

Walking in the *Foot Prints* of Jesus

A Discipleship Journey



Sermon on the Mount

Week 33

Truth & Authority

Matthew 7:28 - 29

Opening Prayer:

I Praise You for this Resurrection Madness

Lord of such amazing surprises
has put a catch in my breath
and wings on my heart,
I praise you for this joy,
too great for words,
but not for tears and songs and sharing;
for this mercy
that blots out my betrayals
and bids me begin again,
to limp on,
to hop-skip-and-jump on,
to mend what is broken
in and around me,
and to forgive the breakers;
for this YES
to life and laughter
to love and lovers,
and to my unwinding self;

for this kingdom
unleashed in me and I in it forever,
and no dead ends to growing,
to choices,
to chances,
to calls to be just;
no dead ends to living,
to making peace,
to dreaming dreams,
to being glad of heart;
for this resurrection madness
which is wiser than I
and in which I see
how great you are,
how full of grace.
Alleluia!

Reflection

We are coming to the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount. As we reflect on these last two verses, two questions emerge. The first we will reflect on this week and the second, next week, as we bring our study of the Sermon to a close.

When Jesus finished these words, the crowds were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes.

Matthew 7:28 - 29

Imagine, if you will, being in the crowd listening to Jesus. Having been taught primarily in the Temple by the scribes, you would expect this teacher to attribute His knowledge to a higher authority – Jewish Tradition and, ultimately, the Law of Moses. Always pointing to a source that emphasized the absolute authority of the law, the scribes themselves never offered original thoughts, methods, or interpretations. They acted as mere transmitters of the knowledge.

But Jesus taught in a completely different way: with stories and metaphors; using different methods and tactics. He taught in the fields, by the sea, and around the dinner table instead of on the Temple grounds. He tells them *He* is the fulfillment of the law, that *He* is the ultimate interpreter of the law of God! He was confident, certain about what He taught; so certain, in fact, that He declared His teaching to be the only way to attain salvation! Jesus declares Himself (as the Son of Man) the source of truth, the ultimate authority in His teaching. By declaring, “You’ve heard it said... but I say to you,” Jesus asserts special knowledge, power, and authority. Is there any other response you could have but astonishment? Those listening to Jesus on that hill had to choose to follow Him and submit to His authority or not.

Which brings us to the question Jesus asked his disciples in Caesarea Philippi: “Who do *you* say that I am?” (Matthew 16:15) We have the benefit of two thousand years of theological reflection and the Tradition of the Church which reveals to us who Jesus is, then and now. And yet, each of us must answer that question for ourselves. Because if we have any doubt as to the authority of the Person who preached this Sermon, that doubt is obviously going to affect our view of it. If we doubt His uniqueness, His divinity, or the fact that here was God incarnate speaking, then Jesus’ teachings probably won’t have much impact on us. But if we truly believe that the Man who spoke these words was none other than the only begotten Son of God, then these teachings become crucial to our role as beloved children of God (we will reflect more deeply on this aspect next week).

Once again, we are challenged with the following question: Under whose authority will I place my life?

Closing Prayer

Speak to Jesus about what is on your heart, then rest in silence for a few moments listening for His response.