

When Jesus was baptized, we're told that the heavens were opened, and the Holy Spirit came down to rest upon Him. Judging by all the demonic activity that Jesus encountered, here in Capernaum and elsewhere, the gates of hell must have opened at the same time.

It's as if hell emptied itself of its unclean spirits to combat the Holy One of God. Wherever He went, the demons met Him and called Him out by name. They even followed Him into church as we see in our Gospel text for today.

Now we might think that these unclean spirits of Satan would not want to draw attention to Jesus. They knew who He was, but the people did not know. Why not keep it that way? But no, they yell and cry out, "*You are the Son of God!*" They are terrified of Him. His power is far superior to theirs. Whatever word He commands, they must obey.

And His word of command to them is one of rebuke. "*Be silent and come out!*" In fact, throughout our text, we see Jesus giving this same rebuke. To other demons later on. But even to something as impersonal as a virus. It's the same word in the Greek. As Jesus rebuked the demon in Capernaum, so He rebukes the fever which had gripped Simon's mother-in-law. And the result is the same. The fever leaves her with no harm being done to her, just as the demon-possessed man was left unharmed.

What power there is in the words of Jesus! The people all saw this. They were astonished at His teaching, it says, "*for His word possessed authority.*" And not just here. Later, on the Sea of Galilee, Jesus rebuked the storm, and immediately it obeyed Him.

It didn't matter if He spoke to something that had ears or not. Lazarus in the tomb had ears, but they were dead along with the rest of him. And still he came out at the word of Jesus. Demons, fevers and sicknesses, storms, death, Jesus' word had authority over all of them.

Wouldn't it be something if parents today possessed that same word of authority over their children? Mom tells her unruly child to be silent and to behave, and immediately he or she obeys. But why stop with that? Why not with all of God's children? Since Jesus' word possesses authority, everything He commands us in Scripture we all immediately obey, right?

But we're not demons. Nor are we fevers or storms. We're people. People with ears to hear. But also with minds to tune out what Jesus says and to disobey. No demon could ever do what we do. The demons all had to obey Jesus' word. But us? Sometimes we do, but oftentimes we do not. There isn't one of us here who obeys Jesus as well as the demons obeyed Him.

Yet to what demon did Jesus ever preach the Gospel of the kingdom? To what demon did Jesus ever say, "Arise and be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins?" To what demon did Jesus give His precious body and blood under the elements of bread and wine?

Jesus came to cast out fevers and demons with the word of rebuke. But that same word of rebuke He has not, nor will He ever, speak to you. Rather, He says, "*The one who comes to Me, I will never cast out.*"

It doesn't matter how many times you have disobeyed Him. Jesus' word to you is not the same word that He gives to the demons. Not rebuke, but love. Not a word to drive you away from Him, but the word of welcome and acceptance to draw you in and make you His own.

Oh, how we need that word from Jesus. In Capernaum the demon spoke to Jesus saying something like this, "*What have you to do with us?*" What he meant was, "*Leave us alone!*" He was doing what demons do, and he wanted no interference from Jesus.

When was the last time you told Jesus the same thing? Maybe not with your mouth. But certainly with your actions. When we are engaged in disobedience, the last thing we want is for Jesus to interfere. "Leave us alone!" is our unspoken demand to Him.

But He will not. He ignored the demon's demand in Capernaum, instead casting him out of the man he possessed. He did the same thing for you in your baptism because He does have everything to do with us. He became one of us, even becoming sin for us. He bore your disobedience and mine in His own body on the cross.

Think about this. The very thing Jesus did to all the demons was done to Him. He cast them out wherever He went. And so with Jesus. They cast Him out. Out of Jerusalem. Out of their presence. Out of the land of the living, throwing Him onto the place of the dead, Golgotha's bloody hill.

This is why you are not cast out. Jesus cast the devil out of you in your baptism, and He was cast out for you on the cross. And so you always have a place with Him. All your uncleanness is washed away. Your disobedience is fully pardoned.

The demons are after you, my friend. They do not want Jesus' interference. They want to point out your sins to you. They want your conscience to bother you. But Jesus' word has authority. And His word declares that you, yes you, are forgiven of all sin. And so you can tell the demons to leave you alone. You have no place with them. But you do with Jesus now and forever. Amen.