

Luke: The Doctor Will See You Now

“What is This Word?” – *Luke 4:31-37*

Does God Exist and Does He Act in the World?

Does God exist? And if He does, is He active in our world, or did He just wind up the clock of the universe and walk away?

That’s not just a philosophical question — it’s deeply personal. Because if God is real *and* involved, then it means our world isn’t random. It means injustice doesn’t get the final word. It means pain has a purpose. It means evil has a limit. It means your story is not an accident. Your life is planned and there is a plan for your life.

Luke’s Gospel answers this question not with theory but with a Person — a man who steps into an ordinary synagogue on one ordinary Sabbath day and begins to speak with extraordinary authority that shakes the unseen world. There’s no thunder. No lightning. Just a voice — teaching with such commanding truth that the demonic realm cannot stay hidden.

We don’t just meet a good teacher here. We meet the King who brings the kingdom. The One whose word doesn’t just inform — it transforms. And just the authority of his word confronts evil.

So, Luke says if you’re wondering whether God is real and active, look here. Because in Jesus, truth is spoken, heaven invades earth, and even hell can’t stay silent.

This morning, we are continuing our sermon series in Luke. Over these next seven Sundays, we will see the Great Physician speak and work in power. I invite you to Luke 4:31-37. (read Text)

An Extraordinary Word

The demons know that Jesus is the long-expected Son of David, the kingdom-bringing, world-conquering, enemy-defeating Jewish Messiah. They know this.

His own hometown of Nazareth has just tried to throw him off a cliff (Luke 4:29). But they couldn’t. Because, for now, Jesus is untouchable.

He will decide when he is to be killed. “No one takes [my life] from me, but I lay it down of my own accord” (John 10:18). So, Jesus just walks away unscathed through the crowd. And after a twenty-mile journey, he comes to Capernaum, where Simon Peter lives. And on the Sabbath, he enters the Jewish synagogue and does the same thing he was doing in Nazareth. He teaches. But it was not ordinary teaching.

Luke says, “And he was teaching them on the Sabbath, and they were astonished at his teaching, for his word possessed authority. (Luke 4:31–32)

Jesus’s authority is astonishing. In other words, he spoke as one who had the right to tell them what they ought to believe about God. We know that’s the focus of his teaching because down in Luke 4:43, when he leaves to go teach elsewhere, he says, “I must preach the good news of the *kingdom of God* to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose.” When he mentions “other towns *as well*,” he means that’s what he was teaching here in Capernaum: the good news of the kingdom of God.

And he taught with authority. He is not quoting others. **He speaks as if the truth is his own.** In other words, Jesus claimed to have the right to tell them what they ought to believe about God and his kingdom — the way God would rule the world, and the way people should live under his rule. And verse 32 says, “They were astonished.”

The Greek word for “astonished” is *ekplesso*. Its root is to strike out of one’s senses. Being dumbstruck, dumbfounded or left “at a loss” from witnessing the incredible, causing the viewer to gape in astonishment. It is used to communicate when someone has been struck with amazement or astonishment. They stood amazed in the presence of Jesus the Nazarene.

Because the authority of Jesus is astonishing. I mean, if it doesn’t astonish you, you’re not paying attention, or your capacities are out of whack. Listen to the way he teaches in his first extended sermon in Luke, one chapter later.

“Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I tell you? Everyone who comes to me and *hears my words and does them*,

I will show you what he is like: he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when a flood arose, the stream broke against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. But the one who hears and does not do them [*my words*] is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the stream broke against it, immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great. (Luke 6:46–49)

If I spoke like that — if a preacher said, “What you do with my words determines whether your life will be swept away in the final judgment” — you’d think I or he was a loony, crazy. Jesus teaches with astonishing, breathtaking, dumbfounding authority. And, of course, they did call him a crazy (Mark 3:21) and worse: they accused him of being “possessed by Beelzebul” (Mark 3:22).

You can go to churches all over Berkeley County this morning and the truth of the Word is being replaced by a lot of advice on how to have a better or even your best life. Luke tells us that Jesus’s sermon is NOT advice; **it is a proclamation of the Kingdom of God.**

The authority that Jesus taught with did not only amaze or astonish the audience in Capernaum’s synagogue. It’s also going to drive a demon out of the darkness and make him a witness to the truth.

Truth exposes Evil into the Open

The reason I say that’s the *effect* of his teaching is because Jesus doesn’t do anything — *nobody* does anything — to cause the demonic outburst of Luke 4:33–34. Jesus is just teaching. He’s telling the good news of the kingdom. He’s magnifying God as king and liberator (Luke 4:18–19). And he’s doing it with unprecedented authority. And the next thing we hear is this loud demonic voice: “Ha! 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” (verse 34).

Verse 33 gets us ready for this outburst: “In the synagogue there was a man who had the spirit of an unclean demon, and he cried out with a loud voice . . .” A few significant things stand out here in verse 33.

The first is that a demon-possessed man was in the synagogue. One wonders how often and how long that had been the case. How many Sabbaths in a row had that demon been sitting or standing through the preaching and teaching of the Scripture?

One assumes that this was not his first week. The demon was not a guest or a visitor scanning a QR code and hoping for a treat. This demon had most likely been a consistent presence over time in the Capernaum synagogue, just dressed up like one of the normal congregants.

Which reminds us that just because we claim some space to be sacred doesn't mean it is never defiled with the presence of the Enemy or his brood. Just because you think the carpet and pew is special and precious doesn't mean the spiritual darkness of evil has not been sitting or standing in and on it.

There are evil spirits who have been extremely comfortable and very present Sunday after Sunday after Sunday in churches all over the world. Now, to be fair, in some of the so-called churches, they probably don't hear anything that bothers them, and they don't see any activity which concerns them. But don't think this reality is trapped in the amber of the past. For those who've read or are reading CS Lewis's marvelous *Screwtape Letters*, there are Wormwoods among worshipers in churches right now.

The second thing that strikes me is a simple question. Why? Why did the demon interrupt the sermon? This is demonic suicide. Why did he do that? He knows Jesus is the Holy One of God. This is not going to go well for the demon. **Evil hates being exposed.**

It reminds me of the times in school when the teacher would ask a question and I would do my level best to NOT make eye contact with them.

"Please don't look at me. Ignore me. Ask someone else." One would think that a demon would just remain silent, not make eye contact with the Great Physician and Teacher. I don't know why he made such a suicidal appearance instead of keeping his head down. But what I see, and what you can see, is this:

the teaching of Jesus with authority provokes demonic exposure — and then deliverance. It was true then. It is true now.

“The steady-state, normal way that demons are exposed and removed is the teaching of truth in love.”

In 2 Timothy 2:24–26, the apostle Paul said that if the Lord’s servant teaches God’s *truth* with clarity and authority and love and patience and boldness, two things may happen: (1) God may grant people to repent and come to a knowledge of the *truth*, and thus (2) they may escape from the snare of the devil, who had captured them to do his will. **The normal way that demons are exposed and removed is the teaching of truth in love.** The devil is a liar and a hater. He cannot abide a heart or a community ruled by truth and love.

The third thought: Now at this point in Luke 4, someone might say, “I’m not sure bringing demons out of the dark is safe.” No, it’s not safe, unless Jesus is present and on your side. If you turn away from Jesus because you want to play with the demonic (sorcery, séances, necromancy, fortune-telling, Ouija boards, mediums, crystal balls, palm reading, witchcraft, astrology), you may draw the demons out of darkness, but you won’t have Jesus’s help. That is a dangerous place to be.

Jesus’s Word has authority and power.

But if you stand with Jesus, if you trust him and position yourself under his authority and in his care, here’s what happens:

Jesus rebuked him [the demon], saying, “Be silent and come out of him!” And when the demon had thrown him down in their midst, he came out of him, having done him no harm. And they were all amazed and said to one another, “What is this word? For with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits, and they come out!” (Luke 4:35–36)

Surely this is the main thing Luke wants us to see: *Jesus is absolutely sovereign over demons.* The people were “astonished” at the authority of his “teaching” (verse 32), and now they are “amazed” (verse 36). For when that teaching provokes demonic exposure, there is not only “authority,” but “power” —

authority and power to dispatch that exposed demon and deliver the man who was in bondage. Let the last part of verse 36 sink in and be your boldness as a follower of Jesus: “With *authority and power* he commands the unclean spirits, and they come out!”

No Demon Can Disobey

Why? Why do they obey? I mean, the whole point of being a demon is that you don’t obey God. Demons hate God. So, what’s with all of this obedience? Here’s the answer: God has two kinds of willing.

He has a moral will, like the Ten Commandments: “Don’t take the Lord’s name in vain. Don’t kill. Don’t steal. Don’t lie.” That’s God’s moral will. And demons don’t give a hoot about obeying those commands. The very meaning of being a demon is to be opposed to the moral will of God. **The moral will of God can be resisted.** You and I resist His moral will every day, don’t we? We sin, transgress, and add up our iniquities on the daily, as the kids say.

But the other kind of divine will is not the moral will, but the sovereign will: “Let there be light” — and there was light. “Lazarus, come out” — and the dead man came out. “Demon, be silent, and come out of him” — and he came out. He obeyed. **The sovereign will of Gd cannot be disobeyed.** Must be obeyed. No choice.

When Jesus teaches, “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you,” he is teaching the moral will of God. It is heard but can be disobeyed. But when he says, “Be silent and come out of him,” that is the sovereign will of God, and it must be obeyed.

And the people were amazed and said, “What is this word?”

(verse 36). BINGO! That’s the right question. The Ten Commandments are the *word* of God, and *they* don’t get obedience from demons. What is *this* word?

The closest we get to an answer is the last part of verse 36: “With *authority and power* he commands the unclean spirits, and they come out.” The Ten Commandments have authority. God has a right to tell us how to live. But *this* word of Jesus comes with *authority and power*.

“Jesus Christ forms a thought in his mind, he turns it into a word, and that word creates reality.” **Jesus’s word creates reality.** Genesis 1 and John 1 tell us that. All things are spoken by Jesus into existence. It is the power of his word.

We don’t know how this works. We don’t know what kind of power this is. Electromagnetic? Bluetooth? Wi-Fi? Radio waves? Those are all mysterious enough. But Jesus Christ forms a thought in his mind, he turns it into a word, and that word creates reality — which we should expect, **since Hebrews 1:3 says, “He upholds the universe by the word of his power.”** By his powerful word. Correct your outline if you are filling in the blanks. Scratch out the power and replace it with word. And in the blank write the word, “power.” In Greek it is “the word of his power.” Or the powerful word of Jesus.

The question that echoed through that synagogue in Capernaum still echoes today: *“What is this word?”*

The crowds were amazed. The demons were exposed. And the afflicted were set free — all because Jesus spoke. And when he speaks, reality obeys. **When Jesus speaks, reality bends, demons flee, and hearts are changed.**

This isn’t just a story about the past. It’s a story for the present — because the authority and power of Jesus still operate today. The Word still speaks. The King still reigns. And the kingdom of God is still good news — for the weary, the wounded, and even the wayward.

But hear this: Jesus’s authority is not just something to admire from outside — it’s something to come under, an authority we surrender to from the inside of our hearts. The demon knew who Jesus was and trembled. But the invitation to you is different: to know who Jesus is and *trust* him. To follow him. To let his Word both astonish you and then re-create you.

The One who cast out demons with a word is the same One who went willingly to the cross, laying down his life by choice — not because anyone overpowered him, but because he chose to be pierced to deliver us from the real enemy: sin and death.

And now, risen and reigning, Jesus speaks a new word over all who trust him: *“Free. Forgiven. Mine.”*

So don't just be amazed. Be changed. Answer His word with your own commitment to lift him high and surrender to Him. His Word has the authority to confront the darkness in you... and the power to set you free.