Spirituality
Pencil Preaching





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August 29, 2022
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“They were astonished at his teaching because he spoke with authority” (Luke 4:32).

1 Cor 2:10B-16; Luke 4:31-37

It is no surprise that the Gospels show Jesus as an effective, engaging speaker. The Word of God is good with words, for the same creative power that made the world is now remaking it, reclaiming the underlying grammar of God’s original design from the distortion and damage of sin.

This damage is evident in the man possessed by an unclean spirit in the synagogue on the sabbath. He is apparently able to come to the synagogue without being detected, but the demon cannot abide being there in the presence of real holiness and authority. At Jesus’ command, the demon releases the man, who falls at the feet of Jesus unharmed. But there is a deeper distortion Jesus is challenging, that of the synagogue and the sabbath itself. Religion has been used to take possession of people’s lives, making them scrupulous and fearful, asserting the letter of the Law over its intent to focus our hearts on God.

By healing the possessed man on the sabbath, Jesus takes on the whole structure of institutional religion. Opposition to him from the local synagogue all the way up to

the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem will grow and culminate in his condemnation and death. Jesus is not just an itinerant preacher, exorcist and healer; he is a threat to the entire system.

The authority of Jesus over creation begins within human consciousness, where the distortions of sin first take hold. In his letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul proclaims the power of the gospel to transform our way of thinking. The “world,” i.e., human consciousness estranged from God, cannot grasp the mind of Christ, who has entered the world to transform our human experience by the power of grace. Jesus, made perfect by his death and resurrection, offers us all a renewed consciousness purified of sin and open to the Spirit of God.

Ordinary people could feel this deep resonance in Jesus’ words. He had authority because he was in touch with the Author of creation. No evil spirit could stand up to his power. We seek the mind of Christ that alone can recalibrate our inner consciousness and actions. This is what daily discipleship means. We rejoice to have this grace at work within us at all times.

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