

## Poem of Praise

Jesus.

His name is a complete sentence.

His name is an entire prayer.

His name alone brings healing.

His name guarantees salvation.

His name quenches the thirsty soul and fills the soul's hunger.

Jesus

His name is the perfect solution to every problem.

His name can resolve conflict.

He brings peace and calm into every situation.

His name is protection.

His name brings light when darkness is all around.

Jesus

His name is music, it is the sweetest melody.

His name is joy unspeakable.

His name is perfect

His name is altogether lovely, magnificent, glorious.

His name is Emmanuel, He is God with us.

Amen

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### [Mark 1:21-28](#)

You may know the famous story of the preacher who asked some children, 'What's furry, either red or grey in colour, and collects nuts?'

A little girl nervously answered, 'I know the answer should be Jesus but it sounds like a squirrel to me.'

Unlike that occasion, the answer to the biblical story we've just read very definitely is Jesus. For Jesus and his authority are the focus of Mark's account here.

And Jesus demonstrates his unique authority in two ways in this narrative.

The **first** is the authority of **his teaching**:

<sup>22</sup> The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law.

What was the difference between Jesus and the teachers of the law? Well, the teachers of the law were learned men, but when they taught all their exposition of the Scriptures would be based on quoting '[previous authorities and commentators](#)'.

To a large extent, the modern preacher does the same. Without you knowing it, I just quoted a scholar named Ian Paul. I could also look at my shelves of Bible commentaries and turning to Mark's Gospel, I could cite William Lane, Robert Guelich, Craig Evans, or James Edwards. Whether I quote them or not, I will have engaged with their writing while working out what to preach.

Jesus doesn't need to do any of that. He has come from the Father. He is the Son of God. He doesn't need to derive anything. He speaks with personal, divine authority. If he came to preach, he wouldn't need to say, 'Ian Paul thinks this.' If he wrote an article, there would be no footnotes.

You get a flavour of this in Matthew's Gospel, where Jesus often says, 'You have heard it said ... but I say to you ...'

If you encounter the voice of God through a preacher today, it will be because the preacher has worked on faithfully and accurately relaying to you the teaching of Jesus (which may involve consulting learned sources). And there will also be the explicitly spiritual dimension. The preparation will be soaked in prayer. The Holy Spirit will sovereignly choose to light up the words of the preacher in your hearts and minds, such that you hear the voice of God, rather than the preacher.

Please pray for your preachers. We only have this secondary authority. Pray for our faithful study of the Scriptures. Pray that we will be in tune with the Holy Spirit.

And for all of us, preachers or otherwise, what we need is an authentic encounter with the voice and teaching of Jesus through the work of the Holy Spirit. The Scriptures have been preserved for us as the primary and supreme way to hear his authentic voice today.

Therefore it's not just a case of praying for Sunday's preacher. It's about exercising the privilege we all have to read the Scriptures under the illumination of the Spirit and encounter Jesus, to whom they point.

The **second** way Jesus demonstrates his unique authority in today's passage is in the authority of ***his power over evil***:

<sup>23</sup> Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an impure spirit cried out, <sup>24</sup> '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!'

<sup>25</sup> 'Be quiet!' said Jesus sternly. 'Come out of him!' <sup>26</sup> The impure spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek.

This is a battle for power. The unclean spirit uses words that were commonly used as a rebuke: 'What do you want with us?' The spirit also names Jesus as 'Jesus of Nazareth ... the Holy One of God', a reflection of the ancient belief that knowing someone's name gave you power over them.

But it doesn't work with Jesus. He doesn't use spells or incantations. He doesn't even need to pray. He acts on his own superior authority! 'Be quiet! Come out of him!' And that's that. All done and dusted.

Jesus doesn't just have words, he has deeds. And those deeds validate the content of his teaching that we thought about last week, where he proclaims that the kingdom of God is near and it's time to repent.

It's something that confronts us all. Very few people are demonised, but all of us face the conflict with evil and the temptation to go the wrong way.

And so this combination of authoritative teaching and authoritative deeds face us with a choice. What will we do with Jesus?

At the end of the passage we don't hear what choice the members of the synagogue make about Jesus. We only hear about their amazement (verse 27). Who will follow Jesus and who will oppose him? We know that very soon there will be a split. Teachers of the law whose authority as we have seen is displaced by Jesus will largely oppose him. Many ordinary people will follow him.

But what about us? It's not enough just to admire his teaching and call him a good man or even a prophet. Choosing to do nothing about him is effectively to choose against him, because we are saying we don't want him to change us.

Why, some people even try to neutralise the influence of Jesus by saying that they worship him on Sundays in church. But that same worship is also meant to convey the word and works of God in Christ to us. We still need to choose.

Perhaps some of us listening today are also amazed by Jesus and his authority. But let's be more than amazed. Let's respond to him by following him.

### **A Challenge to Pray**

The power to heal  
The power to forgive  
The power to hope  
The power to bless  
The power to change  
The power to restore  
The power to save lives  
The power to restore what has been broken  
The power to transform hearts and minds  
The power to bring freedom  
The power to achieve victories  
The power to impact eternity  
The power is in your hands

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### **A Prayer for the Church (Ephesians 3:14-21)**

For this reason, I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name: I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fulness of God.

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations for ever and ever! **Amen.**

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## **No Longer Despised – Blessing**

You shall no longer be called despised,  
or seen as forsaken,  
for the Lord delights in you.

Those who are struggling to pay the mortgage,  
those who worry about the future,  
you shall no longer be called despised,  
or seen as forsaken,  
for the Lord delights in you.

Those who are not listed amongst the great and the good,  
those who will never make the celebrity A-list,  
you shall no longer be called despised,  
or seen as forsaken,  
for the Lord delights in you.

Those who feel shunned and ignored,  
those who struggle to get by each day  
you shall no longer be called despised,  
or seen as forsaken,  
for the Lord delights in you.

Those whose hopes have been crushed,  
those whose dreams were dashed by life,  
you shall no longer be called despised,  
or seen as forsaken,  
for the Lord delights in you.