

Australian Evangelical Lutheran Church
BETHLEHEM TOOWOOMBA, OUR SAVIOUR LOWOOD, ST JOHN'S AUBIGNY,
ST PAUL'S GREENWOOD, TRINITY MARBURG, TRINITY OAKEY
28 January Fourth Sunday after Epiphany

HYMNS: 47 239 409 789 286 822

INTROIT: Psalm 111

Praise the LORD! I shall give thanks to the LORD with all my heart, in the company of the upright and in the congregation.

The works of the LORD are great; they are studied by all who delight in them. His work is glorious and majestic; and His righteousness endures for ever. He has caused His wonders to be remembered; the LORD is gracious and compassionate.

He has given food to those who fear Him; He will remember His covenant for ever.

He has declared the power of His works to His people, by giving to them the inheritance of the nations.

The works of His hands are faithful and just; all His precepts are trustworthy.

They are steadfast for ever and ever; they are done in truth and uprightness.

He has sent redemption to His people; He has ordained His covenant for ever: holy and awesome is His name.

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all who observe His precepts have good understanding. His praise endures for ever.

COLLECT: Almighty God, You know we live in the midst of so many dangers that in our frailty we cannot stand upright. Grant strength and protection to support us in all dangers and carry us through all temptations; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

READINGS:

Deuteronomy 18:15-20 The LORD promises a prophet like Moses.

1 Corinthians 8:1-13 Freedom and the conscience of your brother.

Mark 1:21-28 Jesus teaches with authority.

Welcome to all worshipping with us!

Pastor Ziebell can be contacted via phone/text at 0407 583922.

Email him at paziebell@gmail.com or to the church office at ddaelc@gmail.com.

Please notify pastor of anyone who is unwell or in need of a visit.

Pastor is usually in his office Tuesday-Wednesday for anyone who would like to call in. Other days of the week are set aside for visits.

Deuteronomy 18:15-20

¹⁵ **“The LORD, your God, will raise up for you a Prophet like me from among you, from your fellow-Israelites. You shall listen to Him!”** ¹⁶ This is exactly what you asked from the LORD, your God, at Horeb, on the day of the assembly, when you said, ‘Let me not hear the voice of the LORD, my God, any longer or see this great fire any longer, that I may not die!’

¹⁷ **“The LORD told me, ‘What they have said is good. ¹⁸ I shall raise up for them a Prophet like you, from among their fellow-Israelites. I shall put My Words in His mouth and He will tell them everything that I command Him.**

¹⁹ I Myself shall call to account any person **who does not listen to My Words, which He speaks** in My name. ²⁰ However, that prophet who acts insolently by speaking anything in My name that I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, shall die!’

1 Corinthians 8:1-13

¹ Now concerning the meat sacrificed to idols: We know that all of us have some knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. ² The person who thinks that he knows something does not yet know as he ought to know. ³ However, if anyone loves God, God knows him. ⁴ Therefore, about eating meat that has been sacrificed to idols: We know that an idol is nothing in the world and that there is no other God but one. ⁵ For, even if there are so-called “gods,” either in heaven or on earth (as there are many “gods” and many “lords”), ⁶ yet for us there is only one God, the Father, from whom all things come, and we exist for Him; and there is only one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things come, and we exist through Him.

⁷ However, not everyone knows this. Some are still now so accustomed to an idol that they think about the meat that they eat as something that has been sacrificed to an idol and, since their consciences are weak, they are defiled.

⁸ Food will not commend us to God. We lose nothing if we do not eat and gain nothing if we do eat. ⁹ However, beware that somehow this liberty of yours does not become the thing that causes weak people to stumble! ¹⁰ For, if anyone who is weak sees you, who have this knowledge, sitting at a meal in a temple of an idol, will not his conscience be encouraged to eat the meat that has been sacrificed to idols? ¹¹ For the weak person is being destroyed by your knowledge, your fellow-Christian, for whom Christ died. ¹² However, when you sin against your fellow-Christians in this way and wound their weak consciences, you sin against Christ. ¹³ Therefore, if food causes my fellow-Christian to stumble, I shall certainly never eat meat, that I may not cause my fellow-Christian to stumble.

Mark 1:21-28

²¹ They went to Capernaum. On the next Sabbath, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. ²² The people were amazed at His teaching. For He was teaching them as one who had authority and not as the scribes taught. ²³ Just then there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit and he cried out, ²⁴ “What do we have in common with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are, the Holy One of God!” ²⁵ Jesus spoke sharply to him: “Be quiet and come out of him!” ²⁶ The unclean spirit shook the man violently and with a loud shriek came out of him. ²⁷ The people were all so amazed that they debated with one another: “What is this? This is a new teaching, with authority! He even gives orders to the unclean spirits and they obey Him.” ²⁸ The news about Him spread quickly everywhere through the surrounding region of Galilee.

THE AMAZING AUTHORITY OF JESUS Sermon for the 4th Sunday after the Epiphany 2024 Mark 1:21-28

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is our Gospel from before, Mark 1:21-28: **They went to Capernaum. On the next Sabbath, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. ²² The people were amazed at His teaching. For He was teaching them as one who had authority and not as the scribes taught. ²³ Just then there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit and he cried out, ²⁴ “What do we have in common with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are, the Holy One of God!” ²⁵ Jesus spoke sharply to him: “Be quiet and come out of him!” ²⁶ The unclean spirit shook the man violently and with a loud shriek came out of him. ²⁷ The people were all so amazed that they debated with one another: “What is this? This is a new teaching, with authority! He even gives orders to the unclean spirits and they obey Him.” ²⁸ The news about Him spread quickly everywhere through the surrounding region of Galilee.**

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Many people today have a negative reaction to any kind of “authority.” By this, I mean in today’s culture, we tend not to like authority. Lots of forms of authority at every level of our society have been torn down. We don’t like anyone having authority or exercising it over us. And to a degree, that’s understandable. We don’t like anyone telling us what to do. “*You’re not the boss of me!*” we would say.

Today, however, I would like us to rethink this matter of “authority” since we shall be meeting someone who has a lot of authority and knows how to use it! Of course, I am thinking of Jesus, and when He exercises authority, He’s doing it for us, for our good. Today, we see Jesus exercising authority, not over us, *but for us*.

Let’s begin by explaining what the word “authority” means.

We often associate authority with the word “power,” but there’s a distinction between the two terms. Someone could exercise power without the legitimate authority to do so. For example, a robber could exercise power by holding you up with a gun, but he wouldn’t have the authority to do that. On the other hand, a police officer has the authority to use a gun, but only under certain circumstances, and, hopefully, he may not have to use that power too often. So, authority is something that is vested in someone; it is conferred upon him to act with power for a legitimate cause.

And Jesus has it. *He has divine authority to exercise power for the purpose for which He was sent*. We see Jesus exercising this power and authority, especially in the early chapters of the gospels, which describe His early Galilean ministry. We see His authority in His words and in His works. We see His authority in His preaching and teaching, in His calling of disciples, in His works of healing, in casting out demons, in His authority over nature, and in His authority to forgive sins. Today, our attention is drawn to two aspects of His authoritative ministry, namely, His teaching and the casting out of demons. In both of these areas, Jesus’ authority is amazing and astonishing, and it’s that which makes a big impression on people.

We begin with His teaching. Mark says, “**They went to Capernaum. On the next Sabbath, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach.**”²² **The people were amazed at His teaching. For He was teaching them as one who had authority and not as the scribes taught.**”

Jesus taught them as one having authority. How was that different from the scribes? The scribes would teach by quoting Rabbi so-and-so, and how he got that from Rabbi such-and-such, and if you compare that to this other Rabbi, and

so on it would go - you get the idea. The scribes and the rabbis would quote each other, with the result that their teachings would become detached from the original Word of God. Furthermore, their teaching itself got away from the Word of God in its content meaning and purpose. Take, for example, the Sabbath commandment. Their teaching of this commandment gradually drifted away from God's purpose for it and morphed into a manageable outward observance that people could do and look good. They taught a manmade rule about how many steps you could take on a Sabbath day's journey, etc.

Jesus' teaching was so much different. He spoke with authority. He didn't have to quote this rabbi or that rabbi but went straight to the source, the Word of God. He cut through and cast aside anything that obscured the original intent of the Scripture. In His teaching, Jesus would say things like, "*You have heard that it was said... but I say unto you.*" That's speaking with authority. Jesus got right to the heart of the matter. He expounded the Law of God according to God's purpose and intent. Jesus spoke and taught with authority, and it was astonishing.

Now, why is Jesus' authority in teaching important to you? Two reasons come to mind right away. One, you can trust what He says, and two, Jesus' teaching will lead you to salvation.

First, then, *you can trust what Jesus says.* He is, after all, the very Son of God come in the flesh. So if there is ever anyone who knows, beyond a shadow of a doubt, what the original intent and purpose and meaning of Scripture is, it is Jesus. You can rely on His words.

Second, *Jesus' teaching will lead you to salvation.* In His teaching on the Law, Jesus stripped away the false righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees. They thought they had kept God's Law pretty well, well enough to be counted righteous before God. "*Stop right there!*" Jesus would say. "*If you are angry with your brother, you have committed murder. If you look at another man's wife with lust in your heart, you have committed adultery. So stop thinking you have kept God's Law well enough to be counted righteous. You haven't.*"

And that applies to you and me, too. We have not kept the commandments well enough. We need to have our self-righteousness stripped away from us, too - not so we are left in despair - but so that we shall realise our need and be ready to receive the only true righteousness that works and that comes to us in the person of Christ, our Saviour.

So that is the other part of Jesus' teaching we need to hear: ***the Gospel.*** The words of comfort and forgiveness Christ speaks: "*Come to Me, all you who are working hard and carrying a heavy burden, and I shall give you rest!*" (Matthew

11:28). “*The Son of Man has not come to be served but to serve and give His life as a ransom for many*” (Matthew 20:28). That’s why Peter, speaking on behalf of Jesus’ disciples would tell Him, “*Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life*” (John 6:68).

Jesus’ teaching carries great and life-giving authority. He comes straight from the Father’s side, full of grace and truth. Jesus makes the Father known to us. He makes His Father’s will and word known to us, in its truth and purity. This is God’s beloved Son. *Listen to Him.*

We see Jesus’ astonishing authority displayed in His teaching, and now, a second area in which Jesus’ authority is seen in our text is His authority over unclean spirits, that is, over the demonic realm. Mark records, “**Just then there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit and he cried out,**

²⁴ **“What do we have in common with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are, the Holy One of God!”**

²⁵ **Jesus spoke sharply to him: “Be quiet and come out of him!”**
²⁶ **The unclean spirit shook the man violently and with a loud shriek came out of him.** ²⁷ **The people were all so amazed that they debated with one another: “What is this? This is a new teaching, with authority! He even gives orders to the unclean spirits and they obey Him.”**

Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil, and here we see Him getting a head start on it. Jesus came to restore creation, to fix what was broken, to bring healing to the afflicted, and to bestow the blessings of the kingdom of heaven, and here we see Him doing it. There is a poor man there possessed by an unclean spirit - a demon. Actually, in his crying out to Jesus, the unclean spirit speaks in the plural – “**What do we have in common with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us?**” This could be taken in two ways. Either more than one demon possessed this man, or Jesus’ attack on one demon was a declaration of war on them all. But we do not need to dwell on this. The point is that an unclean spirit has taken over the man, and now in the presence of Jesus, the spirit blurts out in fear of the One who has the superior authority, and that is Jesus. Note that the unclean spirit recognises who Jesus is, that he is “**the Holy One of God**” and indeed, Jesus is just that. But Jesus doesn’t want demons to be witnessing for Him. So He tells the demon to “**Be quiet and come out of him!**” Which is what happens, of course. Jesus’ authority extends over the devil and the unclean spirits and over all the powers of hell.

This is good news for you! How so? Well, don’t think of the power of the devil only in terms of what you may see on the television or read in books, as in,

someone possessed by an evil spirit floating above the bed, or whose head spins around and so on - they're not the only ones who are under the power of the devil. That's just the spectacular stuff, which is rarely seen. But there are a lot of normal-looking people walking around who are equally under the power of the devil, because the devil's ultimate goal *is to pull us away from faith in Christ*. So just ordinary people can be under the control of the devil - in their unbelief, in their pride and their unrepentance - and Satan doesn't have to go to much effort to keep them there.

Dear friends, Jesus came to undo all that, to undo and defeat and destroy the power of the devil. The exorcisms we see Jesus doing in the gospels are signs that that's what Jesus is about. And finally, Jesus beats the devil by laying a giant trap for him. It's like the cross is a mousetrap, and the devil takes the bait. By being lifted up on the cross and suffering and dying, Jesus will actually beat the devil at his own game. The serpent will strike Jesus in the heel, but in so doing, Jesus will stomp on the serpent's head.

You see, the devil would like to use your sins against you, to accuse you before God, saying, "*See? Look at that one there. She claims she's a Christian. But look at what she is doing! Sinning, gossiping, thinking hateful thoughts. How can you let that one into heaven?*" That's what the devil would say about you. And he would be right, as far as your righteousness under the Law would go. You would be guilty and thus shut out of the kingdom of heaven and be sent straight to hell. But Jesus, your Saviour, has defeated the devil for you. The blood that He shed on the cross for you - that covers all your sins. You are clean now. The devil has nothing on you, nothing to accuse you with. Your sins are forgiven, for Christ's sake.

This is the authority of Jesus working for you today. This is the reason you can come to the Lord's house and hear those words that the pastor speaks, "*on behalf of my Lord Jesus Christ, I forgive you all your sins, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*" The authority of Jesus stands behind those words. He has authorised His pastors to do this for you. Or again, often you hear Jesus saying to you, "*This is My body, this is My blood, given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.*"

Dear friends, you can bet your life on those words! Yes, you can rejoice in the fact that the amazing, life-giving authority of Jesus is working for you! Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

PRAYER FOR THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

Almighty God, Your ears are always open to the prayers of Your people, and You promise Your saving help in every time of need. Therefore we lift up our hearts to You.

We thank and praise You that You have enabled us to understand Your Word, and for the blessings of faith, love, and trust in You. Most of all, we thank and praise You for the coming of Your Son, and for His deliverance from our sin, from the condemnation of the Law, from our death, from the devil, and from hell. We give You humble thanks for all Your other gifts. You have bestowed Your Spirit on us through Jesus, Your holy Anointed One. Through Your Spirit give us a deeper knowledge of Your will, and a deeper faith in Your salvation. Continue to renew us by the Spirit also. Give us deeper love for all people. Keep us conscious of Your desire that we should spread the Good News about Jesus. Give us opportunities to tell the good news of the Gospel, and the courage to tell it; and strengthen us by the presence of Jesus, who has promised to be with us always in this task. Make us more aware of people's needs, that, in meeting them, they may see that we are credible witnesses of Him; and bless what we say.

We pray also for all our families. Bless each home with Your presence and the Spirit of Christ, that children may grow in favour with God and man, and that parents, by love and proper example, may maintain their homes in godliness. Grant that both children and parents may be eager to worship You, and may delight in serving Your Son in their daily lives.

Provide and maintain good government for us and for all people; give all in our nation high moral values and responsible citizenship.

Comfort and bless all among us who are afflicted in any way, that they may find release from their burdens and trials, and learn to know Your gracious will, and how to submit to it.

May we all, in the unity of the faith, and in the knowledge of Your Son, continually praise Your name and fulfil Your saving purposes in the world. We ask all these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

Article: Our Faith is Weak, but Jesus is Strong!

The Gospels are tantalising. We want to know so much more, so many human-interest details, but we must be content with what we have. In His Word, God has given us all the information we need. If the Bible answered all our questions, we

would not be able to carry it around, not even in a big truck (John 21:25). In heaven, there will be no end of time to talk to the saints.

One intriguing character in the Bible is the man from Capernaum. You can read about him in John 4:46-54. He travelled several hours to Cana to ask Jesus to come to Capernaum to heal his son. Jesus healed the boy without leaving Cana, and the man returned home to find his son well.

The original text calls this healing a sign (v. 54). It was a clear indication that Jesus is true God. Who but the Creator could heal with a word spoken at a distance? Who but God has that unlimited power and that unlimited presence?

The main meaning of the sign is the identity of Jesus as true God. That is the primary point of all the miracles. But there is often a poignant, personal point, too. In this case, the faith that Jesus gave this man is interesting and instructive.

It is not surprising that the man believed after he saw that his son was well (v. 53). Jesus complained about people needing signs to believe (v. 48). But this man also believed before he saw. He believed the Word of Jesus (v. 50). Jesus gave him that faith through that Word.

Knowing who Jesus is, there is no reason not to believe. Jesus said, "Go! Your son lives," and the son lived. That was the same as when God said, "Let there be light," and there was light (Genesis 1:3). Jesus is God Almighty.

But the man did not see right away. He had faith without sight, before sight. We have not seen yet at all. But we have believed - by God's power through His Word (John 20:29). We walk through life as that man travelled the road to Capernaum - by faith, not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7).

The man had to wait. He could not phone home. He could not race there in a car. What did he think every step on the road to Capernaum? What do we think every step of the way through this world and this life? It was late enough and far enough that the man did not get home until the next day. Did he spend an anxious evening, a sleepless night? He was concerned. He was eager to see his son. He need not have worried. But he was weak. His faith was not perfect. He still struggled with doubt.

We still struggle with the sins of doubt and worry. Our faith is weak. But Jesus is not weak. His Word and His promises are certain. Because He has died for our sins in our place, we have God's grace, the forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and salvation. It is enough for us that God is pleased with us for Jesus' sake. That is all we need (2 Corinthians 12:9).

How happy that man was when he got back to Capernaum! How happy we shall be when we get to heaven! Looking back on the road, we shall know that we need not have been anxious at all about anything. Since we know now what we will see then, let us not worry. Let us trust - because of Jesus' death, because of Jesus' life, because of Jesus' power, because of Jesus' promises, because of Jesus!

Children's Message:

Have you ever been tempted to do something you know is not pleasing to God? The devil urges us into these temptations, just like he tempted Eve to sin against God. He told her that God's Word wasn't really true and that he had a better idea than God did. Actually, the devil has been up to that kind of tempting ever since, and he sometimes uses people to be his voices to tempt us, to lie for him.

In our First Reading from Deuteronomy today (18:15-20), God said He would send Someone who would always speak His Word faithfully, so we could always believe everything

He said. And He wouldn't tempt us to sin, but instead, He'd tell us how we're forgiven for our sin. Who do you suppose that would be? Of course, it's Jesus! Jesus is the Prophet who always speaks God's Word truly. And He's more than a prophet because He makes what God says happen. Jesus is the One who makes God's forgiveness of sins happen for us, and you know how He did that too! By dying on the cross for us. That's the wonderful thing He has done - and tells us about - for all those times the devil tempts us into sin.

The devil tempts us to listen to any word but the Word of God - especially when it comes to the gifts God gives us, faith, the Sacraments, and Scripture. The devil hates the Word of God because our salvation rests in trusting what God says to us in His Word is true.

Because our first parents Adam and Eve knew they had done evil and were ashamed of their naked flesh, they made their sin worse by deciding to cover their bodies - which God declared to 'be good' when He created them. Because our first parents ate from the forbidden tree, disbelieving God and acting as ones above God, each person is conceived with the corruption of sin. Therefore, we are unable to decide to have faith in Christ or to save ourselves by any work we do. That doesn't sound good, does it?

But you know what? God spoke our names when we were baptised, and the words He spoke brought us faith in Jesus. We believe and trust in Him because we recognise His voice, and His words bring us everlasting life. So the devil has no power over us. We belong to Jesus, because He has defeated the devil and promised, "*He who has come to faith and been baptised will be saved*" (Mark 16:16). *Thank You, Jesus, for speaking Your Word to us. By it, we know that we are Your children, and the devil has been defeated. Amen.*



Trip to America

Pastor is still planning a trip to the USA later this year, working between the dates of August 7 and 18. It is still early days yet in the organising, but the following is a rough time frame, to give you some idea. We can begin to work out a schedule as soon as we have numbers.

We hope to leave Australia on Wednesday, the 7th of August, arriving in the USA on the same date. We shall visit the Ark Encounter and the Creation Museum over two days and then travel to Decatur, where we can worship with our brothers and sisters of the ULMA on Sunday, 11 August. The following week is still unplanned, but we can set aside a few days for sightseeing, etc. Pastor will talk with the ULMA people about ideas.

Return flights are hovering around \$1900.00, and plan around \$150.00 a night for accommodation. Tickets into the Ark and Creation Museum are around \$135.00 for dual entry into both attractions and can be purchased here before we go. I suggest you work on a budget of around \$5000.00 as the minimum for the trip. However, this does not include food, souvenirs, transport, etc. There is the possibility that some ULMA members may put us up while in Decatur, or drive us around, saving a little more money.

So, anyone interested in coming along, **please let pastor know by the end of February.**

WEEKLY ANNOUNCEMENTS

4 February 5 Epiphany	11 February The Transfiguration	Ash Wednesday
8.30am OAK LR 9.00am TMBA HC 9.00am GRN LR 10.45am AUB HC 9.00am LOWOOD LR	8.30am OAK LR 9.00am TMBA LR 9.00am GRN LR 9.30am AUB LR 9.00am MARBURG HC	Wednesday, 14 Feb. Oakey Vespers, 7.30pm. Thursday, 15 Feb. Marburg HC. 7.00pm.
Sunday, 4 February		
READINGS: Isaiah 40:21-31; 1 Corinthians 9:16-27; Mark 1:29-39		
HYMNS: 308 16 796 (839 292) 241		
Sunday, 11 February		
READINGS: Exodus 34:29-35; 2 Corinthians 3:12-18; 4:1-6; Mark 9:2-9		
HYMNS: 747 37 358 (84 291) 152		

Wednesday, 7 February, 10.00am. Women's Guild at Bethlehem Toowoomba. Opening devotion: Narelle. Choose a Bible verse from Numbers, chapters 13-16. Item of Interest: A hair clip or scrunchie.

Sunday, 18 February, **1.00pm**. Seminary Committee meeting at Bethlehem Toowoomba.

Congregation AGM dates:

St Paul's Greenwood: today after service.

St John's Aubigny: tonight, 7.30pm.

Trinity Oakey: Tuesday, 30 January, 7.30pm.

Trinity Marburg: Sunday, 11 February, after service.

Bethlehem Toowoomba: Sunday, February 18, 2.00pm.

Our Saviour Lowood: Sunday, March 3, after service.