

A man stands before you on the television set with a pillow. He says, Are you tired of your pillow flattening out? Do you want a pillow with interlocking fill that adjusts to your individual sleep needs. Do you want a restful, sleep-filled night? Hi my name is Mike Lindell. If you buy My Pillow today, I'll give you another my pillow absolutely free. Well, Mike from Minnesota had me. I purchased My Pillow. His words were powerful. They convinced me. Well chosen words delivered with excitement can lead you to buy things you ordinarily would never think of buying.

When people heard Jesus speak, they were wowed by his words. His words were much more appealing than Mike Lindell from My Pillow. People turned to each other and said, "No one has ever spoken like this before." The Greek word could be literally translated, "knocked out of their senses." That's what happened to the people when they heard Jesus speak to them. They were knocked out of their senses because no one ever spoke like this before. Jesus said, "My words are spirit and they are life."

This morning we want to take a trip back in time and listen to Jesus as he teaches in the synagogue. We want to realize that the power Jesus showed in his teaching is still with us today every time we open the Bible. So get ready to be: Amazed At What He says and Does!

Jesus was always looking for opportunities to talk to people. One place he did this was in the synagogue on the Sabbath day. "They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach." If you were to travel to Israel and visit Capernaum, you can see the ruins of a synagogue that was built about 500 years after Jesus' time. Underneath that synagogue is evidence of a foundation from a much smaller synagogue, probably the one that was there at the time of Jesus. Jesus loved going through the villages and towns talking to people about the kingdom of God. He wanted people to know that he was their King who had come to rescue them the way a shepherd rescues a lost sheep. "The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law."

Jesus taught differently than the teachers of the law. The teachers of the law were fond of taking Old Testament laws and then adding their own spin to what God's Word said. Over the years the opinions of various different rabbis were discussed more than the Word of God just as happens in Judaism today. For example, Jewish rabbi's determined that a Sabbath day's journey was about three miles. You could walk three miles without breaking the Sabbath. But then another group of rabbis said you could walk another three miles if established residency at the end of the three mile trip. You could do this by having someone place something from your house at the end of the three miles, allowing you to travel another three miles. Jesus said of these false teachers that they strained out gnats and swallowed camels. They become so focused on the outward keeping of the law, they totally ignored the corruption that existed in their hearts. He said of these people, "You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence."

Allow me to illustrate this teaching with this stainless steel water jug. Imagine, I picked this up at a garage sale for one dollar. The people were selling it so cheap because it was dirty and gross on the inside. I bought it, placed marbles and some TSP inside and shook the marbles vigorously. Within about a minute or two it was shiny and clean on the inside. I could do this with the water jug, but we cannot do this with our sinful hearts. The rabbis gave the impression

that if you tried to look clean on the outside by keeping certain laws prescribed by the rabbis you could cover up the bad that was on the inside. Jesus taught with authority. He said this about the heart in Matthew 15, “For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what make a man unclean, but eating with unwashed hands does not make him ‘unclean.’”

Jesus spoke with authority because he told them people the solution for the problem of sin was not looking into yourself or looking at what you do. Jesus told the people to look at him. He told them he was the Shepherd who gives his life for the sheep. He told them he was the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through him. Jesus told the people he was the Son of God who had come down to this earth to rescue them and save them. He taught them that the sacrifices in Jerusalem pointed to him as the Lamb of God who was to take away the sin of the world.

Jesus still speak with authority to you and me through this amazing book we call the Holy Bible. The other day I was reading from the book of Proverbs. In my reading from chapter eleven I came across this verse: “Riches will not help anyone on the day of God’s fury, but righteousness will save a person from death.” These words spoke with great authority and power. All the money in the world could not save me from one sin. My righteousness could not save me from one sin. My only hope of being saved from judgment day is the righteousness that Jesus has to offer.

Whenever we gather for worship, or whenever we read the Bible, we can anticipate that Jesus will come to us and speak to us with authority.

A number of years ago, Moses predicted that a prophet would come with authority, who would be like him in many ways. Moses pointed out that this would be the Messiah. How was Jesus like Moses? Moses said: “The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him.” Two things to note about this description of Christ – Moses said that Jesus would be a prophet “like me.” How would Jesus be like Moses? Remember, Moses was a very unique prophet. Of all the prophets, he was the only one God spoke to face to face. The Bible says that Moses actually saw the form of God, had face to face contact with God – no other prophet had that privilege. In the same way, Jesus would have face to face contact with God the Father. Do you remember when Moses came down from the mountain after being in the presence of God. His face was radiant that he had to have a veil on. Do you remember Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. The Bible says that when Peter, James and John tried to look at him, his face was shining like the sun. In addition, Moses stretched out his staff and the waters of the Red Sea parted. Jesus walked on water and calmed a storm. Moses brought water bursting forth from a rock for the people to drink in the wilderness. Jesus turned water into wine for a wedding party to drink. Jesus also told a woman at Jacob’s well, that whoever drinks the water he offers will never be thirsty again. Moses prayed and the Lord sent from heaven manna and quail for the people to eat. Jesus fed 5,000 once and 4,000 another time with a few loaves of bread and some fish. Jesus also told people, I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. Moses saved the people from Egypt. Jesus saved people from their sins. Moses issued the 10 Commandments and all of God’s laws. Jesus obeyed those laws perfectly and spoke with great authority. Boy is Jesus, like Moses!

Now let's look at how Jesus demonstrates his authority by what he does. He overcomes the power of Satan. Did you know that the devil loves to come to church with you every Sunday? "Just then a man in the synagogue who was possessed by an evil spirit cried out, "What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are- the Holy One of God!"

Why would Jesus be so harsh to these evil angels? They spoke the truth. Jesus is the Holy one of God. Well let's just say someone from the gang MS13 said, "Pastor Schulz is a down to earth pastor, who cares about people. And those people of Open Bible are a just a great group of people. What MS 13 says may indeed be the truth. But what would people in the community begin to think. Does Pastor Schulz have some gang affiliation. Is MS13 doing some money laundering over at Open Bible. Is that how they recently paid for their entire expansion? Not good PR to have MS 13 promote your church, is it. Even if what they say is the truth. Same with Jesus. Thus, Jesus says, "Be quiet! Come out of him!" The words of Jesus are so powerful that the evil spirit comes out of him immediately and makes a loud shrieking noise. "Daddy, remember that day we were in the synagogue and Jesus threw out the evil spirit? Remember that terrible shrieking sound that we heard? It was awful." As hideous as this shrieking sound was, it was a good sound for it shows us clearly this morning that Jesus has authority and power over Satan. He spoke to the evil spirit and the evil spirit left the man. The people were amazed. They said, "He even gives orders to evil spirits and they obey him."

The devil loves to come to church. He cannot stand to have people listening to the words of Jesus and drawing close to him. That is why he will try to raise havoc in the church. The devil likes to raise discord among Christians to keep them from hearing the words of Jesus.

Martin Luther said wherever the Lord build's his church, the devil builds a tavern next door. In the parable of the sower and the seed, Jesus said the seed that falls on the path are those "who hear and then the devil comes and takes away the words from their hearts so they cannot be saved." Satan loves to come to church and sit with us. He loves to distract us with thoughts about what we have to do this week, or what someone is wearing, or perhaps even the upcoming Super Bowl. Even in our personal devotions, he will suggest that we do not take the time to ponder and meditate, because there are more important things to do.

Satan loves to accuse us of our sin and drive us to despair. He suggests to us that Jesus' words "It is finished" really don't apply to us. In the Revelation it says he accuses us before God's throne day and night. But then it goes on to say we overcome him by the blood of the Lamb and the Word of the Testimony. The words of Jesus have tremendous power and authority, even over the devil. Jesus doesn't say to you, "I hope you go to heaven someday." He says, "Because of me, you will go to heaven someday." Jesus doesn't say to you, "I might forgive you of your sins." Jesus says to you, "Because of me, your sins are forgiven." Jesus doesn't say, "I'll be near you sometimes." He says, "Lo, I will be with you always." Do you see the authority? That is why we gladly say "Yes" when Moses says to us, "You must listen to him." Yes, we listen to Christ. He has saved us. He says it right here, in his Word.

Another week looms in the front of us. Satan is still the same hungry roaring lion looking for people to devour. We don't have to be afraid, because we have the sword of the Spirit, God's Word. Listen to the words of Jesus here in the Bible. Love them. Live them. They have not lost their power. Amen.