

What Do You Want With Jesus?

- ✦ He teaches with authority. (vv.21-22)
- ✦ He drives out demons. (vv.23-26)
- ✦ He turns the world upside-down. (vv.27-28)

In the name of Jesus, without whom nothing is real, dear saints of God:

It looks really strange if you don't know what you're watching. A soldier walks up to a jeep and flips it over with one hand. Two men approach a full sized tank and turn it upside-down. They tip a plane over with its wheels to the sky. For real! In WWII the Allies wanted to liberate Europe, but they needed Hitler's troops and tanks in the wrong place. So across from Calais at the narrowest part of the English Channel, the Allies built an army of tanks and jeeps, airplanes and men – all large inflatable toys. From the air they looked real enough to fool Hitler. Below it would be a fun playground for you kids.

Human eyes with human reason are easily fooled by appearances. Consider the glittering jewels on the "Red Carpet," mostly borrowed by actresses in dresses few women would ever wear. The "bad boys" look so handsome – as long as they're around. And "American Idols" can't even keep themselves from crying, much less dry your tears. Entertainment tonight? What about real life losses, real needs, real heartaches that fame and fortune cannot heal? How real is your reality? Keeping it real will help answer the Holy Spirit's question today: **What Do You Want With Jesus?** Consider this first of all:

✦ He teaches with authority. (vv.21-22)

In our Opening Hymn we sang, "Oh, that the Lord would guide my ways." (CW 462) He must be guiding because here we are where Jesus always spent the Sabbath. ***"And they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath he entered the synagogue and was teaching. And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes."*** (ESV) For Jesus it was never a question where He would spend the Lord's Day. Since childhood His parents always took Him to church. They would not agree with Americans saying, "Let them grow up and make their own decision." Luther, the great reformer, said it well, "If you don't teach them, the devil will." As a teenager, Jesus got into trouble for staying at church, learning all He could in His Father's house.

Jesus was not the kind of teacher His fellow Jews were used to hearing. The *scribes* knew the Old Testament backwards and forwards because they hand copied it. Try it sometime. But instead of paying attention to the actual words of God, they tried to glean the meaning from centuries on centuries of rabbinic traditions called the *Talmud*. One scholar told us if you ever want to torture yourself, try reading the *Talmud* in Hebrew. Or you could sit in class with a university professor so high up in his field, you can't understand any better than a mouse under a rock. ***"Scribes"*** would have liked the modern dictum: "If you can't convince 'em, confuse 'em!" ***"Scribes"*** made you feel as if you're on a diving board, confused whether to dive, jump, or bounce. Everybody's shouting, "Make up your mind!"

As soon as Jesus opened His mouth, everyone was amazed because ***"He taught them as one who had authority."*** Even the little children know why. Jesus was not filled with hot air like an inflatable tank or jeep. Jesus was anointed and filled with the Holy Spirit and power. He is God's eternal Word in human flesh and blood. Jesus shares God's innermost thoughts and heartfelt feelings. God the Father wanted us to know this because He said twice, ***"This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased,"*** then added, ***"Listen to Him!"*** (Matthew 3:17; 17:5) **What Do You Want With Jesus? He teaches with authority.** But His teaching is not just empty words. Mark's Gospel especially spotlights Jesus' divine power over the forces of evil. Mark's readers from the Roman Empire would really love this about Jesus:

✦ He drives out demons. (vv.23-26)

Satan wasted no time to start dive bombing Jesus: *“Immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, ‘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.’* (ESV)

Have you ever wondered why there were so many demon possessions in Jesus’ day? Why were there so many fighter planes over Europe in WWII? Satan knew the battle was on, so he attacked God’s kingdom hard and fast. “Satan” means “Enemy,” and his hellcats aimed at God’s own Son. **Demons** try to get people to stop listening, or at least listen to lies, because the devil’s other name means “liar.” He wants to silence God’s truth in today’s FIRST LESSON. Imagine the fall of Satan’s kingdom of fake joy, full guilt and eternal destruction if everyone heard God’s New Covenant of pure grace. Your guilt is gone when you hear God say: *“I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”* (Jeremiah 31:34) This Good News plunges hell into the fiery lake of burning sulfur. It throws the gates of heaven wide open so you can see God holding out His arms to welcome you home, forgiven full and free.

Satan knows who Jesus is, but Jesus won’t let the **demons** tell anyone: *“Be quiet!” said Jesus sternly. “Come out of him!” The evil spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek.* The Holy Spirit explains a few verses later: *“[Jesus] also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was.”* (Mark 1:33f NIV84) Jesus wanted everyone to listen to God’s Word and see the proof in His miracles. You might say, “Hell don’t get to tell.” **Demons** can only cry out in terror. God wants praises that honor Him for His goodness and grace, praises which are only possible for repentant sinners. By God’s grace you see your sins, repent and rejoice in Jesus your Savior. God wants your confident praises of His mercy and grace. **What Do You Want With Jesus?**

✦ He turns the world upside-down. (vv.27-28)

They’re so predictable. Either this world and Satan make sin look like delicious, forbidden fruit, or they fill you with fear. It doesn’t take big sins and catastrophic losses. Satan can use seemingly little sins to keep you in bondage. Pride and self-righteousness feel so normal as long as you stay in line with the world. They’re like the fishing line Cambodian Communists threaded through the hands of their captives to control them on forced marches through the jungle. As long as everyone kept walking, okay. But if anyone stumbled or tried to run away? That nylon line through every hand would hurt them all. You could never rest until your cruel captors called a halt or shot you dead. That’s the devil’s way.

But when people saw Jesus using His divine power? They were glad. He never did miracles to help Himself. It was always to bear the grief and carry the sorrow of sinners like us who need God’s deliverance. *“The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, ‘What is this? A new teaching – and with authority! He even gives orders to evil spirits and they obey him.’ News about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee.”* Jesus’ preaching **turns the world upside-down.**

What Do You Want With Jesus? Doesn’t that really depend on how well you know what He wants with you? He already carried all your sins to the cross. He promised to *“remember them no more”* because they’re all washed away with His holy, precious blood. God cannot remember them because He made sure they’re gone. Every tear you shed, He keeps in a bottle (Psalm 56:8 KJV) as a memory of all the joy He plans to give you when He finally gets you home to heaven. He’s not trying to keep you in line with pain and suffering. Or fool you with empty promises. Jesus **turns the world upside-down** so you can escape its hollow fame and reach the stars of God’s heaven where wonders never cease. God wants you for His own. He put His Name on you in your Baptism. Do you trust the reality of His power over sin, death and hell? Do you know others who still need to hear what God has done for them? Easter is a such great time to be busy sharing and inviting. Yesterday I got to show one of the guards John 3:16 in Greek, then explain it in English. Folks who otherwise would spend the Lord’s Day chasing rainbows, can find God’s gold here. Without Jesus nothing is real. **What Do You Want With Jesus?** He surely wants you! Christ is calling you. Christ is sending you. Amen.