

**With Authority** First Week in Ordinary Time Tuesday, January 14, 2014 8:15 AM  
1 Sm 1:9-20; **Mk 1:21-28** (For the Sick) (Jesus was able to bring about authority even in his speech, because he embodied it and he let his speech be from himself.

**“A new teaching with authority. He commands even the unclean spirits and they obey him.”**

This idea of **authority**—very important in the New Testament, not related in any way to modern concepts of authority, law, courts, jurisdiction. It has nothing to do with that. It is a participation in the power of God. But it’s of power that can reside actually in verbal form, so **it’s the power of God, but it lives even in speech.**

The scribes are described here as not having authority. Well, **scribes were writers.** They would write things down, copy things. Theoretically they were supposed to copy them exactly, but somebody often tampered—we don’t know who—tampered with text because when in 1947 the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered, there were scrolls that were far older than any scrolls we now have, and they were different. **Words were changed.** And that happens for two reasons. First of all, it could be **a simple mistake.** In Hebrew up until the ninth century AD, none of the scribes put in any vowels. Well, even in English if you take all the vowels out, look how many words would look the same, just the consonants. So somebody had to decide, well, what word is it? So even the most intentionally sincere scribe could make a mistake. Interpretation was actually the rabbi’s role, I believe. But then there was another process whereby sometimes somebody came along and said, “Oh, I think that’s the wrong word. Instead of being ABC it should be BCA, and then they **changed it, again, no doubt well-intentioned. But that is fiddling with texts.** It could have great consequences for meaning.

**Jesus was about meaning; meaning has power.** Meaning has power; even false meaning has power. Think of the meaning that people took from Marx’s manifesto *Das Kapital*. Now it’s not really a very profound interpretation of life. It’s not very accurate, and it surely isn’t relevant today. But think how many people read that and let that interpret for them what life was all about? That’s power. That’s the power Jesus had. Only **Jesus’ power was used to get people, first of all, to be open to the power of the Father,** whose goodness desired to

bring people every kind of blessing: spiritual, physical, material, psychological, and on every level: health, well-being, prosperity—not necessarily wealth in our modern term—but prosperity, enjoyment of life, sufficiency in every area, protection, and safety, and peace. This is the will of the Father. And this **Jesus was able to bring about even in his speech**, because he embodied it and **he let his speech emerge from himself**. He wasn't copying what someone told him. He was speaking from within his own being. And don't forget, **his being is consubstantial with the Father**; they are so to say "cut from the same cloth," although that's a rather clumsy expression.

So this is what Jesus is about, and this is what the people are learning. How powerful it is! It is therefore such a shock when as his life proceeds we find him being opposed, when we find hostility aimed at him. Why would this be? Well, because the world isn't a neutral place. The **creation** is not neutral. Insofar as God has created intelligent, willful, free beings, those **beings choose either to be obedient and submissive to God** and therefore enjoy the fullness of his blessings, becoming part of his program, his kingdom, his action in the world, **or they rebel**. They want their own way: I know better what's best for me. And that **rebellion** didn't begin with human beings. It **started before the first human being ever came to earth in the spirits of God's heavenly hosts**.

So this great drama, this great battle, if you want to call it that, this great **contest between good and evil now is entering into the very flesh of the human nature in Christ**. We just celebrated his birth. We celebrated his baptism, and now we are seeing what that is going to lead to. For those who want, it will lead to integration, wholeness, health, restoration, redemption, salvation. For those who don't want, it will lead somewhere else.