

What is new? When I go and visit our members who are homebound, that is always a question that I get from them. So what is new at church Pastor? I then launch into the state of the union address with them, I talk about church attendance, the different programs that we have going on, and what events that we have on the calendar. After they catch up on what is new at the church, we take some time to talk about what isn't new at the church. I usually grab a bulletin nearby and talk about God's word and give them a mini-sermon about God's word. It's never anything new, but it is the reason that I am there, it is the reason that I am their pastor. I am there to tell them the old news about God word because it still has the authority to change their life.

The section of God's word that we are studying today is from Mark 1:21-28. People don't know who Jesus is at this point. He isn't famous. When people read in their bulletin that Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth is preaching, they don't think much of it. Until they heard him speak. They listened to this preacher named Jesus, and it was amazing. It was different for them. It sounded like something new because our text says that, "The people were amazed because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law."

Have you ever been amazed that someone can teach so authoritatively? The word there in greek amazed, isn't like a simple golf clap, "Oh, nice impressive." It is mind-blowing. To be struck out of your senses. Amazed to the point of being overwhelmed. Like a kid when he sees a magic trick. His face lights up. Overwhelmed by amazement. Jesus did do slight of hand, and he hadn't even healed anyone or driven out demons in this lesson, but the people were awestruck by him because of what he was teaching them. The gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke use this same word to talk about how the crowds felt when they heard Jesus speak because he taught them with authority.

How do you speak with authority? ..."Please rise". It works sometimes. Authority is having power or control over something. If I see flashing lights in my rearview mirror and hear, "Pull over!" I am going to listen, and I am going to pull over my car. The police have authority. As a parent, I have authority over my daughter. Eat this or don't eat that. Don't run away in the

mall. Time to go to bed. I am an authority for her. But how did Jesus teach with authority?

He taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law.

Wouldn't you expect the teachers of the law to have authority? Do this. Don't do this. Eat these foods. Don't eat those foods. Wear these clothes. Celebrate these holidays. Wash your hands this way. Work during these days of the week doesn't work those days of the week. The teachers of the law were people that taught the law. They taught the people what they believed God wanted them to do. And the teachers of the law thought that was what authority was. And the people thought that is what authority was. Look at what the church can command people to do, and people do it. The Old Testament church commanded people to give tithes, plural; it ended up being around 23% of their income to the church. The teachers of the law commanded it, and guess what, the people did it. They told people don't eat certain foods, and guess what, people did it. They said come to worship, and people did it. Isn't that authority, isn't that control? Making people do what you want them to do when you want them to do it?

The people were amazed because he taught them as one who had authority and not as the teachers of the law.

The people were blown out of their mind when they heard Jesus speak because the authority that Jesus had made the authority that the teachers of the law have look like they had no authority at all. They were preaching the law. They were preaching this is what you should do and this is what you shouldn't do, and people were doing or not doing what they said, and that looked powerful until the people saw what Jesus was able to do.

They thought it was a new teaching. But it wasn't different. Deuteronomy says that no one should preach anything different from the words that God has given to them. The teachers of the law were preaching God's law. Jesus says in a different Gospel that he and the father are one and everything that comes from him also comes from the Father. The law came from God; he gave it to Moses, Jesus is God. Both the message of the law and the message that Jesus was speaking were from the same place so you would think that they would be the same, and have the same

authority. But when people heard them they realized there was a difference. Jesus and his preaching had authority, the teachers of the law didn't.

The law has power. And it is part of my job to teach the law from this pulpit. It is my job to let you know what God demands of you. He tells you and me to "Love the Lord your God with all your heart soul and mind, and love your neighbor as yourself." God also wants me to teach you, that the slightest stumble in your life, one sin, no matter how great or small, will disqualify you from receiving everlasting life in heaven, and will result in you spending an eternity suffering in hell. So please God. Do what he says. Or else you will receive what sinners deserve.

If that were my only message, I wouldn't be a Pastor very long. You wouldn't come to this church very long. And it's not because this message isn't true. It's because you know that already. Before you walked into this church this morning you knew that you haven't been perfect. You know that sin has consequences. You know what guilt is. You know what shame is. You know you aren't perfect. You know you never will be. You know you were trying to be what God wants you to be. But you also know that God should punish you for your thoughts, words, and deeds. He has every right to.

Meditating on that. It could make me shape up for a while. But eventually, it is going to make you hate your God. Because he demands something from you that you can't do. He says be stronger when you are weak. He says to be perfect when you are flawed, and eventually, you would just push away from him.

God loves you. God knows that you and I, and everyone else in this sinful and evil world didn't have a chance to do what the law required us to do. He knew we were going to break every rule in the book. He knew we were going to fail to keep his law. And so he promised to send into the world someone who would keep the laws we couldn't and would give us credit as if we did. He promised to send us a Savior because he loves you and he wants you to be in heaven with him forever. And he did. He sent Jesus into this world to pay for all of the sins of this world.

All of your sins, all of your mistakes, all of the times that you fall short of perfection, have been forgiven completely by Jesus the Christ, the savior of the world.

Now we follow his law. We do what God wants us to do, not because we are afraid that if we don't God is going to throw fire and brimstone down from heaven and destroy us, but because we know this is the way that we should offer our thanks and our praise to God.

The law only has so much authority. You can only tell someone what they should or shouldn't do so many times. And you might be able to temporarily change someone's behavior by threatening them. But unless you change the heart and the mind, unless you change the motivation and the rationale, you don't change a person. The gospel changes us. It transforms us. It has the power to make us born again and new. It has the authority to forget about the foolishness of this world and understand teaching that is out of this world and from God. It has the power to change the perspective about how we live every day of our lives. It can show us what true love is. It has the power to wipe away the fear of death. It has the power to show you what it means to be content in sickness and in health, in suffering and in triumph. The power of the Gospel is limitless. To hear about what your God has done for you, and to believe it, that is a miraculous event that changes our lives.

That power comes from God. The power of his word. The word of God has been used to create the world in an abyss of darkness and nothingness. And the word of God can be used to make you a child of God and keep you in his tender care for all of eternity. It saves you.

That is authority. That is control over our lives that we will never have by chasing after the law. That's nothing new. That's what Jesus teaches. And that's what we learn from him today. Amen.