

MESSAGE – Authority of Jesus

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Remember research papers?

Dig for information about a topic

And cite your references....

To prove you weren't just making something up.

Your role as a student was to learn from, quote, and use the knowledge of people who were authorities in a subject matter

This isn't just the way research papers work...this practice has its place in everyday life: we use the authoritative or widely accepted knowledge that comes from outside of us.....We use terms like:

- 'where did you learn that?' which indicates that something you know must have come from somewhere
- 'my grandpa always said that....'
- People of today look to news media as sources of truth to support their views: 'CNN reported'; 'FOX news said'.....

'Schools of thought' are accepted and highly followed methods of understanding a particular kind of knowledge. For instance, there are schools of thought in psychology (Structuralism, Functionalism, Psychoanalysis, Behaviorism, and Gestalt Psychology)

philosophy (idealism, realism, pragmatism and existentialism)

economics (classical and Keynesian), and yes even in theology (biblical, historical, systematic, and practical).

Typically, anything outside accepted schools of thought are received with either suspicion or with a bit of awe.

Such was the case with Jesus: Mark 1:21-28

²¹ They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. ²² The people were amazed at his teaching,

because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law. ²³ Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an impure spirit cried out, ²⁴ "What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!"

²⁵ "Be quiet!" said Jesus sternly. "Come out of him!" ²⁶ The impure spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek. ²⁷ The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, "What is this? A new teaching—and with authority! He even gives orders to impure spirits and they obey him." ²⁸ News about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee.

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Jesus grew up with the cultural/religious educational system of the day:

At 5 – fit for scripture

At 10 – learning interpretations

At 13 – fulfilling of commandments

At 15 – making rabbinic interpretations

At 30 – able to teach others

Very few would become teachers in this system....most would have learned a vocation between 15 and 30 and spent their lives doing that

Most of the few who did become teachers (rabbis) could only teach accepted interpretations....most rabbis learned and then taught what previous rabbis had taught (what had become schools of thought);

They taught what had become widely accepted– they relied upon the rabbis who had s'mikhah: authority to make new interpretations.

In our story today we hear about how Jesus comes along into the synagogue and begins to teach and people were amazed because he teaches like one who has s'mikhah.

- 1) Being a rabbi with s'mikhah means he told new parables that depicted what the kingdom was like.  
<sup>45</sup> "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. <sup>46</sup> When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it. Matthew 13
  
- 2) Being a rabbi with s'mikhah means he taught new interpretations of Scripture.  
"You have heard that it was said, but I say to you"  
And eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, but....  
Love your friends and hate your enemies, but.....
  
- 3) Being a rabbi with s'mikhah means he created a "yoke". Rabbis who had s'mikhah would create a "yoke"; a way of understanding how to live fully with God. Jesus said, <sup>28</sup> "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup> Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup> For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." Matthew 11
  
- 4) Being a rabbi with s'mikhah means he used a certain technique of instruction called remez...hinting. In a particular setting, quoting something from scripture to describe what is going on knowing that his listeners would understand the rest of the scripture passage and find themselves in it. For example - when the Sadducees demanded that Jesus tell the children who were singing "hosanna" to him to be quiet, Jesus quoted to them from Psalm 8: "from the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise". This made them mad because they would know what came next in the line: that the voices of children silence God's enemies and foes. They would have heard clearly that Jesus was declaring that they, the religious leaders in Jerusalem, were God's enemies.

And so we learn that not everyone was excited about Jesus like those people in our story today who not only experienced Jesus' authority in his teaching, but how it was backed up with an authoritative act of power over an impure spirit.

Not only was it the Pharisees and Sadducees and scribes who rejected and were put off by Jesus:

In Matthew 13: "Coming to his hometown, he began teaching the people in their synagogue, and they were amazed. "Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers?" they asked. <sup>55</sup> "Isn't this the carpenter's son? Isn't his mother's name Mary, and aren't his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas? <sup>56</sup> Aren't all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?" <sup>57</sup> And they took offense at him.

Which brings us to the question of how do we receive the word Jesus teaches?

Jesus was not just a good teacher or another rabbi of his day. He did not quote the teachings of other scribes and rabbis as binding, but He expected us to see His teaching as superseding the other rabbis. The original hearers of Jesus said: "What is this? A new teaching—and with authority." The Greek word *exousia*, translated "authority" is typically used in the Bible to refer to God's own authority. In essence, those earliest of hearers were proclaiming that Jesus was speaking God's own word.

I know we live in a day and age in which there is a lot available to us. There are a lot of schools of wisdom for us to listen to. So the question is, "How are we receiving Jesus and what Jesus is teaching?"

- As simply one of many options or schools of thought?
- With skepticism like the people of Nazareth
- With anger and rejection like the Scribes and Pharisees?

Or as *the* very Word of God that has become flesh and lived among us; the One who Moses predicted would come:

Deuteronomy 18:18

<sup>18</sup>I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their fellow Israelites, and I will put my words in his mouth. He will tell them everything I command him.

Do we accept Jesus' teachings as authoritative in our lives?

Do we pattern our attitudes and actions around what he taught?

We are approaching the season of Lent – 40 days of preparation before Easter. These 40 days are a great opportunity to dig in and learn.....so let me put out a challenge: make a plan to read through the Gospels between now and Easter. Dig into what Jesus is teaching in the parables he speaks, in the interpretations of Torah he declares, and in the rezem (hints) he uses. Let us learn more what it means to take his yoke upon our own shoulders.

Psalms 111:10

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom;

all who follow his precepts have good understanding.