



Introduction

In Deuteronomy God promises to raise up a prophet like Moses, who will speak for God; in Psalm 111 God shows the people the power of God's works. For the church these are ways of pointing to the unique authority people sensed in Jesus' actions and words. We encounter that authority in God's word, around which we gather, the word that prevails over any lesser spirit that would claim power over us, freeing us to follow Jesus.

Confession and Forgiveness

In the name of the Father, and of the ✚ Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

Gracious God,

have mercy on us. We confess that we have turned from you and given ourselves into the power of sin. We are truly sorry and humbly repent. In your compassion forgive us our sins, known and unknown, things we have done and things we have failed to do. Turn us again to you, and uphold us by your Spirit, so that we may live and serve you in newness of life through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

God, who is rich in mercy, loved us even when we were dead in sin, and made us alive together with Christ. By grace you have been saved. In the name of ✚ Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven. Almighty God strengthen you with power through the Holy Spirit, that Christ may live in your hearts through faith. **Amen.**

Gathering Hymn ELW # 614 / WOV # 737

There Is a Balm in Gilead

Listen and sing along [here](#).

Prayer of the Day

Compassionate God, you gather the whole universe into your radiant presence and continually reveal your Son as our Savior. Bring wholeness to all that is broken and speak truth to us in our confusion, that all creation will see and know your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

First Reading: Deuteronomy 18:15-20

Today's reading is part of a longer discourse in Deuteronomy, an updating of the law for the Israelite community as the people wait to enter the promised land. Here Moses assures the people that God will continue to guide them through prophets who will proclaim the divine word.

Read the text [here](#).

Psalmody: Psalm 111

¹Hallelujah! I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart,
in the assembly of the upright, in the congregation.

²**Great are your works, O LORD,
pondered by all who delight in them.**

³Majesty and splendor mark your deeds,
and your righteousness endures forever.

⁴**You cause your wonders to be remembered;
you are gracious and full of compassion.**

⁵You give food to those who fear you,
remembering forever your covenant.

⁶**You have shown your people the power of your works
in giving them the lands of the nations.**

⁷The works of your hands are faithfulness and justice;
all of your precepts are sure.

⁸**They stand fast forever and ever,
because they are done in truth and equity.**

⁹You sent redemption to your people and commanded your covenant forever;
holy and awesome is your name.

¹⁰**The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom;
all who practice this have a good understanding.
God's praise endures forever.**

Gospel: Mark 1:21-28

Forces that would bring death and disease have taken hold of a man, yet they recognize Jesus and know what his power means for them. Jesus commands these forces to leave and people are amazed at his authority.

Read the text [here](#).

Reflection on the Text

Imagine the scene. It is Saturday morning, *Shabbat* (or Sabbath in English). The worship service is just beginning. A stranger comes in, bringing with him a group of followers. He begins teaching as if he were in charge. Suddenly, someone in the crowd stands up and begins shouting at the stranger. More calmly than you or I can imagine, the stranger speaks to the man. Rather than shouting at him, or demanding that he be removed, Jesus instead does what is needed to restore him. He heals him, then and there.

We don't really expect the ministry of Jesus to begin with an exorcism, but in Mark's Gospel, it does. With this unexpected encounter in the synagogue, Jesus begins a ministry that turns the world up-side-down. He shows that now only does he know the scriptures, and that he is able to teach like no other, but he also has power over unclean spirits.

Other than Hollywood, we really do not think much about people who are possessed by evil spirits. But there are other things which possess us that we can talk about. I am sure each of us can think of people who are possessed by addictions, mental illnesses, or who are so self-centered that they seem to be addicted to themselves.

This person whom Jesus heals – he did not ask Jesus for help. He simply wanted Jesus to leave him alone! But Jesus healed him, and brought about a drastic change in his life, *even though* it did **not** appear that it was wanted. This person might have been quite content with his life as it was. Sure, this person might have seemed a little odd. He might not have been accepted in some circles. People might have avoided him during the sharing of the peace. But he might not have been ready to admit that there was something in him that was wrong. An exorcism might not have been high on his list of things to do that day.

Yet, Jesus exercised his authority. Authority over this man's life; authority over the spirits that possessed him; authority over his teaching at the synagogue. Jesus exercises that authority over us as well, calling us to follow him, showing us that which needs to be done, leading us help those in need, helping us to see that putting ourselves first is not what he wants us to do. Jesus uses his authority to **free us from our sin** so that we may follow him.

Jesus came, filled with the Holy Spirit, to teach about God's love, mercy, and grace. His teaching in the synagogue, even without the healing, would have been different. Jesus did not say what he thought God wanted from his chosen people; Jesus said exactly what God had already told them. Put God first, love one another, love your neighbor.

Jesus spoke with authority because he **had** authority. Not earthly authority, given to him by humans, but authority which came from God, when he claimed Jesus as his beloved Son.

While Jesus no longer walks among us casting out demons, his authority over our lives has not diminished. The words of Jesus, read throughout the Gospels, still has authority in our lives. Jesus commands us to love God and obey the commandments. Jesus commands us to love our neighbor. Jesus commands us to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, care for the sick, the oppressed, and the poor. Jesus commands us to break bread and drink wine, remembering his sacrifice on the cross. Jesus commands us to forgive others, as we have been forgiven. The authority of Jesus is not just in the words used to teach, but in the words given to us by our Lord and Savior of how we should live our lives.

Most of all, Jesus shows us in this text, and continuously throughout his ministry, that God's will is for us to be in community. Not just gathered on Sunday mornings, but any other time that we can gather together in his name. Jesus shows us that even the sick, the possessed, and the outcasts, are to be healed, cleansed, and brought into the community.

No one is too sick, too poor, too black, or too brown or too different in any way, to not be invited and included. Jesus takes charge of their lives and redeems them – makes them whole – and invites them into community.

We, too, are invited. Jesus offers us forgiveness. No matter what we are “possessed” by on this day, Jesus has the cure. We come as broken, sinful, possessed creatures. Jesus has authority over us, even over the unclean spirits that possess us, the sin that fills us, and the many temptations that we face.

Jesus, in his preaching and teaching, shows us God's love for us – his children. Jesus also shows us the authority of his words as he heals the sick, redeems the lost, forgives the sinner, and raises the dead. We see the power of Jesus' words not only in scripture, but in the lives of those around us. Think of those you have seen healed, redeemed, and forgiven. Look at the people in your life – how have you seen the power of Jesus' words in their lives?

Jesus taught as one with authority – and still does today. Hear his words and be healed. Say his name out loud and be redeemed. Ask and be forgiven. Amen.

Hymn of the Day ELW # 876 / LBW # 242

Let the Whole Creation Cry

Listen and sing along [here](#).

Apostles' Creed

We profess our faith with the whole church in all times and places:

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.*
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

Prayers of Intercession

Guided by Christ made known to the nations, let us offer our prayers for the church, the world, and all people in need.

A brief silence.

For all who share the gospel and proclaim freedom in Christ throughout the world: prophets, teachers, pastors, deacons, and lay leaders; for the church and its ministries, let us pray. **Have mercy, O God.**

For all God's works in creation: plants and animals, water and soil, forests and farms; and for those who were gifted with protecting our natural resources and all that exists, let us pray. **Have mercy, O God.**

For government and leaders: cities and nations, rescue professionals and legal aid attorneys, elected officials and grassroots organizers; for all responsible for the well-being of civil society, let us pray. **Have mercy, O God.**

For those who suffer in mind, body, or spirit: those who are sick and hospitalized, those living with HIV/AIDS, those struggling with mental illness, those who are hungry or homeless, and all in any need; for caregivers, hospice workers, and home health aides, let us pray. **Have mercy, O God.**

For the concerns of these congregation: those who travel, those absent from worship, those celebrating birthdays or anniversaries; for the people of God in this place and for other needs in our community (*especially*), let us pray. **Have mercy, O God.**

Here other intercessions may be offered.

For the covenant God made with us in the waters of baptism, in thanksgiving for the baptized who have died in the Lord, let us pray. **Have mercy, O God.**

Merciful God, hear the prayers of your people, spoken or silent, for the sake of the one who dwells among us, your Son, Jesus Christ our Savior. **Amen.**

Lord's Prayer

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray:

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.**

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Closing Hymn ELW # 886 / LBW 559 *Oh, for a Thousand Tongues to Sing*

Listen and sing along [here](#).

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Today's reflection was written by Pastor Ray Sipe.