Luke 4vv31-44 ‘**Astonishing authority’**

**Getting started**

1. Can you think of any big claims you’ve heard, maybe from the lips of politicians, or colleagues, or maybe from family members. How confident were you that these claims would be delivered?
2. What was the claim that Jesus made at the start of his ministry? (Luke 4v18-19). This made his original hearers angry (v28), others might have been sceptical he would be able to ‘pull this off’!

*Luke records the events in 4vv31-44 to give us confidence (1v4) that he will be able to deliver on his claims, that he is who he claimed to be- the Spirit anointed Messiah*

*Read 4v31-44*

**Into the text**

1. What general impression of Jesus does this action packed 24 hour period of ministry convey? How does that differ from the way that Jesus is generally seen in the UK at the moment?
2. What does Luke want us to realise from vv33- 37 about Jesus? Is this a new truth or a familiar one to you? How does 1 John 3v8 help us to understand Jesus’ purpose in life, and his ability to do so? Where do we see Jesus ultimate power over the devil and his dark forces? (Colossians 2v15)?
3. What other area does Jesus show his authority over in 2v38-40? Why is this important for us to know?

*(See 4v40-41 for Jesus’ complete dominion over both these areas*)

1. What does Jesus’ answer in 4v42-44 show us about Jesus’ priorities during his earthly ministry? Why do you think he was so clear about this to the folk in Capernaum, and to us?

**Time out!**

1. Does this exciting day in the life of Jesus mean that today Jesus is always going to oust evil and heal people of their sicknesses?

(Maybe the taster pots of paint illustration might be helpful to think through?)

1. What can we confidently look forward to? (Revelation 21vv1-4)

**Applying this personally**

1. How can this picture of Jesus as *‘the Champion who confronts and trumps all our worst enemies’* help you in the challenges you face at the moment?
2. How can you store this truth away deep in your heart so that you can draw on it in times of particular pressure?
3. Jesus had a great sense of being ‘sent’ by the Father for a particular purpose (4v42-44). How does this apply to you in the priorities you should have in life?

# Luke 4vv31-44

1) **All age slot**

I’d like you to think back to a day in your life and tell me what you DID on that day

Don’t worry- you won’t have to think back too far 😊

Here’s the date:- ‘Saturday 25 February’

That’s only yesterday.

Can you remember what you got up to yesterday ❓

Have a moment with those around you the most enjoyable thing you DID yesterday, and then I’ll gather some answers….. [*Gather answers*] Thanks for your answers….

I wonder whether you’ve ever thought about this…

Speech bubble: ‘What you did’ yesterday tells us a lot (arrow) about ‘Who you are’

* So if you did some exercise yesterday (Images of a child in football kit) – you’re likely to love **sport**!
* If you spent time playing (Image of a group of kids playing) then **friends** are v important to you
* If you met up with grandparents or grandchildren (Image of a family meeting up) then **family** is big for you
* If you spent your whole day on the sofa watching tv (image of kids watching television) then it may show that you’ve just had a busy week!

What we DO speaks volumes about WHO we are

Now today we are going to look at what Jesus (Image of adult Jesus) did one Saturday in a place called Capernaum.

It was pretty action-packed.

He started by teaching people about God and his kingdom. And when Jesus taught, nobody was snoring in the back row 😊 They were fascinated, amazed, astonished at what he said..

There that day was a man whose life had been overpowered by an evil spirit (image of such a man) and with just a word , Jesus managed to rid the man of this horrible spirit, and he was ok again

Then he went for a spot of lunch, and found there was a lady with a fever (Image of a lady looking ill). In those days, there was no calpol, no ibuprofen, a fever could be a killer, and yet Jesus simply told that fever off, like a teacher might a naughty child, and the fever was gone, and the woman was right as rain.

Later on that day, Jesus healed more and more people, and rid lots of people of nasty spirits

And we need to know about what Jesus DID because this shows us WHO he was – God’s ‘Holy One’, the special King God had promised to his people, one who was going to unlock the KOG for all

~ This week, a very powerful man Joe Biden, the president of the USA (image of Joe Biden) gave a speech in Poland. He told Russia off for invading Ukraine a year ago, and told them that their wicked actions will not be successful. Will his words make any difference? Probably not, sadly!

2000 years ago, Jesus (image of Jesus) spoke, and his words brought release from the powers of evil, and freedom from disease.

And Jesus words are still incredibly powerful today, as Jesus releases us from the tight grip of powers that are too strong for us, and gives us a sure hope for the future.

Let’s listen carefully to Jesus today- for he alone has the words that bring us eternal life

[Prayer]

2**) Sermon**

Have you ever noticed that there can be a massive GAP between what we CLAIM we can do, and what we can actually DELIVER?

Last week, I heard about a person who was interviewed for a job (Image of a person being interviewed). The person had impressive qualifications, a good cv and references, and came over well at interview. ‘I can do it’ she confidently claimed…

One month after she started her new job, her boss was in despair (Image of person looking disappointed) ‘O no you can’t ‘he realised, There was a mismatch between what was claimed and what was now being delivered.

Well last week, we saw what Jesus **CLAIMED** to be able to do.

He had just started his public ministry and he went to his home town, Nazareth, and CLAIMED to be the long awaited Messiah, the special King that God had promised to his people centuries earlier on.

*‘I am the one who will preach good news to the poor, proclaiming freedom for the prisoners, sight for the blind…*

Jesus (Image of Jesus) CLAIMED ‘I have come to set the oppressed free’

It’s a **massive** claim, but what are we to make of it? Is it one that Jesus can deliver on, one that we can trust ourselves?

Well, Luke wrote our passage to give us **confidence** in Jesus. He writes so that we can be sure that Jesus’ claims are not mere puff, but solid and true, one upon which we can base our lives now and our future destiny….

1) ‘Jesus is the **mighty champion** over our greatest enemies’ Luke wants us to know

Come then to our reading - Luke 4v31 (p1031) and let’s see that Jesus has power Over the forces of evil….

Jesus has been teaching in the synagogue, and when he taught everyone was on the edge of their seats, with eyes popping – they’d never heard anyone preaching with such authority before

But not everyone was pleased by Jesus’ sermon that day…..

There was in the building a man (v33) who is described as one *‘possessed by a demon, an impure spirit’*. (Image of distressed looking man)

Perhaps this language slightly surprises us, takes us back - a demon sounds like something out of Dr Who rather than something you’d find in the Bible 😊

But God wants us to be very clear that in our world there is light and dark, good and evil.

Jesus himself was tempted right at the start of his public ministry by the Prince of Evil himself, called the devil. The devil is opposed to God and his ways, and is constantly at work seeking to draw people away from God.

The devil isn’t a ‘lone ranger’! He is part of the spiritual forces of evil, including demons, such as the one who has invaded and taken up residence in the life of this poor chap in v 33. His grip over this man is so complete that the guy is described as ‘possessed’. by the demon, utterly unable to free himself from him and his malign influence. Though he correctly recognises Jesus as the ‘Holy One of God’ he rightly shudders before Jesus sensing – quite rightly- that Jesus’ work will be to destroy the works of the devil and all his allies.

How then does Jesus respond to this fellow?

Look at v35. Jesus issues two blunt commands to the demon lurking inside this man. He speaks with the firm authorative tone of a Head teacher coming upon a pupil doing something appalling, He orders both silence and expulsion . ‘Be quiet’. Come out of him’

There must have been a dramatic pause with everyone looking at the man, and at Jesus who has dared to show authority over the dark powers of evil

The demon throws the man to the ground, as a last gesture of malice, and some may have wondered if he was dead. But no – v35- the man was uninjured [mage of man looking well] – Jesus had been able to protect him from harm

The people – v36- were astonished- for Jesus had shown himself to be more powerful than even the powers of the evil one.

Earlier on Jesus had successfully resisted the devil’s temptations

Here, he shows his complete authority over the devil and his minions

Very soon, on the Cross, Jesus will win a complete triumph over the devil as he crushes his power to separate us from God on that Cross

Luke records this incident – the first of many encounters with the powers of evil to show that Jesus claim to be able to free the oppressed is a true claim. He really can break the power of evil over us, so we don’t need to be terrified by the devil and his allies, constantly wreaking havoc on earth. They are a spent force, Jesus is the mighty champion over them

The 2nd area in which Jesus shows his power is Over sickness, and we see that in vv38/39.

Jesus has gone with the disciples to the home of Simon’s relatives, and Simon’s mother in law is very poorly with a fever (Image of ill woman)

Now we don’t probably think of a fever as being that serious, but in Jesus’ day it could- and often was- a killer.

So what did Jesus do?

We’re told , v39, that ‘Jesus **rebuked** the fever’

Isn’t that interesting? It’s the same word as was used to describe what he did to the demon. Jesus saw this ill health as something alien to the perfect world God had made for us human beings to live in. Ill health is one of the consequences of us living in the world outside the Garden of Eden.

Jesus rebukes the fever and – once again – everyone’s eyes would have been fixed on this poor lady. Would she remain in a fever, or would she be cured?

Look at 39 again. The fever left her, after Jesus rebuked it, and she got up and began waiting on them [image of woman with a tray of food]

Luke records this for us in his account of Jesus life because he wants us to feel the force of it. Luke – a medical doctor – would have known how sickness can blight people’s lives, can drag them down and make them feel miserable and frightened, fearing that sickness might well lead to our death

‘Jesus Is Lord over sickness, just as he showed himself to be Lord over evil’ Luke is wanting to reassure us

And – as if to underline his point many times and put stars next door to it- the day finishes with an event , v40, where all the sick are healed and many demons are expelled from people’s lives

It must have been quite a event as a large crowd of people bring people they love, and whose lives are currently spoilt by the forces of evil and sickness. It would have been a rare event with all the NHS staff in the hospitals having a night off as the oppressed are freed.

I think it’s important to answer a question that might well be lurking in your minds, as you think of this extraordinary power of Jesus to free people from evil and heal them from their sickness, and it’s simply this: Is this what we should expect to be happening today? Can we promise to a sick person that they will be wonderfully and fully healed if only they turn to Jesus?

Well, we’d have to say that Jesus remains supremely powerful and gracious, and he can do exactly as he wills. Often today, through the agency of our wonderful doctors and nurses, God brings healing in response to the prayers of his people

Sometimes those healings are beyond what is medically expected, so I well remember a teenager in Sevenoaks with a tumour, and the doctors were very gloomy in what might be possible for him. It’s wonderful still to have Jonathan as a facebook buddy now in in his 40s and married. What an amazing God we have!

But I’d also like to share an image which I have found really useful over the years.

These miracles of Jesus are a bit like taster pots of paint 😊

I’m sure you’ve come across these little pots of paint you can buy [image of taster pots of paint]

You dab a few brushes of paint on the wall to give you an impression of what the wall will look like if you cover the whole wall with it [image of wall fully painted}

Well, the miracles of Jesus are like these little pots in that they show us what God’s kingdom will one day be like. It will be a place where there is no evil – for the devil will be finally destroyed; and there will be no sickness at all.

Listen to how the final book of the Bible, Revelation, pictures that glorious kingdom. It says that there will be ‘No more death or mourning or crying or pain for the old order of things has passed away.’

So when we get ill, or someone we love gets ill, or when we feel oppressed by the powers of evil, of course we pray, and God will often – because he’s a kind and loving God- grant us the resources we need to cope, and sometimes even now answer bring us a degree of healing. But let’s remember that illustration of the taster pots- the miracles of Jesus point us forward to what is to come, which will be more glorious than whatever we enjoy here on earth..

Well, that’s the main lesson I wanted us to grasp this morning that Jesus is the mighty champion over all the enemies we face

But there’s a 2nd – much shorter – lesson I wanted us to see as we close. It’s that 2) Jesus’ kingdom advances through his word

I wonder if you saw that noticed this as the passage was read?

There in the synagogue, as Jesus preached, people were amazed (‘An amazing word….’) since his preaching had dynamism and power and authority. He didn’t drone on like a cleric I knew who used to punctuate his own sermons and prayers with loud yawns 😊 Jesus spoke with total confidence and conviction about God, since he was God’s son who’d come to earth to preach good news

As we’ve seen, Jesus’ word was powerful (A powerful word….), able to expel demons and bring healing to the sick

Jesus’ word was one that needs to be proclaimed **everywhere**… I think that’s the sense of the final incident in this jam packed 24 hour period in v42-44. Jesus had snicked out from his disciples the following morning, to a solitary place, doubtless to reflect on the previous days ministry and to pray.

People from Capernaum understandably were looking for Jesus wanting him to return to their town to do more miracles.

But Jesus resisted their pleas

V43 ‘I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom to other towns also , because that is why I was sent.’

Jesus wants to do so much more than just be a miracle worker.

He wants to speak, to explain, to proclaim to one and all how each person can now enter the KOG through his ministry

That means it wouldn’t be right just to remain in one smallish town. He needs to go everywhere and speak God’s word to everyone…

 As a close , 2 challenges for us all today

We can take and trust this Jesus as our Champion

I don’t know what challenges are atm

I went to see a Christian man in his 50s this week who has heard completely out of the blue that he has terminal cancer, and only a few months to go. How sad, of course, but how wonderful that I could encourage him – with this passage in mind- to keep trusting in Jesus as his champion, the one who will bring him safely to his heavenly home

I’m sure that for most of us, our challenges are less acute than his. But I know this congregation well enough after 23 years to know that we all have our burdens, things that weigh us down. Take Jesus afresh as your Champion, for he will never disappoint you

Or maybe there are people here who haven’t yet put their trust in Jesus. Wouldn’t today be a brilliant one for you to turn from your sins and turn to Jesus as your Champion your saviour, Lord and friend

 Or how about this as a challenge to us, as followers of Jesus

‘We are to proclaim the good news of this kingdom’

I was very struck by some words of a hero of mine on this passage

* We have Jesus as our Champion
* We have his Spirit inside us
* We face the same enemy seeking to distract us
* We have the same mighty weapon - his word- to share

Let’s proclaim the good news in word and deed, for the good of others and the glory of God

[Prayer]