

# Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany

**SHUT THE HELL UP! GET THE HELL OUT!**

**Mark 1:23-28**

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**Analysis by Joseph Justus van der SABB**

21 They went to Capernaum; and when the Sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught. 22They were **astounded** at his teaching, for he taught them as one having **authority**, and not as the scribes. 23Just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, 24and 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.' 25But Jesus rebuked him, saying, 'Be silent, and come out of him!' 26And the unclean spirit, throwing him into convulsions and crying with a loud voice, came out of him. 27They were all **amazed**, and they kept on asking one another, 'What is this? A new teaching—with **authority**! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.' 28At once his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee.

*Author's Note: To dig into this we're once again going to beg, borrow, and steal from some great observers of humanity: Philip Pullman's His Dark Materials, C. S. Lewis's Chronicles of Narnia, J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter series, "The Truman Show," and "The Matrix." In these tales, the Agents of the Authority have so confused, deceived, bullied and beaten the once-free peoples that resistance is not a "responsible" option. This also happens in our world, and not only geopolitically. "Good people"*

*don't buck the System. So bear with me, if you would, on a tour of a gold mine:*

*The Manifesto of The Authority: "If you follow my rules and if you submit to my authority and pay your taxes and do not flout me or ask the wrong questions, then I will reward you with self-worth, meaning, pleasure, safety, daily bread and perks too. You will deserve these things as though you were a god. I will tell you what is Right and Wrong and Good and Bad and you will like it. Rich in self-confidence, you will lord it over the nations, the poor, other religions and those not like you. Those who are 'Excellent at Life' (see Chapters 12 thru 453) under the Authority will be rich and famous... and feared. Those who are not will be punished in this world, and if we happen to leave you alone here, you'll really get it in the next life. Because there is no escaping your deeds... your deeds will find you out. There, you've had your warning. Now, on the count of three... give homage!"*

This Authority is the Lex, the Deep Magic of Narnia, the "Reality of How the World Works," the Matrix... and only reckless fools flout it... and it never ends well for them.

The Authority has Agents, those ideas and attitudes, spirits, demons which infect and infest the alleys of power and the corridors of our minds and under whose thumbs we are firmly held. Their demonic Legions march under banners like "Good" and "Bad" and "Right" and "Wrong." Under their heavy gaze we stumble and stagger and twitch and shudder. But ... it's not that bad, right? It's not like we can or should offer any resistance, should we? We just try to do our best and hope for the best... What else can we do? Cry out in a loud voice and listen for empty echoes of hollow voices?

Given all this, it is not difficult to see ourselves into the

room where Jesus himself is “teaching with authority.” As opposed to quoting Luther or Melanchthon, Paul or Moses, Gamaliel or N. T. Wright, Jesus is teaching as though he himself is the Authority. He is patently NOT in support of, or in light of, or in deference to, The Authority of This World. Jesus’ authority comes by way of reference to himself... and this is really weird. This man Jesus IS an Authority? Preposterous! Astounding! Authority comes from The Authority... and you have to have permission to do that! And a humongous bibliography! We all know that!

But ... (whispers among children) ... what if it were true? Could it be true? Could there be something other than the Winter of Narnia? Well, dear badgers, there is that ancient, seditious myth... dangerous! Whiskers twitch; we’re just a little nervous now, just a little excited... Is there another world out there than the one of the Matrix? Could this Jesus be an Agent of a Different Authority (ala J. K. Rowling’s “dark arts?”), infiltrating into this reality? He’s not coded the way the rest of us are! What Manifesto could he be using? Will we be rounded up for harboring him? Is he dangerous or is he a joke?

So we scream our challenge: “What have you to do with us?! Are you here to destroy us? Do you want to undo everything I know and feel good about?!”

And he, THE Agent responds: “I want the hell out. All of it. Shut it up. Get it out.”

Fade to Black. Cue music.

*End of Part One.*

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## **DIAGNOSIS: Shut the Hell up! Get the Hell out!**

**Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem)** : *Whoa! Would You Look at That!*

The “demons” know what is what ... the bystanders are clueless (and will be throughout Mark). Instead of “Oooooooo, look at THAT guy, he’s the Holy One of God... umm, I wonder if he’s here to destroy us too!?,” they’re all “Huh, would you look at that! Who’d’a thunk? That guy konked that demon right on the head and tossed him out! What a trick! Wonder if he can do it again!? He’s flouting the Authority... Wonder what they’ll do to him! Could be interesting!” And just like that, his fame spread throughout all Galilee.

Jesus is here to make a difference, that’s clear. But please keep this audacious Different Authority well away from me. It’s gossip. It’s kooky. It’s a bit reckless. Don’t ask me to take sides or sign myself up for his—what kind of bizarre program was that again? ... Holy One of who? I dunno. It just sounds weird. I know where my bread is buttered!

**Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem)** : *Who Let Him in?*

Actually, Jesus’ Authority does seem a bit threatening because I’m in bed with the other Authority. It’s less risky that way; the Authority of This World offers its perks to its faithful minions, right? But, in the end, is there a difference between tolerating the Agents of the Authority and being those Agents? Hardly. We’re expert Agents, you and I. We know that Manifesto inside and out. We believe it. And even if we knew what Jesus was going on about (which we don’t), we would reject it... He’s not one of us, he is therefore an Enemy.

**Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem)** : *Shut the Hell up! Get the Hell out!*

Revealed as sniveling collaborators, we stand no chance when confronted by Jesus’ Authoring Authority. If we are to survive,

Jesus has to die. “Did you see what he did to that Class 2 Demon? If he keeps this up, we’re dead meat! What if we gang up on him and turn him over to the Authority!” (Talk about a Gollum Solution!)

And yet, to Author with this new Different Authority, to forgive sins, Jesus is taking a huge gamble with borrowed money. He’s mortgaged heaven, borrowed the bank, taken on flesh and and signed away every pound he got in that deal. With so much (absolutely everything) on the line, anyone else would be nervous or at least have a little bit of respect for the Authority to whom this debt is owed ... but Jesus seems to think that the stakes are worth the results. Literally. He offers them the Bird.

We turn him in. The Authority pounds him. He Authors another guy into Paradise. They nail him. He forgives sinners. They throw the Book, the Tree, the Law, Mortality itself at him. He comforts his friends. Impudent bastard. So we help kill him. Let’s see what he can do now!

He dies with a majority share in the Authority—borrowed and then fully paid for. But, since he’s dead, it will all have to return to the bank.... That was in the fine print, you know. This experiment in Different Authority is over. Everyone who had their hopes up must turn themselves in at one of the Camps for Drastic Rehabilitation at Level Fourteen, or else face an even Lower Level of Hell.

**PROGNOSIS: Shut the Hell up! Get the Hell out!**

**Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution)** : *Shut the Hell up! Get the Hell out!*

Yet this Author means—and does—what he says. Despite death. All Hell breaks loose: it crumbles, it falls. Hell is shut up. Hell is thrown down.

Jesus lives, and it's suddenly hilariously obvious: He was not acting on borrowed Authority at all. This Authoring Authority was his all along. He is THE Agent of the Different Authority, the Author, in fact, and by taking the majority share of Hell, he now bankrupts it permanently.

And, more than that, he's back; he's on the prowl for erstwhile collaborators. Says he wants to sign them up under his own version of Authority.

**Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution) :** *What the Wind Brought*

Watching Narnia thaw, the world made new, the Wind knocks the windows open and the Bird brings good news. "There is no more war. Amnesty is granted. Forthwith, all former Agents are friends. There will be no prosecutions."

This is weird... instead of Hell knocking the wind out of me... the Wind has knocked the Hell out of me!

While not all Agents of This World's Authority accept and trust this, some do. Let's talk about those for a moment.

**Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) :** *Flippin' Authority*  
Despite convulsing and twitching as the demons vacate the premises, we change deep within and it shows. We reject the illusory finality of This World's Authority in spite of potential, probable, and inevitable interim consequences. Our minds, now free, are tinted with some of that Jesus Attitude that got him killed. The reason is obvious: We now know whose we are and 'what is what!'

Instead of joining the awestruck crowds who just rattle on about that guy who threw out that demon, we instead harp on about the incredible revelation that this Jesus is the HOLY ONE OF GOD! And a Holy One of God who gives the finger to the Authority of

This World... That's downright incredible! This guy here, this Jesus, gave the finger to the Authority! Yeah, so what, they killed him... but he's still alive! He says I can do it too... He said, "Shut the Hell up!" and Hell is shut! He said "Get the Hell out"... We're still uprooting hells left and right! We're getting the Hell out! Let me count the ways!

This flippin' audacity is far flung. It is sporadic, yes, but it is also splattered to the very "ends of the earth"... flung far indeed. The bankrupt Authority has its Agents who recognize that Jesus is the Holy One of God but who still covet their authority to make us bow before them, tremble and shudder and scream. To that Authority, the answer to the "Are you here to destroy us?" is, descriptively, emphatically, continuously affirmative. "Yes, I am here to destroy you (in the most Christ-like way possible): Shut the Hell up. Get the Hell out. There's Different Authority here." Whoa... she can do that? No way! Will it work?

Signed up now for the rebels and armed like Jesus with Authoring Authority (the Spirit's Sword?), we do not bend our knees any more on This World's Authority. The indwelling Spirit grants US the SAME Authority as the Holy One of God?!?!?! Could that be true even if it hardly makes sense? Can we forgive sins?! Promise everlasting life?!?! Tell the Authority of This World and its Agents to "Shut the Hell up and Get the Hell out!"—and it happens?! Yes, yes, and yes! The reality is we no longer just quote famous dead theo-thinkers and preachers ABOUT this Authority, we actually PARTAKE of it.

How so? In defiance of this World and its Agents, I forgive. I care. I serve. The Authority by which I do this is mine—Christ in me—and I need no Head Office or DGM or Purple Palace or Capitol Hill, no committee, no commentary, no degree and no memo to back me up and authorize me when I am a Christ Agent. I am already Author-ized. This is my voice, this is vocation, this is

my identity. In Christ, it is yours too. This astounds you? Good. Be a little nervous. Be a little excited. May your badger whiskers twitch. His New Day dawns. There are still a few Hells around to shut up and clear out... and we're on it!

We're Agents of the Different Authority. We go and do likewise. We get the Hell out.