

**Earlsdon Methodist Church
Sunday Worship
31st January 2021**

Theme: Making an Impression



We are called to recognise God's authority and to submit to it in every area of our lives. Let us invite God to direct our thinking and our prayers. Let us give God the highest place in our lives. Let us worship the living God. **Amen.**

Hymn 57 StF: Let All the World in Every Corner Sing



Prayer of Adoration, Confession and Thanksgiving.

Father God, holy and majestic. God of all wisdom, you are the source of all authority in heaven and earth. Compassionate Lord Jesus, what an impression you have made on our spirit! Lovingly speaking through your life on earth: your sacrificial authority on the cross breaking through the barriers of sin.

Awesome Holy Spirit, what an impression you make on our life! Through our faith, you continue to impress upon us the supreme wisdom of God, Gracious and Fair.

Father, Son and Holy Spirit, source of all authority in heaven and earth, **eternal praise belongs to you. Amen.**

We thank you, Lord, that you are the source of all wisdom and ultimate authority.

Thank you that we can always test what we hear in the world today against your word. Thank you that in you, life's foundations are firm. When we fail to look to you, we find ourselves on shaky ground and prone to making mistakes.

But thank you that when we do make mistakes, you can help us correct them. Thank you that when we walk closely with you, our lives have an integrity and meaning that can help bring ourselves and others into closer relationship with you. Thanks be to you, our God. **Amen.**

O God, when Jesus spoke in the synagogue, everyone was astonished by the absolute authority of his words and presence. Forgive us when our own words or actions do not match with our calling. Help us to always speak and act with integrity. Help us also, O God, not to jump to conclusions by first impressions, preconceptions or prejudices – anything that turns us against people who do not quite fit our expectations of them. Yet you may wish to speak through them. Forgive us when we jump to wrong conclusions. Forgive us for judging. Help us to seek your wisdom, to see and hear you in all people regardless of age, appearance or background.

Pause for Reflection

Forgive us Merciful God, in the name of Your Son Jesus Christ, Amen. Amen.



Deuteronomy 18: 15-20 and Gospel: Mark 1:21-28.

Reflection: Jesus Making an Impression

Mark has described how Jesus drew his team together, and now he tells us about the beginning of his active ministry. Jesus' first act is, in some respects, very traditional. He goes to the synagogue on the sabbath and teaches in the rabbinic tradition. Mark tells us nothing of what he said, but he does record the great impression he made on the congregation. Scribes often presented a range of opinions from earlier scholars, then left the congregations to make up their own minds. Jesus' teaching is clearly much more authoritative. It carries conviction and leaves people feeling that they had heard the 'word of the Lord'.

Question: What did Jesus do to make an Impression?

Jesus' words always match his actions! His powerful words delivered the man who was tormented by unclean spirits. Although the story reflects a battle of wills as the spirit attempts to gain control over Jesus by calling Jesus by his name and identifying him as 'the Holy One of God' (**v.24**).

It is astonishing to see that Jesus always asked his disciples – who am I or who do the people say I am? More often the disciples struggle to succinctly express Jesus's messianic and earthly identity but the demons in this man automatically recognised Jesus by name as well as his messianic identity saying, 'Jesus is the Holy One of God'.

This is proof that it does not matter how enormous the evidence of evil may be, the power of God will always supersede such power. The hymn 'at the mention of the name of Jesus, every knee shall bow, and tongue shall confess that Jesus is Lord', comes to mind.

Most importantly, Jesus' actions encourage us to continue in our faith that there is power in his name. In many forms of magic, knowing a name is a source of power. In the face of this, Jesus can defeat the spirit with one word (in Greek): Silence! And the spirit can no longer speak, only scream as it leaves the man (**v.26**). Jesus shares God's power to create order simply through his words (**Genesis 1.3**). There is no possibility of survival for the evil spirit in the presence of the Messiah, and its attempt to name Jesus only serves to reinforce his true messianic identity – that indeed, He is the Son of Living God.

Mark again emphasises the impact this has on the congregation – they are amazed and there is a hubbub of conversation as they discuss what they have just witnessed. In a society where much illness was put down to 'unclean spirits', the power to control them was astonishing, and it's not surprising that Jesus' reputation spreads rapidly. But his hearers have not forgotten his teaching, and they recognise the link between his teaching and his broader authority (**v.27**). It is perhaps ironic, though, that the unclean spirit knows perfectly well who Jesus is, while the congregation is left guessing.

Question: As Christians in whose authority do we speak?

Jesus Christ say he will do whatsoever we ask in his name so that the Father will be glorified through Him. (**John 14:13**).

In whose authority does the Church speak today?

Christ is the bride of the church and we as believers are the bride of Christ and so as we wait in anticipation for his coming, everything we do and say is done prophetically. Remember the parable of the 'mustard seed' wherein Jesus Christ encourages us to speak with authority against any situation big or small regardless of the size of our faith and we will overcome. (Mark 4:30-32)

In the Old Testament reading, Moses carried enormous authority as the leader who had taken his people out of Egypt, across the Red Sea, and through the wilderness to the borders of the promised

land. He was understood as a prophet because he spoke the word of the Lord to the people, including the foundational text of the ten commandments.

Question: How do we identify God's chosen prophets today and how do we receive their authority?

Moses anticipates God's gift of another prophet like him to continue to lead the people on. He recalls the people's fear at the manifestations of God's presence on Sinai (**Deuteronomy 5.25-27**) but Moses however reassures them that the new prophet whom God has promised to choose from amongst them will be able to approach God for them fearlessly.

The prophet's authority, like his, will come from God; he will speak the words God gives him. This expectation continued to be influential, right up to Jesus' own time – John the Baptist denies that he is this prophet (**John 1.21**). Christians have understood it as a prophecy of Jesus himself, able to stand fearlessly before God on our behalf, and speaking the words God has given him.

Finally, I pray that we too will be empowered by the Holy Spirit to stand fearlessly in prayer and meditation before God, interceding for others and the world and to prophetically speak with the authority Jesus Christ has given to us as in doing so, he has also given us dominion over all principalities and powers. **Amen.**

Hymn StF 668: Teach Me My God and King



God of our impressionable world,
we pray for the leaders of the nations,
that they would be wise, just and
compassionate as they exercise their
authority and discern the way forward
amid the difficult social and economic
challenges of the pandemic.

P: May your truth be known

All: And your love be shared in Jesus' name.

We pray for those who are vulnerable,
for those who mistrust the vaccine,
for those for whom it has come too late.
We pray for the families, and friends of –
and all ministering to the dying and the
bereaved.

P: May your truth be known,

All: And your love be shared in Jesus' name.

We pray for your church – around the world
and in our own community,
we pray for creative ways to serve and to
share, for courage and integrity as we

listen and pray, for urgency and daring as
we respond to the needs around us.

P: May your truth be known,

All: And your love be shared in Jesus' name.

We pray, in a moment of silence, for all
those on our hearts and for all those who
have no one to name them in prayer.
We especially pray for David, Veena and
their daughter Danielle as they mourn the
loss of Avril. May they be comforted by
your Holy Spirit and they feel the love and
support of friends and family.

We also pray for Christine Moore at
Radford & Holdbrooks and Kay O'Neil and
the family. May they also see your Light
and be reminded of your steadfast love
and mercies even during these difficult
times.

May the souls of the faithful departed,
Avril and George, rest upon your bosom in
glory.

P: May your truth be known,

All: And your love be shared in Jesus' name. Amen



Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. **Amen**

Hymn 247 StF: I Danced in the Morning



Almighty God be with us this week. Meet with us each morning, and in every situation throughout the day, whoever we are with, help us to draw on your strength and wisdom, that we may be faithful and true in following the example and pattern given to us by Jesus. **Amen.**

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