

Mark 1: 21-28

Authority

There is a question posed at the start of Mark's Gospel. The question is, 'Who is Jesus?' Very quickly - we are still in Chapter 1 - Mark makes the point that Jesus is different to the other teachers and preachers; the scribes, the rabbis, the Pharisees – because he speaks with authority – his own authority. Unlike other teachers, Jesus doesn't preface his teaching with '*as Moses said*' or according to *Rabbi this or that*.

Authority is given to a person – no-one can hold authority without it being recognised by others; without a consensus. This can happen officially or unofficially. Investing a person with authority is about putting your trust in them. For instance, when we see a doctor, we invest that person with the authority to make the right decisions over our welfare. But, one of the characteristics of post-modern society is the erosion of authority. People contest the opinions and decisions of those in authority, partly because authority comes with power, and power has been abused. Sadly, the church has lost some of its moral authority because it has abused its power.

A further thing – this authority might have amazed the crowds, and it was certainly hated and mistrusted by those whose authority was supposedly being undermined – but it was *first of all* recognised and named by demons. They recognised the power they were up against even if others were unsure. Jesus spoke with compelling authority and with power – not granted to him by the crowds or by religious institutions – but by God. His authority was recognised as unique.

Jesus attracted huge crowds because of his authoritative healings. He had the capacity to speak words of healing into lives that were falling apart, consumed by powers ranging from vocal demons, fever, or whatever diseases people happened to suffer from. Jesus evidently had the ability to deliver people from the destructive forces that enslaved them.

Mark paints a picture of Jesus joining in a struggle against dark forces that threatened to sweep people under their malign influence. Through the Cross, Jesus has defeated these dark principalities and powers, and has given us authority in his name. Mark is saying that Jesus came to be the life-raft, offering people the passage to safety. Jesus is the one who offers the passage from death to life. Only Jesus has saving authority.

To reflect: Who do you think Jesus is? To what or to whom do you give authority? Is there anything that enslaves you? Do you recognise *Jesus as Lord* with his accompanying authority over your life?