

Struck by Jesus' Authority

Matthew 7:28-29

Halifax: 24 October 2004

Introduction:

Last week we looked at the Lord's conclusion to the Sermon on the Mount.

- Jesus concludes His great Sermon by showing His hearers the absolute stupidity of anyone who hears His sayings and does not do them!
 - He compares it to building a house on the sand.
 - Building a house on the sand was something that no sane person would ever do!
 - In that part of the world, a rainy season comes almost every year...
 - Jesus is not talking about an extra-ordinary occurrence, but something that would normally be expected...
 - And the foolish man actually builds a house that will fall down if the weather does what it ordinarily does!
 - It is the equivalent of a man in Nova Scotia who puts water in his radiator at this time of year instead of anti-freeze as if it won't be needed this winter.
- The wise man, on the other hand, is not a rocket scientist or a prophet,
 - He is merely a sensible man who builds his house on the rock... the way **any** sane man would do it.
 - The point our Lord is making is that anyone who has heard His sermon and does not do what He says is a hopeless moron!
 - He acts as if he will never die and never face judgement.
 - He makes not provision for the ordinary.
 - There he is, toiling away on a house that will come crashing to the ground as soon as God's judgement comes if not before!

And now to drive home the folly of such an action even further,

- Matthew comes along and explains that everyone who heard Jesus speak were struck by His authority!
 - No one could hear Him without—at least for a moment—realising that Jesus spoke the truth.
 - To resist what He said or doubt what He said was to resist the obvious and to suppress what was certain.
 - It was to take steps that would surely lead to destruction.

Matthew tells us that:

I. Those who heard Jesus preach were astonished!

A. The word *ekplhssw* translated “astonished” in our English Bibles is a bit difficult to translate into English...

1. There is no word in the English language that is rich enough to convey the full sense of *ekplhssw*.

- It is a compound word that combines the word **ek** “out of” with the word **plees-so**: “strike” or “hit.”
- *ekplhssw* is often used to refer to a person’s response when he has been frightened...
 - We have a parallel to this in English when we say that someone was “struck with fear.”
 - The only difference is that the Greek word carries with it the idea of being struck **out** of themselves—

2. The idea is to be so astonished that you are struck out of your wits.

- It happens when you are rather suddenly brought to a new awareness that so arrests your attention that everything is different for you.
- Everything is different—
 - Something strikes you that changes your whole perspective.
 - “I was really struck when Joe told me that his wife had died.”
 - You were astonished by the new information.

B. When Matthew uses the word in verse 28, you might say the people were “awe-struck” when they heard Jesus sermon!

1. The Word of God had come to them and they found themselves, as it were, face to face with God!

- His word came to them in the demonstration of the Holy Spirit and in power...
 - a. It carried such power and conviction with it that they could not deny it, but had to acknowledge the truth of it!
 - Divine authority was clearly revealed in His speech...
 - There was a purity in His doctrine that was indescribable.
 - b. And then in the way it was delivered!
 - There was a confidence and majesty in His bearing—
 - no wavering or hesitancy, no fear of man; no doubting in His words...

- but rather boldness and assurance.
- And with this, there was an urgency and weightiness about His words...
 - He spoke with a loving seriousness such as none had seen before.
- Yet, here He was, a young carpenter with no special training!
 - He was not a scribe or a Pharisee!
 - He had not sat at the feet of Gamaliel!
 - But everything He said cut through to the heart!
 - There was no way to avoid it without suppressing it.

2. You have experienced this, haven't you?

- a. Haven't you had God's word cut right through you—
 - to penetrate right down to the secret places and shine its light all around in the dark corners of your heart?
 - It makes you feel as if you are singled out.
- b. Haven't you had God's word to come to you and leave you with no defence?
 - To come to you as irrefutable and incontestable?
 - Something you can't legitimately resist or question; but must either rebelliously reject or avoid?

C. Matthew says this astonishment is what happened to everyone who heard Jesus!

1. He does not say it happened to some of the people, but he indicates that they were all astonished or struck by His teaching.
 - This comes out with greater forcefulness in the original...
 - In the original Greek,
 - Matthew uses the same word in Matthew 7:28 translated "the people" that he used at the beginning of Jesus' Sermon,
 - In Matthew 5:1, He speaks of Jesus "seeing the multitudes," and then going up on the mountain where His disciples came to Him.
 - By using these same words at the end of the sermon, Matthew seems to indicate that these multitudes came up the mountain to hear Him also.
 - And these same crowds or multitudes were astonished at what they heard Him say!
 - It would seem that all who heard Him had this response!

2. This includes those who truly received the word and were transformed by it as well as those who went away and forgot.
 - a. For some it only struck them as a flash of light that illumined everything, but that was quickly forgotten...
 - It was like a flash of lightening that lit everything up for a moment, but did not remain.
 - They were able to quickly replace what He had said with their own thoughts and diversions.
 - You remember when Jesus spoke to those who came to arrest Him in the Garden of Gethsemane...
 - All He said was, "I am He" and these armed soldiers all drew back and fell to the ground!
 - But then what happened?
 - They got up and arrested Him anyway.
 - It was a flash of light that they could not resist!
 - The word of God struck them and they could not resist it!
 - But sadly, they recovered themselves and soon acted as if the thing had never happened!
 - Such is the way of men with God!
 - b. For others, Jesus words hovered about them to haunt them...
 - 1) They were so struck by what He said that it caused them to change their behaviour in certain ways and go about looking for ways to hide...
 - they found themselves troubled and agitated by what He said for many days, some even for the rest of their life!
 - 2) So it was with the rich young ruler who refused to give up His riches when Jesus called him to do so...
 - He went away sorrowful because He knew that Jesus spoke the truth.
 - 3) No doubt, this is what happened to those Jewish leaders who could not resist His words...
 - They gave themselves up to murderous designs because they could not silence the truth and spirit by which He spoke.
 - The light was too much for them...
 - They hated the light because it disturbed the darkness in which they were hiding.

- c. For others, Jesus' words were accompanied by the transforming grace of the Holy Spirit so that they entered into a whole new life of hearing His voice...
 - 1) They began a radically new life of abiding in His word for ever and ever!
 - a life of acting upon what they had heard Him...
 - a life of trembling at His threats...
 - a life of resting and rejoicing in His promises...
 - a life of walking before His commandments.
 - 2) This is what happened to the woman at the well—
 - She said,
 - “Come see a man who told me all things that I have ever done. Could this be the Messiah?”
 - His word was clearly divine.
 - It cut right through her and exposed her to the root!
 - She received it and began to live accordingly.

TRANS> So you see what Matthew is saying here:

- He is not saying that all who heard Jesus entered the narrow gate...
 - He is not saying that all who heard Him believed,
3. But he is saying that who heard Him had this one thing in common:
- They were at least for a moment struck out of themselves,
 - astonished at His teaching.
 - a. As Calvin summarises it,
 - “All were seized with astonishment, because a strange, indescribable, and unwonted majesty drew to him the minds of men.”
 - “The power of the Spirit shone in the preaching of Christ with such brightness, as to extort admiration even from irreligious and cold hearers.”
 - b. What this means is that all who hear Jesus preach are without excuse for their unbelief!
 - God's word carries its own authentication.
 - It is the truth itself and cannot be resisted because it is true—
 - It breaks forth even upon the hardest heart like lightning.
 - It flashes for a moment until it is extinguished by them.

- They may resist it and suppress and avoid it after it is shone in their hearts,
 - but they cannot keep it from striking them initially.
- c. Of course this is wonderful news for those who truly want to walk in the truth!
- The word of God is not something that is too hard for you!
 - It is near you, even in mouth and in your heart, the word of faith which is preached!
 - It is not that truth comes from within,
 - but as soon as it is brought to you from without, it is clear that it is the word of God.
 - Everyone who hears it is struck by it!

TRANS> This ought to greatly encourage you to regularly put yourself under the word that you might be struck by it also!

II. How much you need to be struck by it!

- A. Like the people in Matthew 7:29, you also have scribes speaking to you who do not speak with God's authority!
1. Jesus' speaking carries with it God's incontestable authority,
 - but the scribes are altogether different!
 - a. The scribes set you up in a dream world that is alienated from God's truth!
 - 1) They encourage you to build your house on the sand!
 - a) "Who told you the rainy season would come?"
 - "Don't listen to them, it hasn't rained for months..."
 - "Go ahead and build your house on the sand, nothing will happen to it."
 - b) "Who told you that God created you?"
 - "Scientists know that we evolved from lower animals.:"
 - "You were not created in God's image..."
 - "You don't have to answer to Him."
 - "Don't you know about the big bang?"
 - 2) Words like this have no authority.

- People can tell that they are not true, especially when they are confronted with the truth...
 - Back in Matthew 7:16 Jesus tells us that we will be able to tell a false prophet...
 - but still, these lying words are welcomed by the sinful human heart which is always looking for ways to avoid the obvious truth.
 - The words of the scribes are designed to help you suppress the truth and forget the truth.
 - They are very effective in lulling you to sleep.
- b. This all started in the Garden when Satan said to Eve,
- “Hath God said?”
 - He knew what God had said and she knew what God had said.
 - Satan’s words had no authority, no ring of truth—
 - They were not believable—
 - Yet they were believed and acted upon!
 - And ever since, we have been listening to too many scribes!
2. Just look at the all the scribes in your life who speak to you without God’s authority!
- a. Your society speaks to you without God’s authority!
- 1) They tell you that it’s okay for a mother to kill her unborn child if she doesn’t want that child.
 - They tell you that there is no difference in the calling of a man and the calling of a woman.
 - They tell you that sexual expression is not to be regulated by God, but by you.
 - 2) These are rather blatant examples, but there is more subtle teaching as well.
 - They tell you that all religions are basically the same.
 - They tell you that you have all the answers in yourself—or from some expert, and that you don’t really need to look to God.

TRANS> The scribes of the world speak without any authority.

- Jesus taught as one having authority and not as the scribes.

- b. Then there are the religious scribes!
- 1) These are even more dangerous because they pretend to serve God and to speak for God!
 - We looked at them when we considered Jesus' warning about false prophets who lead us into His kingdom through the wide gate.
 - They baptise and they administer the Lord's Supper and lead in worship,
 - but they do not lead us to trust in the Christ of the Bible.
 - 2) Their underlying message is that you can be approved of God apart from Christ's death in your place!
 - They may even speak about Him as a Saviour who can help you overcome sin...
 - But they will never speak of Him as the one who bore God's wrath for the forgiveness of His people's sin.
 - They will admit that He died a horrible death,
 - They will say He died as a martyr...
 - But they will not say that He died to atone for our sins—as a substitute in place of the guilty to propitiate God's wrath.
 - 3) The religious scribe's message carries no real authority—
 - Jesus teaches as one having authority and not as the scribes!

TRANS> But there is yet another kind of scribe that is worse than a religious scribe that you listen to way more often than you should!

- c. The scribe which is your own wicked and perverted heart!
- 1) How skilled you are at self-justification!
 - There is Adam, the light of God shining all around, and he says...
 - "The woman you gave me... she gave to me and I ate."
 - Did he have no error to confess?
 - Was it all the woman's fault?
 - 2) Then there are all those excuses you make!
 - a) Parents, you yell at your kid for no reason and then you say:
 - "I've had a hard day" or "I've had a hard week."
 - What kind of authority does that statement carry?

b) And children, you put off the work your mother asked you to do and then you say:

- “I forgot.”
 - So what? What kind of an excuse is that?
 - Does that have any authority?
- Do you find God saying in His word...
 - My people could not help it, they just forgot my commandments.

3) The human heart is like an R-2000 home!

- It is thoroughly insulated from reality!
- It is so full of deception with so many layers of protection that God’s truth is kept out!

TRANS> The only antidote for all the scribes we listen to is the voice of Jesus Christ!

- How desperately you need to hear Him so that the truth will break into your life with authority and squelch the scribes!

B. But how can you hear Him **today**?

- It was two-thousand years ago that He came and preached, and that the people gathered to Him and were struck by His teaching.
 - But what can you do now that He has gone into heaven?

1. Now you can hear Him through His written word and Spirit!

a. The Bible says, “Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God.”

- He has left us a record of all that we need to know in the Bible.
- He sent forth prophets and apostles to declare His will to us, and we have their writings in the Bible...
 - And God has seen to it that these writing are the very word of God.

b. Paul commends the Thessalonians because he says,

- 1 Thes 2:13: when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed *it* not *as* the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.
- The word of God comes to us with the same authority as it did when Jesus spoke it Himself.

c. Jesus told His disciples that this was so:

- Luke 10:16: "He who hears you hears Me, he who rejects you rejects Me, and he who rejects Me rejects Him who sent Me."
2. There are many ways that the word of Christ comes to you...
- a. The primary way is through preaching.
 - 1) In 1 Cor 1:21, Paul says that it is through the foolishness of the message preached that men are saved...
 - a) He is speaking especially how preaching exposes the foolishness of what the world considers to be great wisdom!
 - Preaching today is not new revelation, but taking what is revealed in the Word and bringing it to bear upon God's people!
 - b) By preaching, we are brought under the word and are struck out of ourselves.
 - Our minds are renewed and transformed as the Spirit takes the word and applies it to us so that we see ourselves in its light and so that we see Christ as He is.
 - c) This is how we hear His voice.
 - In Romans 10:14, Paul tells the Romans that they actually hear Christ Himself through preaching.
 - The reason of this is because Christ is the one who sends out preachers as His ambassadors with His message to declare to His people.
 - He is heard through His messengers.
 - 2) I could wish that all Christians had a high view of preaching like that!
 - That we ministers would take seriously the awesome responsibility we have to preach the word of God!
 - That congregations would pray faithful and fervently for the preaching of the word and for their hearing of the word!
 - That believers would come with prepared hearts to devote themselves fully to the hearing of the word...
 - That believers would be careful to search the scriptures to be sure that it is the word of God that is being preached to them.
 - That believers would urge others to come and hear the word of God preached.

TRANS> The primary way that Christ is heard today is through biblical preaching.

- b. But the word of God also comes to us through other means...
 - 1) It comes to you through reading and searching the scriptures...
 - 2) It comes to you through family worship...
 - 3) It comes to you through mediation as you consider how the word applies to you as you live your life each day...
 - 4) It comes to you through other people—
 - your parents, your friends, and even your enemies!
 - 5) It comes to you in the time of trials—
 - God is especially near, as He was to Job—to comfort you and reveal Himself to you as you have never seen Him before!
 - Not by new revelations, but by bringing home to you what is already revealed in His word in a fresh new way.

TRANS> Oh how you need the word of Christ to strike you out of yourself!

- There are so many scribes speaking all around you...
 - But Christ does not speak like them...
 - He speaks with authority!

III. Consider how the truth of the Sermon on the Mount strikes home to those who hear Christ.

A. You are struck out of your desire for pride and self-esteem.

- 1. How striking the Beatitudes are!
 - a. We are all prone to think:
 - Blessed are the self-confident, the high achievers, those who are fully satisfied with themselves!
 - And because these things are praised so much, even if we lack them, we still want them!
 - b. But Jesus strikes you right out of yourself when He says,
 - Blessed are the poor in spirit... those who realise you have nothing within yourself to commend you to God...
 - Blessed are they that mourn... because you see how wretched and ruined and helpless you are...
 - Blessed are the meek... because you have renounced self-government and are looking to be governed by God alone...

- Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness... because you see how lacking in righteousness you are and want to obtain righteousness from Christ—
 - like Paul, you renounce all your own and count it as dung to obtain His.
- Blessed are the merciful... you are no longer out to get everything for yourself, but now you realise that you are called to serve others...
- And on He goes with things that are completely the opposite of what the scribes say!

2. And when these words come to you, you know they are true!

- When you realise that you are before the face of a holy God, there is no place for pretending to be something you are not!
- Jesus' words shatter through all our pretences...
 - It's not blessed to pretend you have something to be pleased about in yourself!
 - Not before God!
 - That is a foundation of sand!
 - Once you come before God, it is glorious and blessed to be empty of self because you see self in the light of His glory and perfection!
 - It destroys your love of self-esteem and pride and brings you to your knees before Christ.
 - How striking!

B. Next, the Sermon on the Mount strikes you out of your illusions of self-righteousness.

1. I mentioned before how skilled the scribes are at promoting self-righteousness, self-justification, excuse making, blame-shifting and such like...
 - We live in a sea of such illusions each day.
 - The voice of the world, the voice of false prophets, the voice of the flesh...
 - all say, "You are basically a good, honest, law abiding person."
2. But Jesus begins to strip all that self-righteousness away when His authoritative word breaks into your life!
 - a. He brings you before God and shows you that before Him, murder and adultery are matters of the heart...
 - That to hate your brother in your heart is murder...
 - And to lust after a woman in your heart is adultery.

- b. He brings you to God's truth and shows you that whatever you do (or don't do) that severs rather than unites you to your spouse is separating what God has joined together.
 - c. He shows you that careless use of God's name which becomes common when your life is filled with dishonesty is from the evil one...
 - d. He brings you before God's commandments and shows you how selfish and unjust you are in:
 - seeking revenge,
 - refusing to pay damages,
 - reluctantly obeying your authorities
 - helping the poor
 - loving your enemies.
 - e. He brings you before God's face to show you how hypocritical your religious worship is...
 - how little you esteem God, even in your most noble works!
 - how earnest you are to be seen by others when you give, when you pray, and when you fast...
 - and how little you consider your Father whom you are supposed to be worshipping.
 - f. He brings you before God to show you your propensity to lay up treasures,
 - to devote yourself to seeking riches instead of seeking God,
 - to fret and worry about things and about tomorrow instead of trusting in God.
 - g. And then He strikes you with the truth about the way you set yourself up as judge in place of God,
 - and evaluate others based on whether they please you instead of based on what God says—
 - and how you seem to rejoice when you find evil in them, being very ready to help them and very slow to see your own sins.
3. How arresting all this is!
- His word cuts through all the pretences and shines the light of truth on you...
 - There is no room at all for self-righteousness after He has spoken just as there is no longer any place to love pride and self-esteem.

TRANS> Now lets look at the third way this sermon strikes you...

- C. It strikes you out of your lax attitude toward Jesus as Saviour and Judge...
- What I mean is, it makes you see how serious your eternal destiny is!
1. In this sermon, Jesus repeatedly sets before you blessing and cursing!
 - a. It is so easy to forget that your whole life is headed for eternal blessing or eternal cursing...
 - Yet, when Jesus' speaks His authoritative word, you are reminded again and again!
 - b. Look at all the places He does this!
 - 1) How clearly the Beatitudes point you to future blessing rather than present blessing!
 - "Blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted!"
 - "Rejoice and be exceedingly glad" when they revile you and persecute you, "for great is your reward in heaven!"
 - 2) Then there is that place in Matthew 5:19-20 where He excludes all those who have a righteousness no greater than that of the Scribes and Pharisees!
 - How astonishing this was—for they were considered the most righteous ones of all!
 - 3) Jesus goes on to speak about:
 - the danger of judgement for you if you hate your brother...
 - how your offending eye or offending hand can cause your whole body to be cast into Hell...
 - how those who do their religious deeds to be honoured by men already have their reward and can expect nothing more...
 - how you will be judged for judging others...
 2. But Jesus really brings home the reality of blessing and cursing at the end of the sermon...
 - a. Presenting the blessing that comes to those who ask, seek, and knock for the righteousness that they don't have in themselves...
 - but how destruction comes to those who reject this narrow way and take the broad gate that leads to destruction!
 - b. He pushes this again and again, passionately warning you to stay away from teachers who will lead you to destruction!

- Urging you that it is not enough to confess Him, preach in His name, fight battles in His name, and do good works in His name,
 - if you do not do the Father's will—
 - which will is that you become poor in spirit and look to Jesus for righteousness!
- c. And He concludes with yet another penetrating warning that you not only hear His words and be astonished by them—
 - be struck out of yourself by them for a moment...
 - for to do that is to build a life that will be destroyed...
 - Instead you must hear His word and be permanently transformed by it!
- 3. All through this sermon, Jesus presents Himself as the one who has all the authority to bless and to curse!
 - a. No one could hear His words and not be struck by this!
 - Consider—
 - 1) When He speaks of the blessing that comes to the persecuted, it is, He says, “persecution for **my sake.**”
 - 2) When He gives the law, He does not say,
 - “But the Lord says to you,” or “Thus says the Lord” as all the prophets say...
 - Instead He says, “but I say to you!”
 - He speaks with the authority of the lawgiver!
 - 3) And when He speaks about the final judgement in 7:21, He says,
 - “Not everyone who says to **Me**, ‘Lord, Lord’ shall enter the Kingdom of Heaven”
 - He presents Himself at the Lord to whom they must give account.
 - He presents Himself as the final judge who will determine every man's destiny!
 - You never hear Moses or any of the prophets speak of the last day and say,
 - “Then I will declare to you, depart from me you who practice lawlessness!”
 - b. But He not only presents Himself as judge, but also as Saviour!
 - 1) For hundreds of years, God's word had promised a Saviour who would come and meet all the demands of His law for His people.

- In every burnt offering and sacrifice, God promised that He would provide and accept a substitute for His people's sins...
 - And in every circumcision He promised that He would take away their stony heart and give a heart of flesh to all who called on His name in truth.
- 2) And so it is that in Matthew 5:17 Jesus presents Himself as the One who will fulfil all those promises that were made in the law and prophets!
- "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfil!"
 - What a remarkable statement this is!
 - How striking it is to all who hear it!
 - Jesus is declaring that He is the One who by Himself will meet all that is required of God's people to save them!
 - He Himself has come (showing that He already existed beforehand) to fulfil all the demands!
- 3) And indeed He did!
- He has shed His holy blood to atone for the sins of all His people, and has met for us everything that the law requires!
 - And He has given us His Spirit to change our hearts!

Conclusion!

How striking!

- You cannot hear these things and not be struck out of yourself by the authority with which the Lord Jesus speaks!
 - But what will become of that light?
 - Is it just a mere flash of lightening in your darkness that quickly disappears?
 - Or is it a light that continues to irritate you and that causes you to look for new places to hide?
 - Or is it a light that drives you to the grace of God revealed in Jesus Christ to be transformed by Him for all eternity?
 - Is it the word of truth that you will abide in all the days of your life?

It is a wonderful blessing to be struck by His majestic voice!

- But it will do you no good if you do not take up your residence in His truth!
 - Ask, and it will be given to you;
 - Seek, and you will find;
 - Knock, and it will be opened to you!