

# GO TO CHURCH WITH JESUS

Pastor Colin Rieke ~ January 31, 2016

<sup>21</sup> They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. <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. <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. <sup>27</sup> The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, “What is this? A new teaching—and with authority! He even gives orders to impure spirits and they obey him.” <sup>28</sup> News about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee. (Mark 1:21-28)

This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it,

I’m sure you’ve heard the question. If you could pick any person, in all of history, to have dinner with, who would it be? Before you rack your brains trying to think who that would be, I want to pose to you another question: If you could pick any person, in all of history, to go to church with, who would it be? Some might pick a great musician like Handel or Bach. Others might pick a great theologian like Luther or St Augustine. Others, thinking more practically, might pick their neighbor or family member. Still others might pick a character from the Bible like King David or the Apostle Paul (the greatest missionary in the 1<sup>st</sup> century). But for a moment, I’d like you to think about what it would be like to GO TO CHURCH WITH JESUS.

It seems so obvious doesn’t it? Who wouldn’t want to GO TO CHURCH WITH JESUS? He wouldn’t be distracting, he could save your seat, and he could answer your questions. This was the great privilege that the worshipers at the synagogue in a town called Capernaum experienced. They got TO GO TO CHURCH WITH JESUS. He spoke like no one they had ever heard before, his words carried authority, and the people were amazed.

Sometimes, we might forget that we too get to GO TO CHURCH WITH JESUS. In fact, he’s sitting right next to each one of you, you heard him speak to you in the readings, and he is speaking to you right now through this sermon. That in and of itself is quite amazing. It might give us a new appreciation for stepping through those doors, it might remind us why we’re here in the first place, and who is here to be served. Because when we get to GO TO CHURCH WITH JESUS. We will

1. Be amazed and
2. Be amazing

It didn't take Jesus long to get busy after he began his ministry. He was baptized at the Jordan River by John. He was led into the wilderness by himself to be tempted by the devil. He gathered several disciples to follow him and learn from him. And now, he was gaining quite a reputation as a traveling teacher. Once he called Peter, James and John to be his disciples, he ventured northward to the town of Capernaum, on the northern shores of the Sea of Galilee, about 30 miles from where he grew up in Nazareth.

What did Jesus do? On the Sabbath, the Jewish day of worship, Jesus went to church. At that time it was called a synagogue. Of all people, Jesus would have been the only one who could honestly say, he didn't need to go to church, he knew it all. But he went anyway, first of all to fulfill the law of God - the third of the Ten Commandments is "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy." Jesus went to honor God. He also went to be encouraged and encourage others through that Word of God. At the appropriate time, Jesus was allowed to stand up and teach on a passage of the Jewish Scriptures. At this time they had the entire Old Testament.

Now we don't know what exactly Jesus taught on this occasion in the synagogue, but we do know the reaction to it. **"The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority."** This was different than what they were used to hearing. They were used to hearing the teachers of the Law, the Rabbi's, the priests speaking about all the different ways they could keep God's Law. Jesus transcended above that and told them what God's Word said, what God's Word is all about and why God's Word was there.

Think about what that would be like, if all you heard about in church was this is what you need to do to please God. You need to come to church every Sunday if you want to be a good Christian. You need to give at least a tenth of what you earn if you want to be a good Christian. You need to make sure your kids obey and respect you if you want to be a good Christian. You need to tell at least three other people that they need to come to church. You need to not smoke, not drink, and not stay out past 11pm. How long would you continue to go to a church like that? But that's all the Jews had. You can see what a breath of fresh air it was when Jesus got up and he didn't hammer them over the head with stuff that they needed to do. But rather Jesus, the Word of God in the flesh, spoke to them God's Word and why he sent it. And the people were amazed.

At that moment, a man possessed by an impure spirit stood up and made a ruckus, **"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!"** This is one of a number of places in the Bible that speaks about demon possession. When we take the Bible at its word, we believe the seriousness of the issue. The demon even spoke back to Jesus. He knew exactly who Jesus was, and he was terrified.

Jesus could not have this, he did not want a demon saying who he was. So he said, **"Be quiet! Come out of him!"** The command Jesus gave had enough power behind it to cause the demon to come out of the man. The people were even more amazed, astounded even from what happened when they WENT TO CHURCH WITH JESUS. It was a three-fold amazement: Amazed at

the new teaching, amazed at the authority behind the teaching, and amazed at the power of his words to expel a demon.

This new teaching was nothing more than God's original teaching, it was not the traditions of men, but the very words of God. Since they were the words of God, the words themselves were authoritative. And what might be most amazing to many is that Jesus displayed his power over the forces of evil. Be amazed at GOING TO CHURCH WITH JESUS.

Whether we remember it or not, whether we like it or not, we do GO TO CHURCH WITH JESUS. Whether we remember it or not, whether we like it or not, the same authority of Jesus is with us today. The same Jesus who exercised his authority over evil spirits, can and does exercise his authority over each and every one of us. Sometimes we forget that, don't we? Sometimes we think we are the one in control of our own lives. Sometimes we think we are the ones who have the choice to make our own decisions. Sometimes we forget the authority of our God, and we are not amazed. All because he hasn't exercised it over us like he did the demon.

But just because God hasn't struck you with lightning every time you sinned, don't you dare begin to think God doesn't care. Don't you dare begin to think that God isn't serious about sin. Don't you dare begin to think that you are the one in control. Because just as surely as he said "Be quiet!" to the demon, he can say, "Be quiet!" to you. In fact he said that very thing in the Psalms. "Be still, and know that I am God!" He is the one who spoke to Job in the Old Testament, "Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me."

When we are still there's nothing to hide our selfish thoughts, our impure motivations, our infatuation with ourselves. When we are still there's nothing which contradicts God's law which says "the soul that sins is the one who will die." When we are still we might just realize that we have no right to question a righteous and holy God, but it is instead a righteous and holy God that has every reason to question us. This alone should be enough for us to be amazed - amazed and fearful.

But as we were sitting in God's righteous interrogation chair, it was Christ, who took our place in that chair. The one who said, "Be quiet!" to the demon, was silently led like a lamb to the slaughter. The one who was pure was condemned for all of our impurities. This is what the Word of God has said has happened. All we need to do is to be amazed and believe it happened.

(2)

So how did the people respond to this miracle they witnessed when they got to GO TO CHURCH WITH JESUS? The writer Mark records for us, "News about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee." People were excited by the amazing thing they had seen and couldn't help but spread that amazing news. We've just heard some amazing news as well. No, it wasn't an impure spirit expelled from a person, but it was hearing how our impurities were expelled before the sight of God.

This is what it means to GO TO CHURCH WITH JESUS. To hear time and time again of God's plan. To hear time and time again that Jesus, the Holy One of God, took our place. To hear time and time again and be amazed. But that's not all. When we GO TO CHURCH WITH JESUS, we are invited to be amazing. We're not amazing because we've decided to spend this hour in worship instead of watching the Pro Bowl pregame. We're not amazing because somehow we've learned how to be better people. We are amazing, because God has made us that way and because of the message we carry, a message with authority, an amazing message.

There are so many out there that have doubts. There are so many out there that have questions. There are so many out there who don't know where to turn. We are amazing in that we have the authoritative word of God behind us. We are amazing because we have certainty in what we believe. We are amazing because we know that God's truth will prevail against man's error and tradition. And if some choose to reject this amazingness? It is not our fault. The Bible says, **"What if some did not have faith? Will their lack of faith nullify God's faithfulness? Not at all! Let God be true, and every man a liar."**

Even if everyone rejected the truth of God in the Bible, it would not make the Bible any less true, it would not make God any less loving, and it would not make God any less holy. The truth of the matter is, the world needs God, whether they realize it or not. This is why we GO TO CHURCH WITH JESUS, because we need him. His authority over the world may not be recognized by all yet, but one day it will be. And on that day we will be glad to hear, **"Come, you who are blessed by my Father, take the inheritance prepared for you since the creation of the world."** Amen.