Jesus' Authority and Preaching

1. Read Luke 4:31-32. Interpreting people's reactions can be a real challenge. The blank stare is the worst– you have no clue what's going on in their minds! Pastors experience this a lot… 😊

   But not with Jesus! When He taught in the synagogues, the audience was ASTONISHED at His words. But here's the twist: I'm left wondering how to interpret that reaction. Were they ASTONISHED in a good way, like, "Wow, that's amazing! I'm ready to drop everything and follow this guy!"? Or were they more like, "Hold on a second! I'm a pretty good person, thank you very much. I try hard to be nice and I don't hate anyone! Why's He looking at me when He says 'repent'? Who does this guy think He is?"

   What does Luke tell us about Jesus' preaching?

   - *Jesus preached with* _____. (Authority) Consider the words of inistitution—Jesus' words deliver what they say.

   How was Jesus' preaching different from the preaching of the scribes in His day and how is it different from preaching of pastors today?

   - Divine Authority vs. Derivative Authority: Pastors do not have the inherent, self-derived authority of Jesus. They stand in the stead of Christ. They teach with authorized authority, which is a delegated authority to preach the Word and administer Sacraments by being rightly called into the holy ministry.

   - Proclamation vs. Miracle: While Jesus' words acted on physical illness and demonic oppression directly, and even the weather, modern preaching centers on the "heralded" (kérussó) word of forgiveness in Christ.

   - Focus on the Means of Grace: A focus on the objective word of the Gospel, where Jesus is still preaching to the congregation through the pastor. Direct examples would be in Confession/Absolution; Baptism; Lord's Supper.

   - Uncertainty vs. Assurance: While scribes created confusion with endless debates, Jesus brought clarity and certainty, speaking as one who truly knew the Father. Pastors today speak with the living word of Christ and should proclaim that word as Christ's and not their own.

2. A wise pastor once defined "power" and "authority" as follows: "Power is a limited ability or commodity. A person has power at the expense of someone else. I must disempower others in order to have it and keep it for myself. Those who lack authority use power. When people operate with power the reaction to them is political. If you operate with power than you have a constant battle with the

other power people in your congregation. That leads you to manipulation by the great power-monger, Satan. Operate with power and you are operating on Satan's terms.

Authority is an unlimited ability or commodity. You cannot exercise authority unless you are under authority. It is never taken. Authority is given to you by someone else. You can only receive it. I exercise authority by authorizing others to act. You don't exercise authority by keeping it to yourself. The more I give my authority away the greater my authority is. Authority grows with the delegation of authority to others. When authorities speak people listen, even if they don't agree."
(Wisdom for Pastors Seeking Joy in Their Ministry, John W. Kleinig (Doxology, Inc. 2009), DVD.

- Why is authority so important to the work of the Church and preaching? Why does power more often breed strife?

  Pastoral authority comes from Scripture and his calling from the congregation. When we preach, teach and provide pastoral care from God's Word, we can do so with confidence that we have not spoken falsely. We can also take comfort in knowing that when we are rejected, they have not rejected our opinion, or even ourselves, but God. We also take comfort in knowing that when we sin in exercising our authority or take an approach of power, we too have God's sure word of forgiveness to restore us.

  Authority is given and delegated from above. Christ has called His Church to proclaim forgiveness and has given us the authority to speak Law and Gospel in His name. Our sinful nature chafes at the thought of being limited by authority. But really, the authority which Christ has bestowed gives us confidence to preach and teach, and gives assurance to our hearers that God's Word and will are truly for them and their salvation.

3. Read Luke 4:33-37. Does it seem unsettling that a demon was in the Synagogue where God's people were worshiping and Jesus was preaching? Can this happen in a church today? If so, how can we be safe? We should expect it more in church than perhaps anywhere else. As Luther said, "where Jesus builds His church, Satan builds a chapel." God's people remain immune by recognizing the authority of Jesus' word –their identity in their baptism, the comfort of the Lord's Supper, the forgiveness pronounced in Confession/Absolution, the command to make disciples, the forgiveness we pray for and the forgiveness we pray to give to others in the Lord's Prayer, the confidence in the Aaronic blessing grounded in Christ, etc.

4. What does the demon mean when it asks Jesus if He has come to "destroy" them?
   The word "destroy" suggests an eschatological interpretation. In the garden God said the promised Seed would crush the Serpent. This would happen in the end-times. Well, the end-times have come. With Jesus a new era has begun. Jesus' teaching and miracles demonstrate that this new era has broken in. The demonic powers fear the appearance of "the Holy One of God" because the people they hold captive, Jesus releases (or exorcises). The ultimate exorcism of the world will occur in Jesus' death and resurrection.

5. Read Luke 4:38-44. In these verses, we see Jesus helping those who are sick and healing people, but He also says that He must continue preaching about God's Kingdom. Why do you think it's important for Jesus to balance helping people with sharing His message?

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