



“I Know You”
Luke 4:31-41

Idea: We dare not allow the demons of hell to respond more honestly to Jesus than us.

Intro: Benjamin Franklin lived in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. It was the capitol of the colonies and later became the capitol of the United States of America. Franklin noticed that as the city continued to grow and become increasingly busy, the infrastructure was inadequate. The streets of the city were unsafe. There were potholes and mud holes everywhere. Stones that had been laid to create the roads were sticking up and out of place, which endangered people and carriages that traveled them. As bad as the road conditions were, what was most concerning was the rise in crime within the city of Philadelphia. When the sun went down people often were accosted and robbed. So, Franklin went to the city officials and argued that it was not safe for the citizens to be on the streets, especially after dark, but they brushed him off.

Now, it is hard to believe that the city officials dismissed him so easily. After all, this was Benjamin Franklin. He was a colonial leader, one of the drafters and signers of the Declaration of Independence, a scientist, an inventor, and later served as the governor of Pennsylvania. They, however, did not act on the concerns he raised, even though he brought the issues before the officials multiple times. How could they not listen to the concerns of Benjamin Franklin? Could it be that they did not know who he was? That is doubtful, but it could be that they did not recognize his authority on the matter. Maybe they thought, “Bengy, you know a lot about electricity, eyeglasses, and diplomacy, but you do not have experience with city government. You need to leave city government stuff to the local experts.”

In a real way, the city leaders in Philadelphia did not know Benjamin Franklin. They failed to recognize what a blessing and asset he was to the city. As we have seen in the first four chapters of Luke’s Gospel, there were many people who also did not know Jesus. They failed to recognize Him for who He was. There were some, though, who knew who Jesus was. For example, Mary knew Jesus. The angels and shepherds knew Jesus. Simeon and Anna had been anticipating Jesus. John the Baptist recognized Him. Satan, definitely, understood Jesus’ identity. In our passage today, we will see that the demons who possessed and oppressed the people in Capernaum also knew Jesus.

Before moving farther, as we read our text, I want to encourage you to imagine what it would have been like to witness these events or even to have been among the ones Jesus healed. Due to our familiarity with the stories of the Gospels, too often we are not awed by them. We know Jesus did wonders, but our familiarity diminishes our amazement of them. Let’s read the story as Luke wishes it to be experienced. Let’s read it with fresh eyes. Luke’s perspective places the reader into the event as a spectator. The reader is in the synagogue or in the crowd, watching the event take place. So, let’s place ourselves there as we read. Many in attendance did not know Jesus, but there were some characters who did know Jesus.

Read Luke 4:31-41.

Inquiry: As mentioned in the previous passage, it is likely these events in Capernaum preceded Jesus' visit to Nazareth. In chapter 4, Luke presents Jesus as priest, prophet, and king. The structure of the accounts enforces the author's purpose, so chronology is not necessarily important.

Luke tells us that Jesus went down to Capernaum. This small town is located on the upper northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee, approximately two miles from where the Jordan River flows into the lake. Capernaum was a prosperous fishing town. The fishermen sold their catch locally, but there is also evidence they sold their fish in Magdala to Rome. Capernaum is where Jesus will call His first disciples (Andrew and Simon, James and John, and Levi).

"As was His custom," Jesus worshiped in the synagogue on the Sabbath (vs. 31). As I mentioned last week, the service contained many elements. Part of the service involved reading from the Torah and the prophets. Those readings were followed with an exposition of what was read. As Jesus preached, the people were astonished and awestruck (ἐκπλήσσω). He taught with an authority the priests and synagogue leaders did not possess. His teaching came with exclamation marks and power. He taught as if He had the ability and the right to define and proclaim the words of God. The teaching of the priests came as secondhand theology. They were slaves to quotations. Their preaching was legalistic, joyless, weightless, and boring. The Lord Jesus, on the other hand, taught the Old Testament like it was His autobiography.

In the synagogue that day, among God's people, there was a man possessed by a demon. We dare not run past this detail in the text because it is not what you might expect to find in a place of worship. Demons are typically portrayed as horrific creatures in stories and movies. We expect to find them roaming graveyards and dark forests, stalking and hurting people. Satan would prefer us to look for the demonic among the dead while he gains ground among the living. This demon-possessed man, however, was all dressed up and a full participating member in the synagogue. He looked the part. There is no way to know what role the man played in the synagogue, but we can assume he was accepted by the people as a worshiper of God because there was no objection from them. His presence in the synagogue should open our eyes to the reality that the gates of hell are always working to infiltrate and gain a foothold in the local church today.

After worship, Jesus went to eat dinner with Simon and his family. There He found Simon's mother-in-law sick. Jesus rebuked the fever, and she was healed. News of His miracles spread throughout the town and countryside, so the people brought their sick and demon-possessed loved ones to Jesus to be healed. He healed them and prevented the demons from speaking.

As we read this passage and work to understand it in the context of all that is going on around it, we discover that many people failed to recognize Jesus or know Him. They missed Him. Fortunately, others did find Him. They recognized Jesus as the Son of God and the long-awaited Messiah. Among those who recognized Jesus were the demons. There was no doubt in their minds as to who Jesus was. Today, it is imperative that we too recognize Jesus and seek to know Him. We dare not allow the demons of hell to respond more honestly to Jesus than us. The demons and the people of Capernaum said to Jesus, "I know You." They recognized four things about Jesus.

1. You teach with authority.

Jesus' teaching was clear. He preached the Word of God and not about the Word of God. There is a world of difference between the two. One makes a child of God; the other makes a religious person. Jesus delivered with clarity the message the people needed to hear. He put His finger on the pulse of their lives. He shined the light of God's Word on their sin and need. For example, in Nazareth, the Lord was not satisfied with the people's marveling over His words. Instead, He intentionally pointed out their failure to recognize and embrace Him as the Son of God (4:23-27).

“The saddest moment in any preacher’s life is when he comes down from his pulpit knowing that he gave the people not the best he knew, but only what they expected.” – Henry Ward Beecher

Jesus did not give people what they expected; He clearly delivered what they needed. The preacher is responsible for presenting with clarity the unadulterated teaching of God’s Word.

Jesus’ teaching was also convicting. He preached with conviction. He believed the words He spoke and knew them to be life giving. The Gospel of John emphasizes this aspect of God’s Word. In John 1, Jesus is the Word who existed before Creation. He is the Word spoken through whom all things were created. And He is the Word made flesh that dwelt among us. Jesus’ disciples quickly recognized that Jesus was the embodiment of the Word of God. Peter said of Jesus, “*You have the words of eternal life*” (John 6:68).

Jesus taught the Word of God with authority, trusting the Spirit of God to use it to reveal sin and draw sinners to saving faith in Him. If the church is to have authority today, it must rest its teaching on the authority of God’s Word. We live in a day in which people want nothing to do with biblical doctrine. They are only interested in feelings. They want to feel good and not to be made to feel bad. Feelings are deceptive, but God’s Word is not. Therefore, as God’s people we must stand on God’s Word, otherwise, we have no authority to speak.

Those in Capernaum said, “I know you; you teach with authority.” They also said, “I know you...”

2. You demonstrate power over the demonic.

There is no way to know when the demon-possessed man objected to Jesus’ teaching, but we know at some point it had had enough of Jesus’ presence and words. The reaction we read here is always the reaction of the demonic in the presence of Jesus. James 2:19 helps us understand what took place. It says, “*the demons believe – and shudder!*” The Greek term translated “shudder” is φρίσσω. Literally, it means “to bristle.” In other words, the demons of hell bristle up like a frightened cat in the presence of Jesus. They are scared to death, ready to fight, but incapable of doing anything to Him.

This demon bristled up to Jesus. He wanted the Lord to go away and leave him and his congregation alone. His question (*What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth?*) was a shout of defiance. It was an instinctive cry of dread: “You have come to destroy us!” The demon, like all demons, knew Jesus would condemn him someday, and perhaps it was that day. He knew Jesus to be “*the Holy One of God.*”

As we read this interchange, it is important to understand that the demon was not seeking to suck up to the Lord. Instead, he was frantically attempting to bring the Lord under his power. According to William Lane, it was widely believed at that time that “the exact knowledge of the other’s name brought mastery or control over him.” The demon was attempting to exert control over Jesus by speaking His name. Jesus with a word rebuked the demon, commanding him to be silent and to come out of the man. The same thing happened that evening in Peter’s house. Each demon attempted to exercise control over Jesus but failed miserably.

Everyone in Capernaum, including the demons, recognized Jesus’ power over the demonic. They knew Him to be the Son and Holy One of God. His power lies in His identity. Today, we recognize that the demons of hell are real and active. They are ever working to disrupt and destroy the work of the gospel in and through God’s people. Today, the forces of hell are behind the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Demons are behind every facet of immorality and evil in this world. They work to create chaos and disunity. They spread death and lies. They are behind false religions. They work to ruin marriages and fracture the family. Their influence and control can seem insurmountable, but we need to remember to

recognize Jesus for who He is. He has power over the demonic. He speaks a word and demons bristle in fear and helplessness. Today, we know Jesus to be the One who brings peace amid war. He is Truth and exposes the lies. He cleans up the sinful and heals the broken.

Those in Capernaum said, "I know you; you demonstrate power over the demonic." They also said, "I know you..."

3. You heal the sick.

Peter's mother-in-law was very sick. She might not have been dying, but, like most fevers, she surely felt like she was dying. She was too sick to attend worship in the synagogue that day. She was too sick to take care of the family. For that reason, Peter and his family appealed to Jesus for help. Surely, she and the family had exhausted all their abilities to get the fever under control, but they were powerless against it. Luke tells us that Jesus rebuked the fever just as He had rebuked the demon. He issued a charge or command, "Be gone!"

There are two things worth identifying about this miracle. First, Jesus possessed the power to heal the sick. It has already been indicated that He simply rebuked it and the fever was gone. Peter's mother-in-law immediately got up and started dinner. What an amazing moment that must have been? Can you see yourself there in the room with her? She is sick! She feels terrible. Every bone and fiber in her body aches with pain. She is unable to move and feels exhausted. Then, after one rebuke from Jesus, she is instantly healed. She is up on her feet and normal again. Wow!!

Second, Jesus possessed the empathy to want to heal. Some detractors to this story might argue that Jesus only healed the woman because He was hungry and needed dinner. Perhaps, you could make this argument if Luke had not also included how Jesus "*laid His hands on every one of them and healed them*" (vs. 40). Who are the "every one of them?" They are the people from town who came to Jesus at Peter's house that evening. They came because they had sick and demon-possessed loved ones. They came because they needed the Messiah's help.

Hand-on healing was an unusual practice. It is unknown in both Old Testament and rabbinical literature. Jesus, however, brought a radical divine, tenderness to the needy. Not only did He lay His loving hands on each hurting person, but He also sat there all night until the last person was served. Just as Jesus healed those in Capernaum, He can and wants to heal the brokenness in your life.

Those in Capernaum said, "I know you; you heal the sick." They also said, "I know you..."

4. You are the Holy One of God.

The demons had no doubt about who Jesus was, and still today, they have no doubt about Jesus' identity. He is the Son of God...the Holy One of God. He is Lord of lords and King of kings. Back then and still today, many people do not know Jesus. They fail to recognize Him for who He is. We have read of several who rightfully recognized Jesus for who He was. They came to know Him as their Lord and Savior. They experienced His healing touch on their lives. Those in Capernaum said, "I know you; you are the Holy One of God." I wonder, though, if we recognize and know Jesus like they did. Have we experienced the broken spaces of our lives healed by Jesus? Have we experienced His redemption?

Those in Capernaum said, "I know you; you are the Holy One of God." Can you say that?

Conclusion: Many times, we do not recognize the blessing that is before us. The city leaders in Philadelphia acted as if they did not know Benjamin Franklin. He kept bringing his concerns about the safety and welfare of

the citizens before the leaders, and they kept turning a deaf ear. Finally, he had enough of their lack of action, so he put a post along the walkway at the edge of his front yard. That evening he hung a kerosene lantern on that post.

When the sun had set and the darkness had set in, the people on Franklin's street came out to see this odd light, illuminating part of the walkway. They stood within the glow of that lantern and talked about how incredible this was. No one had thought of hanging a light before. Instead, they just stumbled around in the darkness. Do you know what happened the next night? Someone else did the same thing. The night after that someone else did it, and the night after that another person hung a lantern. This new idea spread quickly, so that in a very short time, it is said that the city of Philadelphia was aglow.

The danger from those terrible streets in Philadelphia was lessened because one man saw the need and discovered a remedy. On a much greater and eternal scale, Jesus saw the need in the lives of every person and became the remedy. He is the Holy Son of God who as a human being offered Himself as a sacrifice to pay the penalty for all sin. The blood He shed fully cleanses us from sin. His death and resurrection defeat hell and the grave and make it possible to have eternal life. Perhaps more important than all of this is the fact that Jesus brings us back into relationship with the God who has created us for Himself. All of this, however, is contingent upon knowing Jesus. Do you know Jesus?

Good news: God loves you. He created you and desires to know you.

Bad news: You are a sinner in rebellion against your Creator.

Best news: God has done everything necessary to justly deal with your sin and bring forgiveness and restoration to your life. Today, He calls you to turn from your sin and self and turn to Him as Savior and Lord. Have you received forgiveness in Christ? What would keep you from embracing the truth and believing on Jesus today? Do you need to follow the Lord in believer's baptism?