

"It Goes Without Saying"

Text: Mark 1:21-28

Ephesians 3:20-21 Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Dear Fellow Servants of the One True God:

It goes without saying that language and communication fascinate me. In fact that's the very element of language by which our text for this morning will be introduced – the expression *"it goes without saying."* Interesting, first of all, that whenever someone uses the expression, they always say the very thing they claim doesn't need to be said. The natural question is: If it goes without saying, why say it?

Obviously it goes without saying that this is just another quirk of the English language. It's a wordier way of saying "obviously" but with a subtly different nuance. Yet examine the expression itself. Who was the first one to use the word "goes" in that context – "It goes without saying"? How did it come about that a phrase like this even came to be used at all, let alone universally understood?

The question will likely have to remain forever unanswered. This morning we will simply use the phrase to help unlock the truths of this morning's text. There we will find several truths that certainly did "go without saying," and several others that certainly did not and should not.

The text that will form the basis of our study this morning is found in the First Chapter of Mark's Gospel:

^{ESV} Mark 1:21-28 And they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath he entered the synagogue and was teaching. ²² And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes. ²³ And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, ²⁴ "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are--the Holy One of God." ²⁵ But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!" ²⁶ And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying out with a loud voice, came out of him. ²⁷ And they were all amazed, so that they questioned

among themselves, saying, "What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him." ²⁸ And at once his fame spread everywhere throughout all the surrounding region of Galilee.

So far the very words of our God. Confident that God will keep his promise not only to visit us with power whenever we study his Word, but also that he will keep his promise to grant to us, his children, those good things for which we ask, so we pray, ***"Sanctify us by your truth, O Lord. Your word is truth."*** Amen.

I assume that all of you are aware that today is the last day of the annual Men's Fashion Show in Paris. Obviously I'm not serious. I'd be surprised if anyone here knew that – or cared. We're told it's a big deal in certain circles (they refer to the event as "important") and this year it is getting more attention than usual because it features gender fluid ensembles – clothing (like skirts and blouses) that can be worn by men who never know, day to day, if they want to identify as men or women.

We've long been a frivolous society, but now the silliness has slithered into much darker places. The television-viewing public is no longer offered light-hearted shows with a basically wholesome message. "Entertainment" has become little more than satanic propaganda where sin is championed and virtue is ridiculed.

It goes without saying... that our society has absolutely lost not only all sense of what is right and what is wrong, it apparently can no longer grasp what is and is not important.

Contrast this silliness with the events described in our text for this morning. First, we read almost casually the simple statement that Jesus ***"entered the synagogue and was teaching"*** and that there he encountered a demon-possessed man.

What a difference, what a contrast with the absurdity, the frivolity, the misguided emphasis of our society. Jesus was our guide and example in so many different ways. This is just one more. Having left his eternal existence in heaven, he entered our world to carry out the single most important work in the history of mankind. Having existed in heaven and having witnessed the rebellion of Satan and his minions, and then the subsequent fall of mankind, the God-man Jesus was nothing if not sober-minded. He recognized the demon possession of a human being and the incessant struggle for the immortal souls of every human being as immeasurably more significant than, for example, any sporting

event. Certainly the possessed man in our text would have agreed. Surely for him it would *go without saying*.

Nor are we here today immune. Every single one of us needs to take a step back and from that perspective to look, long and hard, at our lives and daily struggles. For us too the need for this regular self-evaluation ought to go without saying. Tragically, it does not and therefore cannot.

To help us in this, consider again the conversation between our Savior and the demon in our text. Hear again how our text communicated this profoundly important exchange: ***And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, ²⁴ "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God." ²⁵ But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!" ²⁶ And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying out with a loud voice, came out of him.***

Come to terms with the fact that this is the unseen reality of what is taking place all around us every single moment of our lives. It was certainly not exaggeration on Peter's part when he wrote: ***Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.*** (1 Peter 5:8) Recognize the threat, the eternal peril, and stop trying to pet the "kitty." We cannot flirt with sin and expect to escape unscathed – that sin which carries the terrible power to corrode and eventually destroy the saving faith that has been given to us. We cannot pretend that the struggle for our souls against the devil and his angels is one bit less critical and dramatic than Scripture itself portrays it.

And yet we do, all the time. Christians are supposed to build up and support each other until we are all safely across the finish line. But what do we do? We wound and cripple and offend even those closest to us – and all over the stupidest, most inconsequential things.

Need a good measuring stick by which you can evaluate your own actions? Ask yourself how important, worthwhile or relevant any given action or goal in your life would be if Christ were to return at that very moment. Most would suddenly appear profoundly misguided – something akin to refusing to board one of the lifeboats on the Titanic because you're too busy complaining about or stressing over the color it was painted, or arguing about who gets to sit in the front and who gets to steer.

Seriously. How many elements of your life look utterly ridiculous against the backdrop of today's text? You and I can do something about that.

The next *"it goes without saying"* in our text would have been spoken by the people that were listening to Jesus and witnessing all that happened. Certainly for them it would *go without saying* that Jesus was different. In fact they had never heard or seen anything like Jesus of Nazareth. The first thing we hear was that ***"they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes."*** Jesus was source material. Listening to him would have been like sitting down and talking to George Washington in person, rather than reading what the historians wrote about his life and times. Jesus didn't have to cite sources. He himself was the source. He wouldn't have to scrunch up his face, rub his beard, and render a considered opinion on the meaning of a passage in the Scriptures; he was the God who inspired the very words. He was the God who dictated truth. He didn't have to guess at the age of the earth; he was there. He himself did the creating. He didn't have to guess at history; he saw it. He didn't have to wonder about how things worked here on earth; he himself had created the science – much of which still continues to mystify mankind. What an incredible privilege to hear the very Son of God speak, as he spoke with the authority that only he could command.

Be wise enough to know that you can and you have heard that very Son of God. We have his words still today on the pages of our Bibles. Recognize what you find there as the same authority that so impressed the people of Jesus' day. It's still right there, waiting to speak to any who bother to listen – the very same power, the very same authority, the very same truth.

Which brings us finally to the two things in our text that simply *cannot* "go without saying." The first is that it can never "go without saying" just who Jesus was and what exactly he had come to earth to do.

This was something that couldn't be left to man's imagination – then or now. The people who heard Jesus speak were amazed, but that amazement could and did carry them to some very strange places. They heard Jesus speak with authority, but that experience alone confused them – causing them to blurt out the question recorded in our text: ***"What is this? A new teaching with authority!"*** Throughout Jesus' ministry human beings reacted very differently to this man who was so obviously different. Some tried to make him their earthly king. Others were frightened or intimidated and wanted to keep him at arm's length. Still others wanted to turn him into their own walking infirmary or grocery store.

All of which explains why Jesus couldn't and didn't adopt the "it goes without saying" mentality. His person and work had to be clearly spelled out. Jesus' mission wasn't anything man could figure out on his own. No rational human being would suspect that God the Father had sent his own Son to live a perfect life, and then to offer that perfect life as the full and complete payment for the sins of all mankind. No human being could expect that of God – that a holy God would punish his holy, sinless Son for all that they themselves had done wrong. Jesus had to tell them, and tell them he did. **John 3:14-18: *And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. ¹⁶ ¶ "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. ¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.***

Whenever man is left to his own devices and imagination to come up with his own salvation plan, it *always* involves man doing what he must to earn his way. What could not go without saying was, therefore, the very cornerstone of the Christian faith – that every last bit of goodness and sin-payment could only be provided for us, and then given to us, as a divine gift. Man is saved not by doing but by receiving.

In our text we read, finally: ***And at once his fame spread everywhere throughout all the surrounding region of Galilee.*** This is the final message that simply cannot go without saying. As Jesus and his Apostles had to carefully spell out exactly what God's plan for our salvation was, so also now God has determined that that same message is to be shared *by you and me and the rest of the Christian Church on earth* with every single human being. No soul can be saved if he does not hear this message. The message has been so distorted and garbled that it is now everywhere and nowhere. There are therefore human souls in your individual life that may never hear a clear and unambiguous explanation of the truth except from your own mouth. The world around us doesn't get it, but you and I do. The world around us is preoccupied with the mundane and frivolous, not so you and I. The world around us can't provide this truth, but you and I can. The bottom line is that the message we have been given to share will be of absolutely no benefit to anyone else if you and I allow it to "go without saying."

May then the God who first won our souls and then gave us the good news, also now give us the love and courage to share it with our neighbor, and the wisdom to recognize every door that he opens in our lives for this great work. Resolve that when it comes to the gospel, it can never go without saying. Amen.

Scripture Readings

^{ESV} **Jonah 3:1-5, 10** Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying, ² "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it the message that I tell you." ³ So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, three days' journey in breadth. ⁴ Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's journey. And he called out, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" ⁵ And the people of Nineveh believed God. They called for a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them. ¹⁰ When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it.

^{ESV} **1 Corinthians 7:29-31** This is what I mean, brothers: the appointed time has grown very short. From now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none, ³⁰ and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no goods, ³¹ and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away.

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The Third Sunday after Epiphany – January 21, 2018

The Opening Prayer by the Pastor

The Opening Hymn – 3 (Red Hymnal)

"Lord Jesus Christ, Be Present Now"

The Order of Service – Supplement page 12ff. (Brown Hymnal)

The Scripture Lessons: (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

The Epistle Lesson: (Jonah 3:1-5, 10) God sent Jonah to prophesy to Nineveh ("that great and wicked city") concerning the destruction God would visit upon them unless they repented. Miraculously they *did* repent, and God spared them. This lesson ought to remind us of two things: First, God's will is repentance and salvation, not destruction; second, that we should never prejudge the effect of our witnessing. Speak God's Word and leave the rest to God.

Psalm 100 (Supplement page 35) (Brown Hymnal)

The New Testament Lesson: (1 Corinthians 7:29-31) Bible critics have pointed to this reading as evidence of failed prophecy, and therefore of the fallibility all of God's Word. How, they reason, could Paul be correct when he said that **"the time has grown very short"** when "the time" of Christ's return has not yet come to pass almost 2000 years later? Only that's not what Paul said. The word he used means "has been limited" or "has been shortened." Christians live prepared, knowing that the end will come – sooner rather than later.

The Confession of Faith -

The Apostolic Creed (Brown Hymnal page 15)

The Pre-Sermon Hymn – 517 (Red Hymnal)

"The Will of God Is Always Best"

The Sermon – Mark 1:21-28 (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

"It Goes Without Saying"

The Offertory – (Supplement page 16 insert)

The Post-Sermon Hymn – 393 (Stanzas 1-5) (Red Hymnal)

"From God Shall Naught Divide Me"

The Prayers

The Benediction

The Closing Hymn – 401 (Red Hymnal)

"Praise to Thee and Adoration"

Silent Prayer

Welcome! - We warmly welcome any visitors who might be with us this morning and invite you to join us every Sunday at this time. St. Paul is a congregation in fellowship with the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC) – a conservative Lutheran synod with churches and missions throughout the United States, as well as Canada, India, and Africa. We are glad you are here. Thank you for letting us share the Word of God with you. Please record your visit in our Guest Book, and come again!

Attendance – Sunday (42) Ave (43)

This Week at St. Paul:

Today	-9:00 a.m.	– Sunday School and Bible Class
	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service
	-11:00 a.m.	– Fellowship Hour
Monday	-10:00 a.m.	– Study Conference in Pierre
Wednesday	-6:00 p.m.	– Confirmation Class
	-7:00 p.m.	– Midweek Bible Study
Friday-Sunday	-4:00 p.m.	– Board of Trustees Meetings in MSP
Next Sunday	-9:00 a.m.	– Sunday School (No Bible Class)
	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service
	-11:00 a.m.	– Fellowship Hour

CLC News – Pastor Neal Radichel has accepted the call to Immanuel of Mankato, MN. The CLC Board of Trustees is scheduled to meet this weekend, beginning Friday afternoon. Winter meetings are typically held on CLC convention years. Since this is a convention year, it is not too early to think about serving as a delegate. St Paul has not been represented by two delegates at a convention for quite some time. The dates for this year's convention are June 21-24.

Sunday School Party – The Woman's Fellowship will be hosting a Sunday School party for all Sunday School children on February 10th at 11:00 AM. There will be pizza, games and a mission project. The women also plan to meet during the party to make crosses for the mission project. Please see Cindy Ollenburger if you have questions.

Study Conference – Pastor Roehl is scheduled to attend a Dakota Area Study Conference in Pierre on Monday.

Board of Trustees Meetings – Pastor Roehl is also scheduled to attend CLC Board of Trustees meetings in Minneapolis beginning this Friday afternoon and continuing through the weekend. We are planning a lay service on January 28th, and as a result there will be no Bible Class or communion next Sunday.