Jeremiah 1:4–10

**4Now the word of the Lord came to me, saying, 5“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.” 6Then I said, “Ah, Lord God! Behold, I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth.” 7But the Lord said to me, “Do not say, ‘I am only a youth’; for to all to whom I send you, you shall go, and whatever I command you, you shall speak. 8Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, declares the Lord.” 9Then the Lord put out his hand and touched my mouth. And the Lord said to me, “Behold, I have put my words in your mouth. 0See, I have set you this day over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant.”**

1 Corinthians 12:31b–13:13

**And I will show you a still more excellent way. If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. 2And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. 3If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.**

**4Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant 5or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; 6it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. 7Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.**

**8Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. 9For we know in part and we prophesy in part, 10but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. 11When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. 12For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.**

**13So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.**

Luke 19:31-44

**31And he went down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee. And he was teaching them on the Sabbath, 32and they were astonished at his teaching, for his word possessed authority. 33And in the synagogue there was a man who had the spirit of an unclean demon, and he cried out with a loud voice, 34“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.” 35But Jesus rebuked him, 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. 36And 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!” 37And reports about him went out into every place in the surrounding region.**

**38And he arose and left the synagogue and entered Simon’s house. Now Simon’s mother-in-law was ill with a high fever, and they appealed to him on her behalf. 39And he stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her, and immediately she rose and began to serve them.**

**40Now 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. 41And demons also came out of many, crying, “You are the Son of God!” But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew that he was the Christ.**

**42And when it was day, he departed and went into a desolate place. And the people sought him and came to him, and would have kept him from leaving them, 43but he said to them, “I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose.” 44And he was preaching in the synagogues of Judea.**

Last week, we learned that the people of Jesus' home town of Nazareth tried to kill Him.  So it is not surprising that He left there to go to Capernaum the setting for today's Gospel.  Jesus grew up in Nazareth so He will always be known as Jesus of Nazareth.  Nevertheless, after His experience in the synagogue in Nazareth, we see that He moved to Capernaum on the coast of the Sea of Galilee.

Today's Gospel gives an account of Jesus teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum.  We heard that the people in Capernaum were astonished at His teaching, for His word possessed authority.  E.g. Jesus exorcised an unclean demon, He healed Peter's mother-in-law, and then, after sundown, when the Sabbath was over, people brought sick friends and relatives from Capernaum and the surrounding area, and Jesus healed them all.  This is the authority of the creator, the one through whom all things were made.

Authority has been in question recently. In my day, we understood authority, and most people respected the authority of parents, police officers, elected officials, teachers, and so forth.  In fact, most people would at least pay lip service to the Apostle Paul's encouragement to the Philippians.  **“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.”**  When we debated the issues of the day, we searched for truth in order to determine what was right.

Our culture changed about the time that the children of the World War II generation went to college.  Professors encouraged students to question authority.  Educators taught students that the "system" was out to exploit them.  All authority is corrupt and not to be trusted.  Everything that your parents taught you is wrong.  It became very fashionable to treat all authority figures with absolute scorn.  We were taught to believe that anyone in authority was out to oppress you.  This attitude has done serious damage to our culture.

This attitude of rebellion against authority is not a new thing.  In fact, it is almost as old as creation itself. Remember Genesis; the LORD’s commandment was clear and He was the authority. Adam and Eve understood; even young children understand; “Do not eat the fruit of the tree.”

It didn't take long before another voice asked a question, **"Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?"** This voice had no authority.  In fact, Adam and Eve had been given authority over this creature. Nevertheless, the serpent enticed Adam and Eve into rebellion against the authority of the Word of God.  Mankind listened to the word of a serpent instead of the Word of God.  The entire history of the pain and suffering of the human race can be traced back to one central flaw.  We humans constantly rebel against the authority of the Word of God.

Even God's people rebel against the authority of the Word of God.  The history of the Old Testament shows God constantly rescuing His people from the results of their rebellion against the Word of God.  The book of Judges ends with a sad condemnation. “**Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.”**  They did not do what was right in God's eyes.  They did what was right in their own eyes.

Are we any different today?  How often do we get into quarrels, fights, and divisions simply because we do not check to see what Christ's Word has to say on the topic?  How often do we make decisions based on what is right in our own eyes instead of what is right in God's eyes?  How often have we given more authority to our experiences … our opinions … our feelings than to the Word of God?  How often have we placed our relationship with other people above our relationship with God?  How often have we verbally abused someone because they wanted to bring the Word of God to bear on a topic?  How often have we placed our authority above the authority of the Word of God?

Whether we like it or not, God's Word is the ultimate, final authority.  The bible is not like any other book.  Today's Gospel tells us that Jesus spoke with authority and demons obeyed, fevers left, people with every kind of malady became whole again.  God's Word is not less powerful today.  The Holy Spirit has promised to work through it.  By the power of the Holy Spirit, salvation is for everyone who believes. The Bible would be enough if it were just a book of teachings that God wants us to know, but it is so much more.  The Word of God is the very power of God by which He works salvation in us.

The devil wants us to see God's Word as oppressive, and demeaning.  He wants us to believe that the authority of Christ's Word restricts our freedom.  He wants us to believe that the authority of Christ's Word takes all the joy out of life.  The devil will do anything and everything to take God's Word away from us.  If he can't do that, he will try to get us to ignore God's Word, to let it gather dust on the shelf rather than be the truth that saves us from sin.

Rather than being burdensome, the authority of Christ's Word is a source of joy and security.

The authority of the Word of Christ is not just a promise.  It is a promise backed up by deeds.  Jesus often taught and promised something very outrageous: **"The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised."** He not only promised to die and then rise from the dead, but He actually kept that promise.  Back in those days it would actually be pretty easy to get the Romans to kill you on a cross, but only Christ could keep the promise to return to life after dying on a cross.

When Christ died on the cross and rose from the dead, He kept His greatest promise.  He earned forgiveness for all our sins.  In earning forgiveness for us, He earned our adoption into the family of God as His brothers and sisters.  He earned our eternal salvation, life forever in His gracious, joyful presence.  The authority of His Word is forever, as He said, **"Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away."**

Most people have the wrong idea about Jesus.  Many think He is a cosmic killjoy.  They think that God is standing far off, with His arms crossed, making His demands of righteousness and perfection, waiting for us to come to Him, to earn our way home.  It's almost like people have this view that God enjoys the separation and gleefully loves to keep sinners at arm's length, keeping them guessing about how He really feels about them.

We know that the authority of Christ's Word promises the exact opposite.  He is the One who urges us to pray, "Thy Kingdom Come."  Then He is the One who answers that prayer and brings the Kingdom of God to us.

The world needs to hear this good news.  Our neighbors need to hear this good news.  You have the authority of the Word of Christ.  You have a Word that forgives, a Word that blesses, a Word that creates and sustains faith, and, through that faith, delivers forgiveness, life, and salvation.  What a blessing you can be to others when you are alert and watching for the opportunity to confess that authoritative Word of Christ to your neighbors and the other people in your life.

Once a year, Lutheran Hour Ministries requests the congregations of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod to remind their members of their mission.  Obviously, they need financial support for their many activities, but there is more to it than that.  They provide so many resources that are based on the authority of the Word of Christ.  They urge you to take advantage of those resources to help you as you share the authority of the Word of Christ by confessing your faith to others.  I have an informational handout plus an envelope if you desire to help them monetarily. Amen