

"It Goes Without Saying"

Text: Mark 1:21-28

Ephesians 3:20-21 Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Dear Fellow Christians:

It goes without saying that language and communication fascinate me. In fact that's the very element of language by which we introduce our text for this morning – the expression "*it goes without saying*." Interesting, first of all, that whenever someone uses the expression, they always say the very thing they claim doesn't need to be said. If it goes without saying, why say it?

Obviously this is just another quirk of the English language. "*It goes without saying*" is a wordier way of saying "*obviously*" but with a subtly different nuance. Yet examine the expression itself. Who was the first one to use the word "goes" in that context – "*It goes without saying*"? How did it come about that a phrase like this even came to be used at all, let alone universally understood?

The question will likely have to remain forever unanswered. This morning we will simply use the phrase to help unlock the truths of this morning's text. There we will find several truths that certainly did "go without saying," and several others that certainly did not and should not.

The text that will form the basis of our study this morning is found in the First Chapter of Mark's Gospel:

^{ESV} Mark 1:21-28 And they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath he entered the synagogue and was teaching. ²² And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes. ²³ And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, ²⁴ "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." ²⁵ But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!" ²⁶ And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying out with a loud voice, came out of him. ²⁷ And they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, "What is this? A new teaching with

authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him." ²⁸ And at once his fame spread everywhere throughout all the surrounding region of Galilee.

So far the very words of our God. Confident that God will keep his promise not only to visit us with power whenever we study his Word, but also that he will keep his promise to grant to us, his children, those good things for which we ask, so we pray, "***Sanctify us by your truth, O Lord. Your word is truth.***" Amen.

I assume that most of you are aware that next Sunday, in our secular society, is known as Super Bowl Sunday. The following Sunday is the NASCAR Super Bowl – the Daytona 500. The attention devoted to these and other similar events is embarrassing. Americans spend billions - all built around, all prompted by, games – sporting contests which will, in the end, mean absolutely nothing of any lasting substance or significance.

It goes without saying... that this serves as irrefutable evidence that our society has trouble identifying what is and is not important.

Contrast this silliness with the events described in our text for this morning. First, we read almost casually the simple statement that Jesus "***entered the synagogue and was teaching***" and that there he encountered a demon-possessed man.

What a difference, what a contrast with the absurdity, the frivolity, the misguided emphasis of our society. Jesus was our guide and example in so many different ways, this is just one more. Having left his eternal existence in heaven, he entered our world to carry out the single most important work in the history of mankind. Having existed in heaven and having witnessed the rebellion of Satan and his angels, and then the subsequent fall of mankind, the God-man Jesus was nothing if not sober-minded. He recognized the demon possession of a human being and the incessant struggle for the immortal souls of every human being as immeasurably more significant than, for example, any sporting event. Certainly the possessed man in our text would agree. Surely for him it would go without saying.

Nor are we here today immune. Every single one of us needs to take a step back and from that perspective to look, long and hard, at our lives and daily struggles. For us too the need for this regular self-evaluation ought to go without saying. Tragically, it does not and therefore cannot.

To help us in this, consider again the conversation between our Savior and the demon in our text. Hear again how our text communicated this profoundly important exchange: **And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit. And he cried out,** ²⁴ **"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."** ²⁵ **But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!"** ²⁶ **And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying out with a loud voice, came out of him.**

Come to terms with the fact that this is the unseen reality of what is taking place all around us every single moment of our lives. It was certainly not exaggeration on Peter's part when he wrote: **Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.** (1 Peter 5:8) Recognize the threat, the eternal peril, and stop trying to pet the kitty. We cannot flirt with sin and expect to escape unscathed, because sin carries the terrible power to corrode and eventually destroy the saving faith that has been given to us. We cannot pretend that the struggle for our souls against the devil and his angels is one bit less critical and dramatic than Scripture itself portrays it.

And yet we do, all the time. Christians are supposed to build up and support each other until we are all safely across the finish line. But what do we often do? We frequently wound and cripple and offend even those closest to us – and all over the stupidest, most inconsequential things.

If you need a good measuring stick by which you can evaluate your own actions, ask yourself how important, worthwhile or relevant any given action or goal in your life would be if Christ were to return at that very moment. So much of what troubles us would suddenly appear profoundly misguided – something akin to refusing to board one of the lifeboats on the Titanic because you don't like the color it was painted, or arguing about who gets to sit in the front and who gets to steer.

Seriously. How many elements of our lives look utterly ridiculous against the backdrop of today's text? You and I can do something about that.

The next *"it goes without saying"* in our text would have been spoken by the people that were listening to Jesus and witnessing all that happened. Certainly for them it would *go without saying* that Jesus was different. In fact they had never heard or seen anything like Jesus of Nazareth. The first thing we hear was that **"they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes."** Jesus was source material. Listening to him would have been like sitting

down and talking to George Washington in person, rather than reading what the historians wrote about his life and times. Jesus didn't have to cite sources. He himself was the source. He wouldn't have to scrunch up his face, rub his chin, and consult the fathers to render an opinion on the meaning of a passage in the Scriptures. He was the God who gave those very words to mankind – he verbally inspired them. He was the God who dictated truth. He didn't have to guess at the age of the earth; he was there; he created it. He didn't have to guess at history; he saw it. Didn't have to wonder about how things worked here on earth; he himself had created the science – much of which still continues to mystify mankind. What an incredible privilege to hear the very Son of God speak, and with the authority that only he could command.

Be wise enough to know that you can still hear him speak, and you have. We have his words still today on the pages of our Bibles. Recognize this as the same authority that so impressed the people of Jesus' day. It's still right here, waiting to speak to all who will listen – the very same power, the very same authority, the very same truth that amazed those who heard the Savior in person.

Which brings us finally to the two things in our text that simply *cannot* go without saying. The first is that it can't go without saying just who Jesus was and what exactly he had come to earth to do.

This was something that couldn't be left to man's imagination – then or now. The people who heard Jesus speak were amazed, but that amazement could and did carry them to some very strange places. They heard Jesus speak with authority, but that experience alone confused them – causing them to blurt out the question recorded in our text: **"What is this? A new teaching with authority!"** Throughout Jesus' ministry human beings reacted very differently to this man who was so obviously different. Many tried to make him king. Others were frightened or intimidated by him. Still others wanted to turn him into their own walking infirmary or grocery store. And still others wanted to kill him.

All of which explains why Jesus couldn't and didn't adopt the "it goes without saying" mentality. His person and work had to be clearly spelled out. This wasn't anything man could figure out on his own. No rational human being would suspect that God the Father had sent his own Son to live a perfect life, and then to offer that perfect life as the full and complete payment for the sins of all mankind. No human being could expect that of God – that a holy God would punish his holy,

sinless Son for all that they themselves had done wrong. Jesus had to tell them, and tell them he did. **John 3:14-18: *And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. ¹⁶ ¶ "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. ¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.***

Whenever man is left to his own devices and imagination to come up with his own salvation plan, it *always* involves man doing what he must to earn his way. What could not go without saying was, therefore, the very cornerstone of the Christian faith – that every last bit of goodness and sin-payment could only be provided for us and then given to us as a divine gift. Man is saved not by doing but by receiving.

In our text we read, finally: ***And at once his fame spread everywhere throughout all the surrounding region of Galilee.*** This is the final message that simply cannot go without saying. As Jesus and his Apostles had to carefully spell out exactly what God's plan for our salvation was, so also now God has determined that that same message is to be shared *by you and me and the rest of the Christian Church on earth* with every single human being. No soul can be saved if he does not hear this message. The message has been so distorted and garbled that it is now everywhere and nowhere. There are therefore human souls in your individual life that may never hear a clear and unambiguous explanation of the truth except from your own mouth. The world around us doesn't get it, but you and I do. The world around us is preoccupied with the mundane and frivolous, not so you and I. The world around us can't provide this truth, but you and I can. The bottom line is that the message we have been given to share will be of absolutely no benefit to anyone else if you and I allow it to go without saying.

May then the God who first won our souls, and then gave us the good news of just what he had done, also now give us the love and courage to share it with our neighbor, along with the wisdom to recognize and to take advantage of every door of opportunity that he opens in our lives for this great work. Amen.

Scripture Readings

^{ESV} **Deuteronomy 18:15-20** "The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers--it is to him you shall listen-- ¹⁶ just as you desired of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly, when you said, 'Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God or see this great fire any more, lest I die.' ¹⁷ And the LORD said to me, 'They are right in what they have spoken. ¹⁸ I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. ¹⁹ And whoever will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him. ²⁰ But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in my name that I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die.'"

^{ESV} **1 Corinthians 8:4-13** Therefore, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that "an idol has no real existence," and that "there is no God but one." ⁵ For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth--as indeed there are many "gods" and many "lords"-- ⁶ yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist. ⁷ ¶ However, not all possess this knowledge. But some, through former association with idols, eat food as really offered to an idol, and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. ⁸ Food will not commend us to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do. ⁹ But take care that this right of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. ¹⁰ For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol's temple, will he not be encouraged, if his conscience is weak, to eat food offered to idols? ¹¹ And so by your knowledge this weak person is destroyed, the brother for whom Christ died. ¹² Thus, sinning against your brothers and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. ¹³ Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble.

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The Fourth Sunday after Epiphany – January 31, 2021

The Opening Prayer by the Pastor

The Opening Hymn – 28 (Red Hymnal)

"Now Let All Loudly Sing Praise"

The Order of Service – Supplement page 12ff. (Brown Hymnal)

The Scripture Lessons: (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

The Old Testament Lesson: (Deuteronomy 18:15-20) Our first reading tells of a remarkable problem. The Jews' were terrified of their God, and yet they needed to communicate regularly with that same God – who alone could supply all of their needs. God himself provided the solution by sending a Mediator - Jesus Christ - to be our Savior. Because of what Jesus has now done, Christians recognize God as our loving Father.

The Psalm of the Day – Psalm 66 (Supplement page 37)

The New Testament Lesson: (1 Corinthians 8:4-13) As Christians, we recognize that we don't live in a vacuum. Our actions have an effect on others. "Can I?" is most often therefore not the question for Christians. The question most often is "Is this wise?" or "Will this be spiritually beneficial for myself and my neighbor?" So also Paul in our second reading this morning calls on Christians to look beyond themselves and their own Christian freedom to the needs of others – even denying a freedom to ourselves so as not to cause spiritual harm to our neighbor.

The Confession of Faith -

The Apostolic Creed – page 15. (Brown Hymnal)

The Pre-Sermon Hymn – 394 (Red Hymnal)

"My Faith Looks Up to Thee"

The Sermon – Text: Mark 1:21-28 (Printed on the back of this bulletin)

"It Goes Without Saying"

The Offertory – (Supplement page 16 insert)

The Post-Sermon Hymn – 779 (Stanzas 1-3) (Brown Hymnal)

"Redeemed, Restored, Forgiven"

The Prayers

The Benediction

The Closing Hymn – 779 (Stanza 4) (Brown Hymnal)

"Redeemed, Restored, Forgiven"

Silent Prayer

Welcome! - We warmly welcome any visitors who might be with us this morning and invite you to join us every Sunday at this time. St. Paul is a congregation in fellowship with the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC) – a conservative Lutheran synod with churches and missions throughout the United States, as well as Canada, India, and Africa. We are glad you are here. Thank you for letting us share the Word of God with you. Please record your visit in our Guest Book, and come again!

Attendance – Sunday (27) Average (30)

This Week at St. Paul:

Today	-9:00 a.m.	– Sunday School and Bible Class
	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service
	-11:00 a.m.	– Fellowship Hour
Wednesday	-6:00 p.m.	– Confirmation Class
	-7:00 p.m.	– Midweek Bible Study
Next Sunday	-9:00 a.m.	– Sunday School (No Bible Class)
	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service
	-11:00 a.m.	– Fellowship Hour

CLC News – Pastor Mark Tiefel is considering the call to Redeemer of Cheyenne. Pastor David Schaller is considering the call to ILC. Teacher Josh Ohlmann has accepted the call to Holy Trinity of West Columbia. Faith of Markesan has called Teacher Ross Kok. Grace of Sleepy Eye has called Teacher Andrew Roehl.

Pastor Out of Town – Pastor Roehl is scheduled to attend CLC Board of Trustee meetings in Mankato this week, leaving (God willing and weather permitting) on Thursday and returning Tuesday. As a result there will be Sunday School next Sunday, but no Bible Class. All midweek classes will be held as scheduled.

Care Package – Instead of the traditional gift box, the Women's Fellowship is planning to send a gift care to our only out-of-town member-student this year. Those who would like to participate can drop their contributions into the mailbox of the Women's Fellowship Financial Secretary, Angela Pfennig. The gift card will be purchased and sent after the service next Sunday. For more information, please see Women's Fellowship President Cindy Ollenburger.

Pastor Fanning – The first pastor here at St Paul, Warren Fanning, has been placed on hospice care in Phoenix. Please remember him and his wife Janet in your prayers.