

Next Sunday is the day; the day when all questions will finally be answered. Everything will be decided on that day. It's a huge day: Super Bowl Sunday. Even if you're not a fan of football it's hard not to get caught up in the excitement with the Super Bowl being played right here in Minnesota at U.S. Bank stadium in Minneapolis. And although many of us, myself included, are brokenhearted that our Vikings won't be in the big game this year, nevertheless we know that this is the game where it's all officially decided with authority. "Who's the best team in the National Football League for this year?" Everyone that's a football fan has an opinion. Sportscasters and opinion makers have their take on the matter, and everyone can all take all their questions and opinions to the Super Bowl, because that's where everything is settled and decided with **authority**.

Wouldn't it be great if there was a place where all of the really **important** questions of life could be answered – a place where everything important is decided once and for all? We live in a world filled with questions. What really happens after a person dies? What is the purpose of life? Why am I here? What really is right and what truly is wrong? And when I sin and I feel guilty, how do I get rid of that feeling? Where do I go with my guilt? If there is a heaven, how do I get there? What does God want from me in my life? There are many questions, important ones. And in our world there are also many, many opinions! Is there a place where everything is settled? Where all the opinions fade away, and everything is decided with **authority**?

There **is** a place, and you know that place. It's the Bible. It's the words of Jesus Christ. He, along with His Word, is the ultimate authority on all things. Today we're going to take time to explore what a blessing it is to have Jesus and His Word in our lives, as we live in a world filled with so many questions and so many opinions.

Jesus revealed His authority in our Gospel lesson for this morning. He was the guest preacher that day at the synagogue in Capernaum. As He spoke, the Bible says that the people were amazed at the way He taught. He spoke with so much authority. He was so sure of what He was saying. Back then, most of the teachers of the law wouldn't teach with authority. They would quote other rabbis to back up what they were saying. But Jesus didn't need to quote anybody. He was God come in human flesh. He was the Light of the world. He was the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and as He spoke the truth – and as you listened to Him – you knew that you were listening to someone who spoke with authority. He was unlike any teacher they had ever heard before!

Then Jesus demonstrated His authority with His **actions** that day by performing a miracle. There was a man in the crowd possessed by an evil spirit. The evil spirit interrupted Jesus' sermon. Jesus commanded the evil spirit to be quiet, and to come out of the man, and that evil spirit immediately obeyed, because Jesus' words had authority. There was no asking a second time. No negotiation: Just immediate obedience to Jesus' authority. The people in the synagogue were **amazed** at what they were seeing and hearing. The words of

Jesus were so **powerful!** And His miracle was so impressive. There was no question that day as to Who was in charge at that synagogue – the Lion of Judah was standing among the flock of Israel exuding authority. The prophet long ago foretold through Moses in today’s Old Testament reading and in so many other places in God’s Holy Word was right there among them.

“But that was then, and this is now,” some may say with no small amount of skepticism, “welcome to the 21st century!” Today in our culture, there is a question about who the ultimate authority is. Who has the answers to all the important questions of life? Where do you go when you have difficult issues and problems and stress and worry, and you need answers? Is it Jesus? Is it His Word, the Bible?

In our culture, the answer is no. “I don’t think you can trust the Bible,” people say. “I don’t think you can trust Jesus Christ as the answer to all of your questions and doubts and worries.” Trust yourself, some people say. Trust your friends. Trust what scientists say. Trust people who have degrees and write books. Trust people who are rich and famous who have done important things with their lives. But don’t trust Jesus.” That’s the message of our culture. And that distrust, that doubt, can sometimes creep into our way of thinking. “Can I really trust the words of Jesus?” we sometimes wonder. Sometimes the Bible becomes the last place we look when we have questions or need comfort or strength. It’s the last resort. The book gathers dust on our shelves, all because we doubt the power of the Word of God.

Have you ever had doubts? Have you ever wondered if you can really trust the words of Jesus that are recorded in this book? What do you do when you feel that way? Where is the best place to go? The best place to go is right back to the words and actions of Jesus Christ. When you feel yourself doubting, go to the Bible – ‘the Word of God, which is living and active, sharper than any double edged sword’ (Hebrews 4: 12). Let the Word wash your doubt away. Look at what He says and does here. His Word truly is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path!

And then go to the cross, and watch Him die for the sins of the world, including yours and mine. He even dies for all the times we doubted His Word. And then go to the empty tomb, and watch Jesus display His authority over the devil and over death, and over sin, by rising from the dead. Here Jesus shows His power over the devil by casting out an evil spirit. On Easter, Jesus showed His power over death and the devil by rising from the dead, crushing the devil’s head.

If you want proof that Jesus is someone you can trust, and that you can take Him at His word, then study His words, study His miracles, especially that miracle He performed on Easter. There He proves that He is everything He ever said He is.

Go to your Baptism. Remember how you are baptized into Christ, into His powerful resurrection from death. Remember how Baptism, “works forgiveness of sins, rescues from death, and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this as the words and promises of God declare.” (Small Catechism, Baptism, 2). (He did that for

you in your Baptism just as He did for little Garrett this morning.)

And just think about what happens at Lord's Supper. Jesus' Words that are spoken here have authority. The same word that cast the demon out of that man in the synagogue, that same word today casts your sins far away from you. "These words, 'Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins,' show us that in the Sacrament forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation are given us through these words." (SC, Sacrament of the Altar, 2) Taste and see that the Lord is good!

What a blessing He gives to us; to have the authoritative Word of God as a part of our lives in so many ways! May God bless you as you continue to grow in His Word, treasure it, and share it with others. Amen.