

Sermon – Port Macquarie – 1st February 2009

Jesus spoke with authority:

Mark 1:21- 28:

Rev Micheal Perrott:

A noted actor was called upon to give an oration. He stood, cleared his throat, and recited the 23rd psalm with perfect dramatization and inflection. When he finished, the room was filled with applause.

Then an elderly priest stepped forward and proceeded to recite the same words. When he finished, there was not a sound in the room, but nearly every eye was filled with tears.

Someone asked the actor what the difference had been. “Well, you see,” he said. “There’s no doubt that I know the 23rd psalm backwards and forwards. But the Padre here, well, he knows the shepherd.”

When Jesus stood to speak to the people in the synagogue at Capernaum and every other place he spoke, he spoke with authority and with commitment, not a dictatorial type of authority but an authority that showed he believed in the message he had and that he knew the great shepherd. The people gathered in the synagogue stood in awe and amazement at Jesus presence, power and his message.

So what was so different for they had had the scribes teaching them for ages? The scribes were the typical teachers of the law in Jesus day; they were well up on the law, for they knew the law book very well, and they knew the traditions of the Jewish system. When the Scribes taught they supported every statement with quotations and thus they always appealed to authority. When the prophets spoke, they said, “Thus says the Lord.” Theirs was a delegated authority, for they focused of the law rather than the law giver, much like many in ministry today.

Jesus however knew the law giver, the holy one, the God of Israel, and because Jesus knew the law giver the great shepherd there was an intimacy to Jesus knowledge about the religious law. For he knew and still knows, not only about God, he knows God personally. In fact he was with God from the beginning of time. So when he speaks he does so as one who has spent a great deal of time in God’s presence. At times it appeared as if he spoke as God, which is not so amazing, as he is God’s Son.

Thus when Jesus spoke he needed no authority to support his teaching; he did not rely on delegated authority because he was the authority of God in human form.

Jesus spoke not from head knowledge, as did the scribes, but from heart knowledge with feeling passion and authority. Jesus went beyond the law as the people knew it to the spirit underlying it, which is a rule of life which draws people into a relationship with God and one another. Jesus teaching thus shows that there is more to the law than the ordering of society according to right and wrong. His teaching shows that far more important is the community of righteousness, justice, compassion, and care the law is meant to bring.

When a government appoints an ambassador, he is given the authority to speak on behalf of the government, his authority is external. Where as when Jesus spoke he did not need any external authorization for his authority had internal and eternal grounding, an internal grounding that is from his relationship with God.

Jesus teaching was confronting for the scribes for it was so different and it offered people a new way of looking at the world and a new way of seeing things for Jesus was live changing. The scribes of Jesus day could not see this and were like many in churches today, they were stuck in a rut and were limited by their inability and unwillingness to see beyond these limitations, which kept them stuck in the sameness of their lives.

Let's not be too harsh on them, for many of us balk at changes.

This reminds me of a small story I read:

How many Anglicans does it take to change a light bulb?

Three, one to get permission from the Bishop, one to change the bulb, and one to say that the old one looked better because her great-grandmother donated it to the church.

The idea of change brings a sense of uncertainty to our lives, and this was the case with the scribes of Jesus day for his words challenged their traditions. Out of their fear and resistance to this new thing that God was doing through Jesus they attacked him and undermined his ministry, eventually crucifying him on the cross.

The same happens today when one speaks out with authority from God and seeks to bring change in the way the Church does its ministry. Quite often that person is attacked verbally and has their efforts undermined by those who wish to stay in the past, who want things as they were 20,30, 50 years ago, in the good old days, and are afraid of what the changes may bring in the here and now.

As Jesus was speaking to those assembled in the synagogue a man with an evil spirit, what we would possibly refer to as mentally challenged or even demonic behavior, stood up and yelled out “what do we have to do with you, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are – the Holy One of God!”

Jesus respond with authority and cast the demon out of the man. This too confronted the sensitivities of those gathered. Here was Jesus not only speaking with authority but acting with authority. They just could not understand it.

But note that even though the scribes etc were missing the point as to who Jesus was the demons knew straight off who he was. This was God in the flesh and they knew it and they knew that there was nothing they could do to keep Jesus from taking authority over them. In stating that Jesus is the Holy one of God they are referring clearly to his deity.

Another point to note from this story which seems to be overlooked is that Jesus healed this man on the Sabbath and no one challenged him. It is not long after this that we read that whenever Jesus healed on the Sabbath the scribes and Pharisees took him to task.

Today people are still confronted by the authority of Jesus teaching, found in the Bible, and still will not accept that Jesus is the Son of God. What people find most confronting is the challenge of Jesus teaching about repentance and salvation, which are God’s gracious gifts to us through Christ Jesus.

People 2000 years ago and today seem to have a problem with acknowledging that they have made a mistake, that they have wronged God and need to seek God’s forgiveness for that mistake. They find it difficult to even admit to a spouse or friend that they have wronged them and ask for forgiveness let alone seek God’s forgiveness. They seem to be unable to accept that our God is a God of mercy and is willing to give us a second chance.

Why is this? Jesus teaching is still the same today as it was in the beginning and the authority and message of these words is still there.

Is it because humans do not like authority and as such rebel, Adam & Eve rebelled against the authority of God at tree of the knowledge of good & evil? Is it because the church of today, the body that Jesus gave authority to speak in his name has failed to do so adequately or consistently, or it has abdicated their authority to the ways of the world and society. Or is it that the church as the body of Christ has lost its passion and sense of compassion or commitment.

Is it that we have let the ways of society, such as excessive political correctness, to come and sit in our churches and affect the way we do

church, and have not challenged them? Jesus presence alone was enough for the demon in the man to take fright so why is it that the Church of God is the one in fear when we have the authority of Jesus to preach, teach and make disciples in his name.

As John mentioned last week as disciples we are called to witness and preach the message that Jesus preached and as he returned to heaven he gave us the authority to do so. Yet many who call themselves disciples seem to be reticent to step out with this authority. Is this because we are not totally committed to Jesus as John indicated that need to be?

I have my theories, they may be wrong, but not the answers, but what I do have and know is that Jesus is going to return one day with authority, the authority of a king, and when he does we will all have to stand before him and give an account of what we have done, or not done, with the talents and authority he has given us.

Jesus spoke to the people of his day and they were amazed at his teaching and the authority by which he taught and the grace of God that he offered. Jesus was speaking as God because he was and is God. Today we understand that the scriptures are the voice of God, and this book has to be our source of authority for matters of life and godliness. God has spoken and it is important that we accept that and understand that and we stand on that for the bible is the only source of this truth and grace.

We are told in the bible that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, for this is part of the gift of grace. However I feel that it is also important as disciples that we open ourselves, and prepare ourselves for these changes that God through Christ is bringing to our lives and to the way we do church. Then we can learn from the God given lessons from the past, good and bad, and be effective in our mission as the body of Christ, allowing these lessons to bring about change, change that will enable the message of Jesus, the message of salvation, to be heard by the spiritual lost, lonely and hurting.

I feel that if we fail to hear Jesus message, a message of grace and forgiveness, and allow it to change us and the way we do things we will be like the scribes and Pharisees of old and remain stuck in the rut.

We are not told what Jesus taught, only that he taught and when he spoke he spoke with authority, the authority and grace of God. Let us who have said yes to Jesus as Lord and saviour and are called to be Jesus disciples do the same so that the Gospel message will be preached, with conviction and authority, to all peoples in all the lands, through word and deed, winning souls for the Kingdom.

When Jesus spoke and ministered to the people he had compassion on them, thus his words spoken with the authority of God and his deeds showed

the love and mercy contained in the message he brought even if it was a hard word or tough message. Jesus was not afraid to speak the gospel with authority, let each one of us as disciples of Jesus go and do likewise.

In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.