

Authority

John 6:1-21; Ephesians 3:14-21

Sunday, August 4, 2024

11th Sunday After Pentecost

First Congregational Church of Marshalltown, Iowa

- Introduction

Ma Lucado wrote this story about the power of authority that comes from within and from who the person in authority is. "In *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, the magazine of the Naval Institute, Frank Koch illustrates the importance of obeying the Laws of the Lighthouse. Two battleships assigned to the training squadron had been at sea on maneuvers in heavy weather for several days. I was serving on the lead battleship and was on watch on the bridge as night fell. The visibility was poor with patchy fog, so the captain remained on the bridge keeping an eye on all activities. Shortly after dark, the lookout on the wing reported, "Light, bearing on the starboard bow. "Is it steady or moving astern?" the captain called out. The lookout replied, "Steady, Captain," which meant we were on a dangerous collision course with that ship. The captain then called to the signalman, "Signal that ship: 'We are on a collision course, advise you change course twenty degrees.'" Back came the signal, "Advisable for you to change course twenty degrees." The captain said, "Send: 'I'm a captain, change course twenty degrees.'" "I'm a seaman second-class," came the reply. "You had better change course twenty degrees." By that time the captain was furious. He spat out, "Send: 'I'm a battleship. Change course twenty degrees.'" Back came the flashing light, "I'm a lighthouse." We changed course."

In the Eye of the Storm by Max Lucado, Word Publishing, 1991, p. 153

<https://bible.org/illustration/lighthouse-laws>*

There are events in the Gospels that emphasize the humanity of Jesus. The whole story of Christmas becomes, to me, much more powerful when I consider it in terms of His humanity. Jesus is God the Son, the Creator, and He has done something that was unique in all religious thought; the Creator has joined creation. Not as a visitor in disguise, for the ancients used to believe that the gods sometimes mingled with humans in disguise. No. Jesus was born of a virgin and entered into and became part of creation. This is part of Christianity alone. No other religion to my knowledge, can make such a claim. In all the accounts of Jesus in the Gospels after His resurrection, there is no mention that Jesus gave up His humanity when He ascended to heaven. To this day, we believe that a human, with scars on His hands and feet, is seated at the right hand of God the Father. I try to consider it but I do not think that I can really comprehend how profound this is. But there are passages in which His disciples see that He is still the one in charge, with ultimate authority.

- Set the Stage

This same human, shortly before His ascension, told His disciples that He had all authority in heaven and on earth. It is His justification for the Great Commission. And here in this passage we see glimpses of that same authority in the work and ministry of the humble carpenter from Galilee. To set the stage, Jesus has performed a miracle involving food. He managed to multiply bread and fish and feed thousands of people in one setting. When this happened, the crowd tried to take

Him by force and make Him king, but Jesus would have none of it. He retreated to a mountain by Himself. After dark, the disciples took a boat and rowed toward Capernaum. It was windy and the sea was rough. After a few miles, the disciples saw Jesus walking on the water toward the boat and they were, understandably, frightened. Jesus told them "It is I, be not afraid." Once He entered the boat they were immediately at their destination.

- Main Point: Bread-Messiah

People wanted Jesus to be the "bread-messiah" the prophet who would turn the earth into a paradise, but Jesus has authority over all the Universe, including the laws of nature.

The main point is that Jesus is much more than most, if not all of us, realize. In His day, there was a belief that someday a great prophet would arise and turn earth into a paradise in which everyone would have all that they really needed, so when Jesus miraculously turned that small amount of food into enough for everyone, they thought that the "bread-messiah" had arrived and attempted to make Him king by force. Again, He wasn't having it, for He came to give Himself on the cross for the sins of the world. But He wasn't having it also because that was so much less than what He truly is.

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Later, when the disciples were rowing against the stormy sea they saw Jesus walk on the water, and exhibition that He had power even over the laws of nature, even power over death itself. In those days, and also today in different parts of the world, people are terrified of seeing a ghost. Seeing a ghost meant that you would soon be a ghost yourself. It was a horrifying reminder of your own mortality, but even then Jesus said, "It is I, do not be afraid." He has power over all things, even the universe and death.

- Application: Meditate on the power of the humble Messiah.

Jesus, in other parts of John (chapters 8 & 18) confronted by religious authorities and later by Roman soldiers, said the words, "I am." When the religious leaders heard it, they attempted to kill Jesus because they knew what He said. He was the "I am," the most sacred of all the names of God. It was a clear declaration that He was God. When Jesus said the same words at the time of His arrest, the soldiers were knocked down by the power of His Presence. Sometimes it is helpful to meditate on just how great and powerful Jesus really is.

- Conclusion

Authority can arise from who the person in authority is. Some show this simply by their presence. Jesus, who has come as a small child in a stable, also demonstrates that He not only has authority, but that He has ultimate authority, even over nature, the universe and death. Sometimes, while recognizing His humanity, it is good to meditate on His divinity, that He is God and He is the God who joined the human race.