

ZION, JANUARY 31

Jesus had been teaching in and around Capernaum for several weeks. It had become his base of operation. The entire town was being transformed by the power of Jesus. We, too, seek to be continually renewed by Christ. So, looking at what happened in Capernaum when Jesus came to town is instructive. Several things happened.

NUMBER ONE: Satan's kingdom gets shook up.

Jesus taught with authority, unlike the teachers of the law. Unlike the scribes, Jesus declared God's truth boldly. We see this Authority as He taught the Sermon on the Mount. Time and time again, Jesus would state what had been commonly taught, then say, "But I say to you ..."

Declaring God's truth without compromise shook up the kingdom of Satan. Jesus was speaking and acting with a divine authority that got the demons in the town of upset.

"And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, "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."

Unclean spirits knew who Jesus was. He was the Holy One of God! They knew that they had no authority over Him. That was the point. He's the holy one of Israel and WE HAVE NO AUTHORITY OVER HIM. We will never intimidate Him or scare Him. The best thing we can do is just ask Him to leave us alone.

So, they sent a representative to the synagogue to ask Jesus to leave. But Jesus' reply to the demon's request was straight to the point, "Be quiet! Come out of that man!"

Immediately, the Bible tells us, the demon left the man. Mark tells us in v. 34, that before that day was over, **"Jesus drove out many demons."**

When Jesus comes to town and takes over, Satan's kingdom gets shaken up. It is well for us to remember that Satan's power is not inherent but permitted. It is not unlimited but controlled. It is not invincible but broken. It is not assured of success but is surely doomed. Satan knows well that there is no ultimate victory for him. The pronounced sentence has only been postponed. But he works to hinder and postpone Christ's final triumph. We can rejoice in the certainty of John's assurance: "**Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.**"

Still Satan is real. He does have power. He is out there. The Bible calls him the prince of this world, the prince of the power of the air, the deceiver of the world, the tempter, the evil one, and the father of lies. He is called a lying spirit, the power of darkness, the prince of devils, the ruler of the darkness of this world. He is called the spirit of disobedience, the unclean spirit, the wicked one. In 1 Peter 5:8 he is called our adversary and is likened to a roaring lion seeking to devour whom he may.

Satan tempts us in three separate ways according to I John 2:15-16, "**Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world —the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world.**"

The first desire appeals mainly to the body, the second to the soul, and the third to the spirit. Perhaps the most common manifestation of the lust of the flesh in modern western civilization is illicit sex. Perhaps the most common manifestation of the lust of the eyes is excessive buying, materialism, idolizing possessions. Perhaps the most common manifestation of the pride of life is trying to control everything by our own power.

The three aspects of temptation listed in I John 2:15-16 parallel the way that Satan tempted Eve in the Garden of Eden. She saw that the forbidden fruit was good for food, which was an appeal to the lust of the flesh. She saw **"that it was a delight to the eyes."** This appealed to the lust of the eyes. She also saw **"that the tree was desirable to make one wise."** This appealed to the boastful pride of life.

The same pattern occurs in Satan's temptation of Jesus in Luke 4:1-12. Satan urged Jesus to turn the stones into bread. That's the lust of the flesh. He showed Him all the kingdoms of the earth, offering to give them to Him. This is the lust of the eyes. He encouraged Him to jump off the pinnacle of the temple, which could have been a source of pride in this miraculous accomplishment. We are in a spiritual battle.

**I'm enlisted as a soldier in this mighty army band,
Marching out to battle with my weapon in my hand,
Heard the captain give the orders and they don't include retreat,
We're crossing o'er the border to a land of no defeat.**

**Now tell me who's gonna fight and who is gonna win,
Who's gonna fight and who is giving in,
Who will cry, "I surrender," when the enemy you meet,
Or be a soldier in the army standing on his feet.**

**Upon this rock I'll build my church then let ole Satan try,
But the gates of hell cannot prevail, and here's the reason why:
Jesus raised the flag on Calvary made sweet victory complete,
And if we're made more than conquerors then Satan's more than beat.**

I remember the Vacation Bible School Children's Church Song.

I'm in the Lord's army, I'm in the Lord's Army,

I may never march in the infantry, ride in the cavalry, shoot the artillery,

I may never fly o'er the enemy, but I'm in the Lord's army.

There are two big lies that Satan has been perpetrating ever since the Garden of Eden. The first is that God is mean, vindictive, a spoilsport whose main role in life is to keep us from being fulfilled and happy--when we step out of bounds, he takes delight in making us pay.

The second lie is that God really doesn't care what we do--probably doesn't know. And if he does, his business is to forgive us. He'll always forgive no matter what, so it really doesn't make much difference how we live and what we believe.

NUMBER TWO: Sin's captives get freed up.

Our text ends with vs. 28 but if we were to read on, we would come to vs. 32-33. **"That evening at sundown they brought to him all who were sick or oppressed by demons. And the whole city was gathered together at the door.** The Bible tells us that before the day was over, "the whole town gathered" to Jesus. This is something that always happens when Jesus takes over. This is what we want to see happen in the lives of every single person. When Jesus comes to town, sin's captives are freed up.

Psalms 61:1 says of the Messiah, **"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound."**

We believe that "you shall know that truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32).

It is our objective to feed people with truths from the Word of God in every area of life, spirit, soul, and body, producing liberty, restoration, and wholeness!

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed." Seeing Satan's kingdom shaken up and sin's captives freed up only takes place when Jesus is allowed to take over the lives of His people.

NUMBER THREE: God's people have to straighten up.

"And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes.

"And they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, "What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him."

The word in the original Greek that we translate literally means "out of oneself." In other words, to speak with authority or to act with authority means to speak or act with a sense of who you really are and whose you really are. This is how Jesus lived. This was the basis of all He said and did.

John tells us in John 13:3, **"Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under His power, and that He had come from God and was returning to God."** You and I are called to be like Christ in this world. And the key to that is allowing the Lord Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, to live His life through us. In other words, if Jesus is going to be free to take over, He must first be allowed to take over the lives of His people.

How do we do this?

- 1. You must put away any unconfessed sin...** the sin that we really don't want to let go of. It's what we keep secret from the church and sometimes from our families... Never doubt the power of confession and prayer
- 2. You must put away any doubtful habit...**
- 3. You must obey the Spirit promptly...**
- 4. You must confess Christ openly...** If I am ashamed... if I try to keep Jesus a secret from friends and family... If we really want to see Jesus come to town and take over, we must determine who we are and whose we are! Are you a Child of God or a child of the world? Do you belong to the Lord or to the world?

ON THE ENEMY: BE ENCOURAGED

- 1.** When the devil brings up your past, bring up his future.
- 2.** The man who is fully surrendered to the Lord will never deliberately surrender to the enemy.
- 3.** When adversity is most ready to strike us, God is most ready to strengthen us.
- 4.** The devil is an equal opportunity employer--all who work for him will go to hell.
- 5.** The Lord adds and multiplies; the devil subtracts and divides.
- 6.** Don't permit Satan to remind you of what God has already forgotten.
- 7.** Satan trembles when he sees the weakest saint upon his knees.

Martin Luther once dreamed that the devil was listening to reports from his agents on the progress they were making against the Kingdom of God. One reported, "A company of Christians were crossing the desert, and I set the lions on them, and all were lost." The devil replied, "What good was that? Their bodies were lost, but their souls were saved. I want their souls." Another little devil reported that a company of Christians were crossing the sea by a ship. I sent strong winds and caused the ship to go on the rocks and all were lost. Satan again said, "That was nothing." Because their bodies were lost, but he wanted their souls. A third agent gave his report saying, "After years of trying, I finally managed to put the church to sleep." And hearing this, hell and Satan rejoiced.