Sermon Sunday 02 February 2025 Christs Authority St Pauls

**Astonished by Christ, Empowered to Love Like Him**

**Key Verse:** *“Whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.”* – 1 John 2:6 (ESV)

**Introduction:**

Have you ever been truly ***astonished*** by something? Perhaps it was a breathtaking view that took your breath away, or maybe it was an act of unexpected kindness that left you speechless. Moments of astonishment can capture our attention and make us see the world… very differently.

Today, we are going to look at the astonishing authority and love of Jesus Christ. Throughout His ministry, people marveled at His wisdom, power, and compassion. But sometimes…. We lose our sense of ***astonishment***. Being over-familiar with someone or something can breed complacency in us…. and instead of being amazed by Christ(!)… we begin to rely on ourselves—our own opinions, desires, and… our own ways of doing things.

I invite you to consider this: Are we still ***astonished*** by Christ? Have we submitted to His authority and love in our lives? Have we done so as a church? Or have we begun to drift toward doing what seems right in our own eyes… you know… doing whatever we want to do…

**I.** Our Gospel reading today takes us to a synagogue in Capernaum, where Jesus is teaching. Immediately, the people are struck by something different about Him. **“They were astonished at his teaching, for his word possessed authority.”**

Unlike the scribes, who relied on traditions and someone else’s interpretations of the Law, Jesus spoke with ***divine authority***. His words carried power because they were ***God’s*** words. But then something even ***more astonishing*** happens. A man appears… possessed by a demon, and he cries out. And with a single command… Jesus silences the demon and rids the poor soul of such evil.

The people are left in awe, asking, **“What is this word? For with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits, and they come out!”** (v. 36).

**2.** But Jesus’ authority wasn’t just about His words—it was revealed through ***His actions***. Jesus heals Simon Peter’s mother-in-law and then ministers to crowds of people who came to Him with their illnesses.

Did you notice how ***personal*** Jesus’ compassion is? [sp] He doesn’t treat people as numbers or problems to be solved. Our text today says, **“He laid his hands on every one of them and healed them.”** Jesus’ authority is never cold or distant—it’s always coupled with deep… genuine compassion.

**3.** Now, we might wonder: What gives Jesus this authority? You can find in John’s Gospel, 5:18-29, the answers this question. In this passage, Jesus declares His equality with God the Father. This claim astonishes—and it ***angers***(!) the Jewish leaders… because it’s a direct declaration of His divinity. Something the Jews (still today!) refuse to believe.

Jesus explains that: *He mirrors the Father’s actions* (vv. 19-20). Whatever God our Father can do… Jesus can do it as well. *He has the authority to give life* (v. 21). He was present at the Creation of the heavens and the Earth and… He even raised people from the dead. And… Jesus *has been entrusted with all judgment by His Father in Heaven* (v. 22). Again, John’s Gospel explains that: **“For the Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son…”** And… I am sure you have heard Jesus say this before from Matthew’s Gospel: **“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ...”** Oh… I am certain, without any doubt… Jesus ***WILL*** be our judge on the Day in which He returns!

Jesus, here today, makes a stunning promise: **“Whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment but has passed from death to life.”** Jesus’ authority is not just about commanding demons or healing sickness—it’s about His ***divine identity*** as the Son of God, the Judge of all, and the Giver of life.

This Word of God forces us to examine ourselves. Ask yourselves these questions: ***Have we submitted to Jesus’ authority in every area of our lives?*** Or have we… like the Jewish leaders, ***resisted His power and clung to our own ways instead?*** Proverbs 14:12 warns us, **“There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.”** [LP]

**II.** Paul’s description of love in 1 Corinthians 13, our Epistle for today… is often read at weddings, but it’s really a portrait of Jesus Himself. Every attribute of love listed here is perfectly embodied in Christ. It says that Jesus is:

* **Patient:** Jesus patiently taught the disciples, even when they struggled to understand. (And many times He had to repeat Himself!)
* **He is Kind:** He showed His kindness by healing the sick and feeding the hungry and lovingly listened and helped those seeking His assistance. No one was ever turned away…
* **Our Lord is Not Arrogant or Rude:** Though He is equal with God, He humbled Himself to serve others. And, Jesus, like His Father…
* **Keeps No Record of Wrongs:** On the cross, He forgave those who crucified Him. Imagine your lot in eternity should God remember and keep track of all your sins?

Jesus doesn’t just display this love—***He pours it out on us***! His love is selfless, sacrificial, and unconditional.

**III.** John writes in his Gospel… **“Whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.”** If we are astonished by Christ’s love, we are called to imitate it in our own lives. Much again, like the familiar ‘***WWJD***’ movement just a few years ago. Ask yourself… what would Jesus do in this or that situation or decision? That moment of thought before doing something stupid will indeed make all the difference in the world! It does us well to remember the Word of God – as well as our study of the Small Catechism and our Confirmation vows! I cannot emphasize enough how important and necessary it is to study the Word of God. I mean… my gosh. Soooo much can be explained to you as you would frequently attend a Bible Study with someone who knows what they’re talking about!

 [LP]

Now… we can ask these same questions as a church… Here at St. Paul’s Lutheran Church… are we walking as Christ walked? Or have we been walking in our own way? Philippians 2:3-4 reminds us, **“Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others *more significant* than yourselves.”** Walking as Christ walked is impossible on our own, but through ***His Holy Spirit***, we are empowered to love as He loved each of us – even as a congregation.

Since my arrival here… I’ve been privy to some circumstances where the love of Christ has merely been a whisp of a notion… not having been considered… the last thing some would ever care to think about. Yes… you have had occasions where one’s own “self” goes above and beyond any Word from the Lord! I’m trying to say that there has been so much more worry and care for this building than there has been for loving the less fortunate and sharing the love of Christ to the many who are in so much need-to-know Jesus came for them too.

Surely, much of this is something your Elders, Church Council and officers need to address… but it’s certainly worthy of being addressed in a sermon from the pulpit.

St.Paul wrote, **“For the love of Christ controls us… that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.”** Christ’s love ***compels us*** to let go of grudges, personal agendas, and anything that divides us as a church. Instead… we ought to work together focused more on conducting our worship services as our Lord deems we should; serving our neighbors and community with a mind towards missions… and sharing the love of Christ with those closest to us; and… to work towards supporting missionaries outside these four walls and other ministries around the world… support those who are telling the billions of people who’ve never heard about Jesus… that He died for them too(!)… and that salvation has been won for all mankind!

While studying for this sermon, I found that like the Prophet Jeremiah, I, as a Pastor, sometimes feel inadequate or afraid. The ministry is truly more difficult than some realize… and having now been called here to St. Paul’s it has become clearer that I am NOT simply serving as some sort of ‘pulpit supply’ type of ministry… You called me here to be your ***Minister***. And though things may occasionally get difficult, I am reassured by the Word of God to continue. God’s promise to me especially this morning is also for you: **“Do not be afraid of them** [those who would try to tear down your ministry here], **for [the Lord is] with you to deliver you”** (Jeremiah 1:8). I am constantly reminded that God’s Word will not return empty (Isaiah 55:11). This means that as you and I stay strong in obeying the Word of God in all we do together as a living, breathing and active church… a group of like-minded folks who belong to Jesus Christ… how we can do many wonderful things not just sharing the love of Christ – but helping to spread this loving Gospel message to many who have not yet heard the Name of Jesus… so that they too would live forever.

**Conclusion:** Jesus astonished the crowds with His authority and love. But He does more than amaze us—He redeems us and empowers us to ***live for Him***. As a church, let us submit to His authority, walk in His love, and reflect His glory to the world.

 If you’re not sure what that means… to be a Christian in today’s world; I can’t more highly recommend your attending more Bible studies. Come. Learn more about the love Christ has ***for you*** and the plans He has for you now… and the plans He has laid out for your future in the Kingdom of Heaven.

**Let us pray:** Lord Jesus, we are amazed by Your authority and love. Thank You for using Your power to save us and Your love to transform us. Help us to walk as You walked, to love as You loved, and to glorify You in all we do. Unite us under Your Holy Word and Your authority. In Your name, we pray. Amen.