

## **Power of Jesus**

Luke 4:31-44

Key Verse: 4:35

“‘Be quiet!’ Jesus said sternly. ‘Come out of him!’ Then the demon threw the man down before them all and came out without injuring him.”

When I was little boy living in Korea, I used to see shamans that would come around the neighborhood to exorcise demons from people’s houses. These were strange looking people dressed all in red with multicolored feathers in the hats. Their faces were all painted but it was their eyes that spooked me the most. Even as a child I could recognize that these shamans were not normal people just by looking at their eyes. They were blazing with some kind of spirit that just looked demonic. These people would dance about the place screaming and shouting, spitting things out of their mouths and just generally acting strange. However, not all evil spirits demonstrate themselves in such outlandish ways. Some evil spirits are subtle and they affect people without them even knowing that they are being manipulated. Some evil spirits reside in people whom otherwise look normal but are nevertheless demonic in their thoughts. Remember Dahmer? Bundy? Jack the Ripper? All these people were clearly possessed by a terrible evil spirit but it took the authorities a long time to catch them - and some were never caught - because they looked otherwise normal to unsuspecting people. How many times have you heard the neighbor of these crazies say, “I’m shocked! He was quiet, kept to himself - he seemed like a normal guy...” Despite those who discredit the existence of spirits, evil spirits are real. I’ve seen the works of evil spirits and they are unmistakable, not to mention creepy. Fortunately for us, this passage tells us of Jesus who has the power to drive out evil spirits. Let’s learn how Jesus’ power has authority over them.

Jesus begins this passage by teaching at a synagogue on the Sabbath. Like in the previous passage, the people were amazed at the teaching of Jesus. Fortunately for Jesus, he did not get chased out of town by the people, almost getting thrown over a cliff. This time around, Jesus’ teaching was interrupted by a man possessed by an evil spirit. Verses 33 & 34 say, “In the synagogue there was a man possessed by a demon, an evil spirit. He cried out at the top of his voice, ‘Ha! 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!’” Notice here that it says, “in the synagogue.” Jesus was not at some seedy bar or in a rough part of town. Jesus was not visiting a mental hospital or even in the Lincoln Park area. Jesus was in a SYNAGOGUE! Jesus was in church when a crazed, demon possessed man started going nuts!

In movies, the church is often depicted as a sanctuary for those that are running from evil and it is commonly seen as a place where the burdened can come to find rest. When people think about church, they automatically conjure up images of a place where they can be protected from the evil spirits - after all, the church is the house of God. But the truth is that it is just as likely to find the presence of evil spirits in a church building as it is inside a night club. The Bible says that where there is the work of God, there also will be the work of the devil. The devil will infiltrate into any church to disturb and undo the work that God is doing inside it. In other cases, if a church has become corrupt and doctrinally demonic - e.g. gay pastors, rejection of certain parts of the Bible, etc. - then the devil will make himself at home in such a “church” to promote this seed of corruption into all those who come in not smelling the stench of evil lingering inside. Therefore, the fact that we are inside a church does not protect us from the work of the devil and it certainly does not allow us the freedom to let our guard down.

Therefore, we must be always diligent and be aware of and ready to fight the work of the devil even within the church.

Furthermore, the demon drove the man to scream at the top of his voice, “Ha! 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!” Here we can learn a couple of interesting things about the evil spirit within this man. First, there seems to be more than one demon as it says, “What do you want with **US**.” Secondly, it seems that among the multiple demons inside the man, one demon was speaking for the rest - perhaps the leader - as the verse changes to “**I** know who you are.” So here we have multiple demons inside this man and with one leader demon that was doing the talking. And it is clearly apparent from the words spoken by the demons that they were certain about who it was that they were speaking with.

In some ways, these demons were much better Bible students than the the crowd that were listening to Jesus and marveling at His wisdom. The demons knew right away that it was Jesus and they immediately exclaimed, “I know who you are” They recognized and respected with trembling fear the absolute power and authority of Jesus. Many people say that they believe in God and then use that as an excuse to not study the Bible or even come to church. Others come to church and even study the Bible but their knowledge of Jesus is limited to their understanding of Jesus as being just a good and moral teacher. But simply believing in God or knowing about Jesus’ makes people no better than evil spirits. Actually, it makes them worse than evil spirits since evil spirits recognized that Jesus was the Son of God.

I once studied the Bible with a student who thought he was hot stuff because he believed in God. For some reason, he felt that his life was justified before God all because he believed in Him. I rained on his parade when I told him that the devil believes in God much more than he believed in God. The devil is intimately familiar with who God is and what God can do. So I told this young man that at this point, he is no better than the devil. Needless to say he was not too happy with me calling him worse than the devil but it was the truth. When people say that they know Jesus or that they believe in God, they are not saying much.

The devil also protested, “What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us?” Besides knowing who Jesus was, the devil also recognized the power and authority of Jesus. Notice that they don’t challenge Jesus nor tell lies about Jesus’ power to drive them out. Their words, as contemptuous as they may sound, is actually the acceptance of their powerless nature before Jesus. They made a last ditch effort to resist Jesus but they knew that their time inside this man was coming to an end. It was a battle that they knew they could not win.

The evil spirits inside this man folded because they respected and feared Jesus as the Son of God. But curiously, us mere mortals sometimes outright reject Jesus’ authority and even defy Jesus and challenge His power over us. When presented with the gospel, these people scream with bitter outrage, “Don’t force your religion down my throat!” or “I can do whatever I want, I don’t have to obey the Bible,” or “the Bible is old and outdated, it no longer applies today.” But these responses are nothing but different versions of the demon’s protest. Resisting the power of Jesus is demonic and people who respond in such a manner are confirming their demonic nature. And just as the demons in this passage put up a pathetic fight, the responses of the unbelieving people today are equally pathetic. They say, “I don’t have

to obey,” or “it doesn’t apply to me,” or “I choose not to accept the Bible.” These responses originate from evil spirits who recognize their powerlessness but are putting up a last ditch effort to keep the person away from God. Demons will lie to people and it will do whatever it can to drive people away from God. But when Jesus comes with His almighty power, no demon can deny that He is the Son of God.

And herein lies the good news - that Jesus has the power to drive out all our demonic tendencies. Jesus is indeed the Son of God and he has complete authority over all the universe - including the devil himself. This is no better illustrated in Jesus’ response to the evil spirit.

Verse 35 says, “‘Be quiet!’ Jesus said sternly. ‘Come out of him!’ Then the demon threw the man down before them all and came out without injuring him.” First Jesus told the evil spirit to be quiet. There is no question that Jesus could have driven out this demon with only His thoughts. But Jesus first rebuked this demon to be quiet. By telling the demon to be quiet, Jesus is commanding the demon to stop resisting and speaking rebellious talk. Also Jesus is commanding the evil spirit to stop talking so it can listen to the command of the Son of God.

They say that the first step to recovering from alcoholism is to accept that you are an alcoholic. As long as you deny and resist the truth that you are an alcoholic, you can never be healed. Likewise, to be healed from demon possession, one must first stop resisting and rebelling against the one who comes to heal. To those who do not know Jesus, it means to stop putting up barrier after barrier as to why they won’t accept the Bible as truth. It means to stop thinking that they are their own little gods with the ability to do whatever they want and not have to listen to what the Bible commands.

Secondly, one must listen to Jesus. Listening to Jesus means not listening to the poor counsel of other demons and also to stop listening to our own foolish thinking. We can become so full of our own theologies, interpretations and selective acceptances of the truth that we cannot hear Jesus telling us the Truth. The fact of the matter is that human understanding is primitive when compared to the wisdom of God. The Bible itself declares that there are truths of God that transcends human understanding. It is only by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit that any secrets of the Bible are revealed to us. Therefore, if we become deafened to the words of the Holy Spirit because we are too busy listening to our own pathetic doctrines and ideas, we can easily become overwhelmed by evil spirits that wait for our pride to grow sufficiently for God’s Word to be displaced from our hearts. So Jesus rebuked this demon and also he rebukes us - “Be Quiet”. I pray that all of us may shut up and listen to Jesus.

Then Jesus commanded the evil spirit, “Come out of him!” With these simple words, the awesome power of Jesus is revealed. The evil spirit gave one last ditch attempt to harm the man but ultimately he came out of the man without injuring him. Jesus’ power was simply too much for these evil spirits. Furthermore, the power of Jesus is effective not only against evil spirits but also against sicknesses. Verses 38 & 39 shows how Jesus has power to rebuke even a fever. I never would have thought to rebuke a fever but when you’re as powerful as Jesus, you can do that. And not just a fever, verse 40 & 41 shows that Jesus had power to heal all kinds of sicknesses as well as drive out all kinds of demons. I don’t know where Jesus did all this work but it sure would have been an interesting sight to see all these sick and demon possessed people congregating all at one place.

When all the healing work was done, Jesus went to a solitary place to pray. Apparently Jesus was working throughout the night for it was at daybreak that Jesus went away by himself. But Jesus' moment of solitude would be rudely interrupted by the mob that wanted Jesus to stay with them. However, to their request Jesus answered, "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent." And verse 44 tells us that this was exactly what Jesus did.

The Bible tells us that the devil is the prince of this world and he works really hard to destroy the work that God has done. The Bible also teaches us that the devil is more powerful than man but powerless before God. Therefore, we ourselves are woefully inadequate to take on the devil but when we are armed with the word of God, the devil can be defeated. When Jesus went away to pray, he demonstrated to us how we can also prepare ourselves against the work of evil spirits in this world. There are people possessed by evil spirits all over the world. Some behave crazily like the man in this passage. But most who are influenced by evil spirits look normal and even pleasant to be with. Some may even proclaim to be Christians and some might even be pastors of churches. So it becomes easy for us to let our guard down and let the work of the devil grow around us. Therefore it is absolutely imperative that we pray like Jesus did to ask God to keep our faith strong and our discernment sharp. We must pray for God's deliverance from the works of the devil within us and to drive out whatever demonic tendencies we may have allowed to fester in ourselves. Prayer is the most potent weapon against the work of the devil.

Also, when Jesus travelled from place to place to preach the good news of the kingdom of God, he set yet another example of how to fight against the work of the devil. There is nothing the devil wants more than to dominate the entire world and turn it against God. As Christians, however, God has called us to spread the gospel to all people of all nations so that the work of the devil may not take root all over the world. So the more we go out to preach the gospel, the less place the devil has to do its work and less people it has to possess and destroy. Let us preach the gospel to the students of this campus so that there may be no place for the devil to do his work here.

In some ways, a passage like this one may be difficult to practically accept. After all, none of us here talk to ourselves in public or can do a 360 with our heads. We don't talk in deep, disturbing voices and we certainly don't float above the ground. The reality is that these fantastic manifestations of demon possession are very rare. But that does not mean that there are no demon possessed people around us and it certainly does not mean that we ourselves are free from the influence of evil spirits. Everyday we are tempted and evil spirits are all around us whispering lies into our ears and waiting for us falter. We may not be demon possessed in the supernatural sense but we can just as easily become slaves and victims of its manipulation. So let us not drop our guard and become easy preys of evil spirits. Let us be aggressive Christians that prays and fights the work of the devil. Let us arm ourselves with the gospel and not allow demons to undo what God has done in us. Let us be quiet and listen to Jesus who speaks with power. And let us pray and preach the gospel that God's work may fill the earth.