

Mark 1: 21-28

**They went to Capernaum;
and when the Sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught.
They were astounded at his teaching,
for he taught them as one having authority--
and not as the scribes.**

**Just then 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.'**

But Jesus rebuked him, saying, 'Be silent, and come out of him!'

**And the unclean spirit,
throwing him into convulsions and crying with a loud voice, came out of him.
They were all amazed, and they kept on asking one another:
'What is this?
A new teaching— with authority!
He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.'**

At once his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee.

Meditation:

**Everybody can be an expert these days!
Just 'Google' whatever you want to know,
and all of a sudden you think you know what is going on...**

**When I was in school at The Catholic Theological Union,
professors kept stressing that when you read something...anything...
on the internet, know who your sources are...
and know what are their credentials are...**

**Because not everything on the web is ...well...
not everything is trustworthy...
not everyone has true authority....**

**In our reading today,
Jesus is in a holy place: the synagogue...
and he is there on a holy day: the Sabbath...
and he is teaching in the Synagogue.
In his day it was the custom for adult Jewish males to take their
turn teaching on the Sabbath so that wasn't so remarkable.**

**But Mark states that Jesus is teaching with an authority
that was different than the authority of the scribes.
Remember: the scribes were the official interpreters of the Jewish Law...**

So what might have been different with the way Jesus taught?

I think we probably have all run into people who expect to be obeyed and respected because of their position...

**but they believe that simply because they have a title:
you must believe and respect them and do what they tell they tell you to do.
They may have control over certain parts of your life,
but you do not respect them,
and thus they do not a position of authority...only control.**

**In these days of talking heads,
with the internet and social media making all sorts of information readily available,
it is important to determine for yourself who teaches with true authority...
and who does not...**

**True authority is never forced, or legislated or commanded.
It is given to you, not taken.
For someone to be a person with true authority,
their words and their actions must gel...
they must be people of integrity...
They must be someone who lifts people up
not pushes others down so that they themselves can appear to be better...**

**People who have true authority take personal responsibility
for their words and actions...
They considers other's views and perspectives and
form an opinion that can be changed if new information is learned.**

People with true authority speaks truthfully, kindly and courageously...

They are people who know how to use their power and their strength for the good of the whole community, not just themselves.

They are willing to look at their own faults and failings and limitations themselves and be as compassionate and forgiving towards others as they are to themselves.

They are people who can laugh at themselves and take themselves seriously enough to know that life is not all about them.

They must be someone who has done their homework: they have studied that matter at hand not just voicing their opinion in a very loud voice.

When you meet someone with True Authority, you know it...and visa versa...

Someone with true authority doesn't have to shout to make themselves heard. They are willing to say that they do not know...

They are willing to learn from others... and they do not shy away from sharing what they do know.

People with true authority...those who earn our respect and admiration, and our following... have this amazing, admirable mix of confidence, humility, integrity and generosity: of self, mind and soul.

You probably would add other characteristics as well!

Those without true authority are intimidated by those who do...

only most of the time they won't allow themselves to admit it.

**They react, as the demon in our reading,
by convulsing and shouting out in a loud voice...**

**Have you ever noticed that those without true authority
just seem to think if they talk louder, you will believe them?**

and finally:

**True Authority rests with and in the Holy One of the Cosmos...
which of course is Love...**

**That is why we are so attracted to people that we see as having
True Authority...**

**It is not just getting the facts straight..
but it is getting the heart straight...**

**It is not about "Googling it" or getting advanced degrees
so that one can be considered an expert...all though getting the facts right is important...
but it is being willing to be humble and kind and compassionate...
and...at the very same time being able to love fiercely and courageously.**

**To be truly, authentically Loving takes courage, tenacity and perseverance...
True Authority rooted in authentic Love is the most powerful force in
the universe...**

That is why Mark has Jesus taking command over the demon.

Ancient people literally believed in demons:

Notice that this demon knew exactly who Jesus was...

The demon was fearful and worried:

what do you plan to do with us Jesus of Nazareth?

**Have you come to destroy us?
I know who you are, the Holy One of God.'**

**This demon was frightened
and he become nasty and angry and all sorts of other ugly things...
and he convulses and yells and resists the presence of Jesus....
Finally the man was set free by the Fierce Love of Jesus...**

**Whether or not it literally happened that way...
it spiritually and metaphorically true
and still it happens just this way in our day and time.**

**We do not literally believe in demons these day,
but we still believe in possession:
we know that people can be possessed by their narcissistic egos
and we recognize that they have no true authority...
We would do well to see all of their blustery belligerence as
being grounded in fear...
We have been taught that even the worst of them are still children of God
and thus we have been invited to love them and in doing so.
and we free them and ourselves from the grip of their fear...**

**Jesus has shown us that no belligerent, whiny, demanding, ego centered, power hungry,
small hearted, narrow minded person...
with an ego as damaging as a demon has any true authority or
any real power over anyone....**

**Jesus has shown us that True Authority rooted in Authentic love
is a power like none other and always has the final word...
and so.... we can all take a big sigh of relief and say:**

Thank you! amen.