

WITH AUTHORITY

(Mark 1:21-28)

Intro: Jesus taught them as one having authority.
-Mark 1:22.

What do we make of authority these days?

- Who has it?
- How did they get it?
- What do they do with it?
- What difference does it make?

I. Authority Sometimes Comes With A Uniform.

A. Police.

1. Uniform.
2. Badge.
3. Flashing lights.
4. Gun.
 - a. We might:
 - Like it.
#Or not.
 - Respect it.
#Or not.
 - b. But there is authority.

B. Pastors.

1. Different kind of uniform.
 - a. Clerical collar.
 - b. Stole.
 - Symbol of the Office of Pastor.
2. Whenever I visit:
 - a. Hospitals.
 - b. Nursing homes.
 - I almost always wear my clerical collar.
#It carries a certain amount of authority.
 - I can get in almost anywhere.
#Emergency room.
#ICU.
#Memory care unit.

- Nobody asks:
 - # "Who are you?"
 - # "What are you doing here?"
 - *I have authority.
- I can ask questions of nursing staff:
 - # "How are things going here?"
 - # "What happened?"
 - # "What happens now?"
 - *I get answers.
 - +Other people might not get.
 - *I have authority.

c. Story.

- Few years ago.
 - # Pam Nielsen was scheduled for some outpatient surgery.
 - # She asked me:
 - *To come.
 - *To have a prayer with her.
 - +Before the surgery.
- I went to the outpatient surgery center.
 - # I don't remember what time of the morning it was.
 - *It was early.
 - *It was still dark outside.
 - # Pam was already:
 - *Prepped.
 - *Back in the procedure room.
- So I unzipped my coat.
 - # To show my clerical collar.
- I went up the nurses' desk.
 - # Introduced myself.
 - # Told them I was there to see Pam Nielsen.
 - # Asked if I might have a couple of minutes with her.
 - *When it was convenient for them.
- I had to wait a few minutes.
 - # Then they ushered me back to Pam's cubicle.
 - *We shared a word of prayer.
- When I came back out into the waiting area.
 - # I visited with Pam's husband Roger.
 - # Roger said to me:
 - * "I've got to get me one of those shirts."
 - * "They won't let me back there."

d. If you've got \$40-\$50 lying around.

- You can get yourself a shirt.
- After Easter I might even make you a deal on one.
 - # But it takes more than a shirt, doesn't it?

II. What Gives Authority To The Uniform?

A. Police.

1. Law.
2. Pam Dake and I were in Calgary, Alberta, Canada one time.
 - a. We visited the Calgary Tower.
 - In downtown Calgary.
 - #Observation platform.
 - *Offering a view of:
 - +Downtown.
 - +Surrounding area.
 - b. We had parked the car on the street.
 - About a block away from the tower.
 - c. As we were strolling leisurely back to the car.
 - #After our visit.
 - #Few minutes after 2:00 P.M.
 - I noticed:
 - #There were no other cars parked on our side of the street.
 - #Police officer near our car.
 - *Ready to write a ticket.
 - #Tow truck.
 - *Ready to tow our car away.
 - I ran as fast as I could down the sidewalk.
 - #Hollering.
 - #Pleading with the officer not to write the ticket.
 - #Promising that I would move the car right away.
 - Fortunately, we received neither:
 - #Ticket.
 - #Tow.
 - But as we drove away.
 - #We looked again at the parking signs.
 - *On that side of the street.
 - #We thought we were good to park there.
 - *Until 4:00.
 - #But upon closer examination.
 - *We discovered that the signs read:
 - +No Parking after 1400.
 - =That's 2:00.
 - +It was in military time.
 - =We had misread the sign.
 - d. Police officer could very well have:
 - Written us a ticket.
 - Towed our car.
 - #Law was on his side.

B. What Or Who Gives Authority To A Pastor?

1. Church does.

a. Wider church.

- Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
 - #Certifies pastoral candidates for ordination.
- Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches.
 - #PCB.
 - *Predecessor church body.
 - #In my case.

b. You do.

- Six years ago you called me to the Office of Pastor.
 - #Ascension Evangelical Lutheran Church.
- You gave me:
 - #Responsibilities.
 - #Authority.
 - *Of the pastoral office.
- It's the longest chapter in the constitution.
 - #Almost two full pages.
- It's no small thing you ask of a pastor.
 - #Every once in awhile.
 - *I pull it out.
 - *I re-read it.
 - #To remind myself what I'm here for.
 - #Before you even think about calling a new pastor.
 - *You ought to read it
 - *You ought to be clear on what you are asking of your pastor.
- You do not hire or fire a pastor.
 - #I hear that language from some.
 - *"We hired you to do thus and so."
 - +No you didn't.
- You called me to this office.
 - #You issued a Letter of Call.
 - *Certified by the Bishop of the Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod.
 - #You don't hire and fire those:
 - *Who represent the presence of Christ among you.
 - *Who proclaim the Word of God to you.
 - *Who teach and preach in accordance with:
 - +Holy Scriptures.
 - +Lutheran Confessions.
 - #While your individual:
 - *Desires.
 - *Wishes.
 - *Opinions.
 - +Have a place within the life of a congregation.

- *Pastor has another level of obligation.
- +To:
 - =Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions.
 - =Wider church.
- +How do you honor?
 - =That call.
 - =That authority.

2. Story.

a. Last fall.

- Josh and Divya had my granddaughter Sophia dedicated.
 - #At First United Methodist Church downtown.
 - *Where they attend.
- Methodists are not so different from Lutherans.
 - #Baptismal theology.
 - #Baptismal practice.
 - *They baptize infants.
 - +As do we.
- That day there were eight children presented.
 - #Five infants.
 - *Babes in arms.
 - #Sophia.
 - *Toddler.
 - #Twin boys.
 - *I took to be about kindergarten age.
- All of the other children were baptized.
 - #Only Sophia was dedicated.
 - *We Lutherans dedicate:
 - +Buildings.
 - +Communion ware.
 - +Paraments.
 - +Banners.
 - *But we baptize people.

b. Josh and Divya had decided.

- They wanted to wait to have Sophia baptized.
 - #Until she is older.
 - *Until she can better understand what is happening.
 - *Until she can help decide for herself.
 - +She is ready to be baptized.
- That's not good Lutheran baptismal theology.
- That's not even good Methodist baptismal theology.
 - #We believe that God is the One at work in the sacraments.
 - *Claiming God's own.
 - *Forgiving sin.
 - *Promising eternal life.

- #It's not dependent on our understanding.
 - *Who of us understands?
 - +How Christ's body and blood are present.
 - =In.
 - =With.
 - =Under.
 - Bread and wine.
 - *I can proclaim it.
 - +But how do I explain it?
 - *It's a mystery.
 - +It's a matter of faith.
- c. I believe with all of my:
 - Heart.
 - Mind.
 - Strength.
 - #Sophia should have been:
 - *Baptized.
 - +Not dedicated.
 - *Baptized a long time ago.
- d. So I had my "say."
 - Believe me.
 - #I had my "say".
 - As:
 - #Parent.
 - #Grandparent.
 - #Pastor.
 - *I had my "say."
- e. After I had my "say."
 - For the sake of the relationship.
 - #I decided to:
 - *Shut up.
 - *Butt out.
 - +Because it's not:
 - =My call.
 - =My decision.
 - +It's Josh and Divya's:
 - =Call.
 - =Decision.
 - What do you think would have happened?
 - #If I hadn't accepted their:
 - *Decision.
 - *Authority.
 - #If I had kept hammering away at them.
 - *To get Sophia baptized.

-I'll tell you what I think would have happened.

#I would have neither:

*Son.

*Granddaughter.

#I would have:

*Damaged.

*Destroyed.

+Relationship.

3. There is a lesson there for us here.

a. What happens when the authority of the pastoral office?

-On matters of:

#Theology.

#Worship practice.

*Ignored.

*Defied.

*Dishonored.

-By those who:

#Have had their "say."

#Have been heard.

b. Those that have ears.

-Let them hear.

III. But That Is Not The Ultimate Authority, Is It?

A. Offices And Calls.

1. There is authority.

a. In the Office of the Pastor.

b. In a Divine Call.

-Make no mistake.

-But it is not the ultimate authority.

2. As a parent.

a. I never tried to persuade my boys to do something.

-With the argument:

#"Because I said so."

b. I always felt that was so lame.

-If that's all I had going for me.

#I didn't have much.

3. Story.

a. When the ELCA was in conversation with the Episcopal Church.

-*Called to Common Mission*.

-Leading to full communion between.

#ELCA.

#Episcopal Church.

- b. We Lutherans were asked to accept Apostolic Succession.
 - Notion that my ministry is validated.
 - #Because I had hands laid on me.
 - *By someone who had hands laid on them.
 - +By someone who had hands laid on them.
 - =By someone who had hands laid on them.
 - Going all the way back to the apostles.
 - I'm all for full communion with the Episcopalians.
 - #But Apostolic Succession is not what validates:
 - *Me.
 - *My ministry.
 - #My ministry is validated.
 - *By the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

B. Ultimate Authority.

1. Not:
 - a. Constitutions.
 - b. Offices.
 - c. Synods.
 - d. Denominations.
2. But the Holy One of God.
 - a. Who teaches with authority.
 - b. Who casts out demons with authority.
3. Jesus does business with the authority of:
 - a. Nails.
 - b. Cross.
 - c. Empty tomb.
4. If you're not getting that from me.
 - a. You have every legitimate right:
 - To beef.
 - To call the bishop's office and complain.
 - b. Because you would be deprived.
 - Of the authority of the Holy One of God.

Concl: The Holy One of God.

- Forgives.
 - #Renews.
- Redeems.
 - #Saves.
- In:
 - #Water and Word.
 - #Bread and wine.

I tell you that.

- Because I have it on very, very, very good authority.