

Matt Henry
Luke 4:31-44
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“Port Authority”

Grace and peace...

Last week, we saw how Jesus was rejected in his own hometown of Nazareth. It wasn't much of a cliffhanger, because Jesus just walked right through their midst and went on his way. The only suspense is what is He going to do next? Jesus makes his way to Capernaum, a fishing village, on the north side of the Sea of Galilee. Capernaum is where Simon Peter and Andrew lived. So here's a connection I hadn't seen before: in Luke 4, Jesus goes from his own hometown to Simon Peter's hometown. In Capernaum, Jesus is going to encounter forces of darkness—namely unclean spirits and a mother in law (just joking, it's her fever actually)—but because He's Jesus, He's able to handle both just fine! With a simple command, Jesus shows he has authority over the unclean spirits and illness itself. So this sermon is called “Port Authority” because in Luke 4, if Capernaum is the “port” then Jesus is the “authority.” Luke 4 is a text about the authority of Jesus. The people are astonished at his teaching because it has authority. Jesus rebukes demons and they submit to him. Jesus rebukes a fever and it leaves Simon's mother in law.

But what about us? Jesus commands us and we...we...well, sometimes we obey and sometimes we don't. Isn't it rather remarkable that we, who are under the lordship of Christ, have the ability to obey or disobey an all powerful, that is, omnipotent God! Why does God allow that? Why did He set it up this way? That display of freedom is remarkable! It's how it is—at least for now.

Today we are going to look at the authority of Jesus then from two very different vantage points—that of the unclean spirits and Simon's mother in law—knowing that we are neither one of these parties. But the point of connection is Jesus himself. He is in another synagogue, it's still the Sabbath and Jesus is teaching.

We expect things to go orderly in worship—but sometimes weird things happen. I was talking to my oldest daughter Emily, now on our her own in Colorado Springs. She works at a church/childcare center and she was telling me what the church was like. She said, "The sermon itself is a full hour." I said, "Oh, that's horrible. He must get paid by the word." And then she said how in one service, a woman started screaming right in the middle of the service. She wasn't charismatic or anything like that, she was upset. She had applied for a job at the church and didn't get it and her solution was to come into the worship service

and scream at the pastor! The good news is that the sermon was a little bit shorter that day.

In Capernaum, a man with an unclean spirit causes the disturbance in worship. He recognizes Jesus and he is compelled to make a scene. Now I want to know how long this unclean spirit had been in the synagogue. I have a feeling he wasn't a guest in worship that day. I have a feeling he was a regular. He might have even felt comfortable there if the Word of God wasn't preached as the authoritative truth that it is. Even today, I bet there are plenty of churches that have been so watered down or are so weak that a demon could sit through it with no problem because Jesus isn't really the main thing. Not so with us! Jesus is always going to be the main thing. Jesus is front and center. I can preach to you with authority so you can live with authority because Jesus is our authority!

Verse 34, the demon cries out with a loud voice, "Ha! What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth?" Notice the demon says "us". I don't think that this is an indication there's more than one demon in the man, like it's Legion or something. But I do think the demon is speaking on behalf of other demons. The other word to pay attention to is "Nazareth." I think this reference is meant to remind the hearer what Jesus just went through in Nazareth—rejection. The demon says, "Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One

of God.” With this statement, the demon reveals important spiritual truths to us. First, there is a day of destruction coming and Jesus is a destroyer. He will bring to an end the forces of evil. Second, the struggle of this world that we face is not against flesh and blood, but against “flesh and blood” but against “the powers of darkness” (Eph. 6:12). The world is chiefly engaged in a spiritual struggle. Don’t mistake the symptoms of upheaval for the disease itself. Third, the demon confesses Christ as the Holy One of God which is true, but it’s not faith. It is awareness. It is a good confession. The demon sees accurately and his statement is a trustworthy one.

A little later on, when Jesus casts out more demons, they cry out, “You are the Son of God!” Again, they make a confession that is true. Why do the demons not say something like, “Ah, you got me!” Or, “Party’s over, boys!” Why is it they confess Jesus for who He is? What is compelling them to say anything at all? They serve a purpose. They help us know Jesus for who He is. James 2:19, “Even the demons believe—and shudder.” When Jesus rebukes and exorcises the demon, the people are amazed at the word of authority that Jesus had. So Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath, Lord of the synagogue, Lord of the spiritual realm.

Now we’re going to go from the spiritual to the physical. Here, the struggle is against flesh and blood. So this is a different problem. Jesus leaves the

synagogue and enters Simon's house. It's text like this one about his mother in law that reveal to us Peter was married. His mother in law has a high fever. They ask Jesus to heal her. So standing over her, Jesus rebukes the fever. The fever leaves. She gets up and starts serving them. I find that interesting that Jesus would rebuke the illness itself. So you see why when word gets out about this, Jesus becomes a one-man hospital. This is the Sabbath and people aren't supposed to travel far, until after the sun sets and the Sabbath is over. But they are so eager, they don't even wait for the sun to fully set. They go! Verse 40 says, "Now when the sun was setting, all those who had any who were sick with various diseases brought them to him, and he laid his hands on every one of them and healed them." Luke as a doctor cares about this aspect of healing. In Luke 4, we've gone from "Physician heal yourself, to Physician, heal everyone!" Jesus is Lord of the physical realm. How we wish Jesus would just say the word and rebuke cancer or rebuke infection. And yet, He doesn't heal everyone—at least not at this time.



I'd like you to be meet a happy little girl named Chelsea Hicks. Chelsea loved to dress up, have tea parties and parades on the oncology floor. Chelsea was three years old in 2007 when she was diagnosed with Stage IV Wilms' tumor cancer, involving her right kidney, lymph nodes and lungs. Over the course of 22 months of treatment, she endured 13 surgeries, 9 doses of radiation, she had a port put in for 20 months of chemo. That's a different kind of port authority, isn't it? The church prayed hard for her.

On February 20, 2009, Chelsea went to be with Jesus. She was only five years old. Her family honors her memory by helping other kids fighting serious

illnesses with The Chelsea Hicks Foundation. There's a website named after her memory, chelseahicksfoundation.org. They have Chelsea's Closet program. They roll into the hospital a portable closet full of brand new costumes. And for at least the moment, these children can just be children. Because every boy still wants to be a hero and every little girl still wants to be a princess even if they have cancer. How her parents kept her company and loved on her and prayed and don't you think as they watched over, they rebuked that cancer with everything they had just as Jesus rebuked the fever? But it doesn't work that way. And that's a tough thing to reconcile—the authority of God with the loss of a child. I know some of you have had to endure this loss. It's one of the hardest things a parent could ever do.

In Luke 4, Jesus healed many. I can be very glad for those who were fortunate to have Jesus in their neighborhood. For the lives he touched, I'm sure they were so grateful and relieved. We can be thankful for the lives He touches today. But we know there are many instances, like Chelsea Hicks, when the healing did not come, even when it was so dearly sought. The healing is not consistent.

And yet, there is a day in store when the healing will happen. God's not done. He will usher in a new age when death is undone. Jesus is Lord of the

spiritual and Lord of the physical, this is where we can make connection because everything Jesus does in Luke 4, He'll do again on the Last Day. He'll cast out all evil forces and destroy them on the Last Day. He'll bring healing and restoration on the Last Day. So what's really going on here is not just cool miracles by Jesus.

These are not just stories of someone else's past. These are stories of our

future. Here, Jesus is bringing the Last Day to the present day! He is demonstrating the authority that He has now and will one day wield on the Last Day. On that day, every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that Jesus is Lord. We just make that confession now. Like the demons, everyone will be compelled to confess the truth of who Jesus is on that day. Like Simon's mother in law, everyone will be free of sickness and disease.

This will happen when it's meant to happen. In Nazareth, they couldn't wait to get rid of Jesus. But He goes. In Capernaum, the crowds wanted Jesus to stay. But He still goes. Jesus leaves them to preach the good news to other towns for He was sent for that purpose (v. 43). And so He went. We want Jesus to come and make it all right. It'll happen in His time. And He will because He is sent for that purpose on the Last Day—to demonstrate His Lordship, to demonstrate His authority as the King.

In this age of freedom and grace, how will you respond to Jesus' authority today? It may be to trust Him, to obey Him, to receive Him. Or it may be just to acknowledge amidst trial and loss, Jesus has full authority and one day as our Healer and Savior, He'll use that authority to make everything right.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Head (what?)

Why were the people astonished by Jesus' teaching?
Where was the man with the unclean spirit?
What things does Jesus specifically rebuke?
What do the demons say that is commendable and true?

Heart (so what?)

What does this incident tell us about good and evil?
When will Jesus rebuke and reverse all illness and all evil?
How does Jesus set us free?

Hands (now what?)

Is it easier to stay where you are wanted or go where you are needed?
What is God calling me to do that I need to obey?
How can you pray and live with greater authority?
How can you help others to answer God's calling in their life?