

The Fourth Sunday after Epiphany

Text: Luke 4:31-44 (NIV) ³¹Then he went down to Capernaum, a town in Galilee, and on the Sabbath began to teach the people. ³²They were amazed at his teaching, because his message had authority. ³³In the synagogue there was a man possessed by a demon, an evil spirit. He cried out at the top of his voice, ³⁴“Ha! 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!” ³⁵“Be quiet!” Jesus said sternly. “Come out of him!” Then the demon threw the man down before them all and came out without injuring him. ³⁶All the people were amazed and said to each other, “What is this teaching? With authority and power he gives orders to evil spirits and they come out!” ³⁷And the news about him spread throughout the surrounding area. ³⁸Jesus left the synagogue and went to the home of Simon. Now Simon’s mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked Jesus to help her. ³⁹So he bent over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. She got up at once and began to wait on them. ⁴⁰When the sun was setting, the people brought to Jesus all who had various kinds of sickness, and laying his hands on each one, he healed them. ⁴¹Moreover, demons came out of many people, shouting, “You are the Son of God!” But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew he was the Christ. ⁴²At daybreak Jesus went out to a solitary place. The people were looking for him and when they came to where he was, they tried to keep him from leaving them. ⁴³But he said, “I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent.” ⁴⁴And he kept on preaching in the synagogues of Judea.

Theme: What a Busy Day!

There are some days when I feel as if I am packing 36 hours of work into a 24 hour day. I look at my schedule and wonder how I am going to fit all of these things in one day. I think that I should cancel something or push something off until tomorrow, but I don’t know what. The phone rings, emails need to be answered, machines break down, the internet doesn’t work, and the kids need to be picked up. (It’s great that one of them drives now) Then it is home for a quick supper, and many times back to church for something. When that’s over, it back home to work on a sermon or Bible class. When I was younger, those kinds of days would give me a rush. Now they just make me tired.

We all have those days when one thing after the next comes up. When I think about stories in the Gospels like our text, Jesus had a lot of those busy days, and He still has those busy days for us today.

I. Think of all the things that Jesus did that day.

He had just been rejected in His hometown of Nazareth. He went on a long journey back down to Capernaum. This was quite a descent. Nazareth is in the hills, about 1200 feet above sea level. Capernaum is on the Sea of Galilee, about 600 feet below sea level. Capernaum was also a very small village. It was so small that we are not quite sure where it was. It was probably just a few homes, but it had a synagogue. On the Sabbath Day, Jesus stood up to preach. They people were amazed at His teaching, but then a man stood up in the back of the church and began to shout back at Jesus. This is a preacher’s worst nightmare. I can’t really tell if you fall asleep during my sermons unless you snore. It is hard to keep my concentration however, when there it a big commotion. Jesus had a demon possessed man, shouting at him at the top of his lungs, “*Ha! 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!” The Lord sternly said, “Come out of Him!” The demon had to leave the man. That would be quite the exciting church service for both the preacher and the congregation.

Then Jesus was invited to dinner, but the cook was sick. Peter’s family asked Jesus to heal the cook. Jesus did just that. He healed Peter’s mother-in-law, and she began to serve them.

Things calmed down a bit, but then the sun went down. The Jewish day ends at sundown. The Sabbath was now officially over, so the people came to Jesus in droves with all of their ailments. He healed the sick, laying His hands on each one of them. He also cast out many demons. That was one busy day. When it was over, He went to the nearby villages to do the same.

II. He hasn’t let up one bit.

He is still busy making sure that His Word is being preached today. He calls pastors into His service to preach the Gospel. He sends them to preach the good news of the forgiveness of sins in His name. On this day and every Sunday, we proclaim Christ crucified for the forgiveness of our sins. As we gather to celebrate our Lord’s Supper, we are proclaiming the Lord’s death and resurrection for us to the world. Christ’s Word also leaves us amazed. It still has authority because He sends us to preach the forgiveness of sins in His name. Christ gave His life on the cross for the forgiveness of your sins. He rose from the dead, so that you can also rise and live with Him in His glory forever. Jesus Christ is Your Savior from sin, death, and all the power of the devil. That is the message that He makes sure is still proclaimed today.

He also hears all of our prayers. So many people came to Jesus that day. He also commands us to pray in His name, and He promises to hear us. He will also answer our prayers with what is best for us. But He also helps us in a very personal way. He went to Peter’s mother-in-law and bent over her. It also says that He laid His hands on every one of the people when He healed them. He just didn’t say, “You’re all healed. Now go home.” He personally interacted with every one of them. He personally hears each one of our prayers also. He knows all of our needs. He knows how to help us. Just as He sends preachers of His word, He also sends Christians to help us personally in our needs. Did you ever find yourself in need, and suddenly there was someone with comfort and help that you never expected. It was Jesus who sent them. In some ways that person was Jesus’ angel to you that day.

Jesus also keeps the devil at bay. It is interesting that there was so much demon possession during Jesus’ ministry. I believe that it shows that the devil didn’t back down. He brought the battle to Jesus, but over and over again the Lord showed His authority over the evil spirits by casting them out. He wouldn’t even let them speak. When we become Christians, the devil puts a big bulls eye on our backs. Peter writes in his first letter that the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking whom he can devour. Peter tells us to resist Him, by standing firm in the faith. The devil wanted to destroy Job. He wanted to sift Peter like wheat. He gave Paul a thorn in the flesh. But Christ defended all of these people with His strength. The devil has his sights on you and me also, but Christ is our defender. He is our strength, even when the struggle makes us weak. We belong to Christ through faith. Nothing, not even the devil can pluck us from His gracious, strong hands.

III. In all of the stress, troubles, and temptations of this life, we come to Christ for rest.

What did Jesus do after this very busy day? He went to a solitary place for some rest. We all have times when our lives are filled with stress. We can hardly think straight. We have times when our lives are filled with anxiety, grief, and trouble. We wonder what could go wrong next. We have times when temptations come alluring. We try to get away from them, but the devil won't leave us alone. When you have those times, find a solitary place where you can be with your heavenly Father in His Word and in prayer. Martin Luther once wrote to a friend, **"Tomorrow I plan to work, work, from early until late. In fact I have so much to do that I shall spend *the first three hours in prayer.*"** The same point is made by this poem that I found, called "I Didn't Have Time."

I got up early one morning
 And rushed right into the day!
 I had so much to accomplish
 That I didn't have time to pray.
 Problems just tumbled about me,
 And heavier came each task.
 "Why doesn't God help me?" I wondered.
 He answered, "You didn't ask!"
 I tried to come into God's presence;
 I used all my keys at the lock.
 God gently and lovingly chided,
 "Why, child, you didn't knock!"
 I wanted to see joy and beauty,
 But the day toiled on, gray and bleak.
 I wondered why God didn't show me.
 He said, "But you didn't seek."
 I woke up early this morning,
 And paused before entering the day.
 I had so much to accomplish
 That I had to take time to pray!

-Grace L. Naessens

Especially in those difficult days, when you wonder where you will find any time for yourself, take time to be with our Lord in His Word and in prayer. In your hectic week, find the time to worship Him. You will find that when you come to Him, He will give you rest. He will take your burden and put in on Himself. He wants to take your sins, your stress, your worries and cares and bear them in your place. That is His great love for us. He is always busy, always on the go, for the good of all who love Him and know Him as their Savior. May He fill all of our stressed hearts with that peace.

Amen.

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