to change people's lives. And He did. By the end of the day, the queue was stretching out of the door, so much so that in the heat of the day, He sought out a desolate place to be out of the way - presumably to pray.

Oh, it was so wonderful in Capernaum. They didn't want Him to leave. They never had a rabbi like him. But He had to preach in other towns and in Judea. Which He proceeded to do - and that is for some other time.

What of us 2000 years later? What can we take from this chapter. I would like to point out the two things that come over from this passage which can be summed up in two words - authority and power. Jesus embodied both together. He had the authority and He exercised it in power. Because of this, people's lives were changed. Their lives were changed in two ways.

First of all their lives were changed materially. To be freed from captivity by a demon meant that now they could live their lives without the influence of the demon. To be healed of their sicknesses meant that they could follow Jesus. Jesus had the power and as He spoke with authority, the manifestation of power changed their lives.

But secondly, there was a spiritual change. In seeing miracles, people saw the power of God manifest - and many came and heard His words - and became obedient to His authority as His disciples.

BUT even at this stage we see the contrast between these two changes. In the prophecy in Isaiah, they have equal weight, but for the people, they were already starting to get to know Jesus for what they could get out of Him. They were less interested in the spiritual changes he would have been preaching about - their obedience to Him, because it cost them. Many received of His miracles or witnessed them, but it was only the few in comparison that followed.

Some things never change. Wind on 2000 years, and people still want a Jesus who does miracles, because they find it much more difficult to accept His message of words. They want him for what they get out of Him. But Jesus just wants our obedience - the whole of our lives because His authority demands it. That's what we celebrate in communion. He gave everything for us - right down to His very life so that we could come into the blessings of God. But it's true isn't it; that we want the blessings without the challenge. We just won't come out of our comfort zones.

It's only when we are under His authority do we really experience His power and see it work through us. We observed last week how Jesus foretold of His disciples that they would do the same things and greater in His name.

We don't see amazing things in Swaffham do we? In fact, generally we don't see much of the power of God in our land. We could. We should. But it starts when we come under His authority and let Him move in power. It's not an optional extra for believers, but our inheritance as the body of Christ.

It starts with obedience to God's call. Tonight we're going to explore just what that means because God equips us in Christ to change people's lives and to change the world in His power - he makes the deaf to hear and the blind to speak. He makes a difference. We are called to make that difference too. Let's pray.

