

Lessons for The Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany

January 28, 2024

Psalm 111 ~ *The psalmist pondered and celebrated God's loving care for his people.*

Deuteronomy 18:15–20 ~ *God would raise up a prophet like Moses to teach the people His true word.*

1 Corinthians 8:1–13 ~ *We use our Christian knowledge in loving ways, to build up an other's faith.*

Mark 1:21–28 ~ *The authority of Jesus' teaching astounded people and confounded evil spirits.*

GATHERING THE TEXTS: Power Balanced with Love

When the people were awe-struck by God's powerful voice on Mount Horeb, He responded lovingly by promising a prophet like Moses who would speak in God's name. St. Paul wrote that even though we know idols have no power, we should exercise that knowledge in a loving way so others may be turned to Christ by our actions. Jesus balanced His authority over sin with His love for the sinner when He banished evil spirits.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERVICE: Dear Father in heaven, your Word is powerful for calling sinners and expelling demons! Let me respond to your love in such a way that I may treat those around me with love and concern. Amen.

STEWARDSHIP THOUGHT: God has blessed us with great goods and the knowledge to be able to use them to His glory. We use them best when we help other people to know God's love and be strengthened in their faith.

OFFERING PRAYER: Lord, from the blessings you provide,
we bring these gifts to serve Your grace.
In Your mercy, teach and guide
us as we live to show Your face. Amen.

CONVICTION AND COMFORT: While we often identify people with the undesirable characteristics they exhibit, Jesus loved the man who was possessed by the unclean spirits and would not let them hurt him. It is comforting to know that Jesus' same concern and love extends to us, even when we get involved in schemes that do not give glory to his name.

Questions to Consider: When is love in the balance?

- Why did God find another way to bring the Israelites his word?
- How would St. Paul rephrase Davy Crockett's quote: "Be sure you are right Then go ahead."?
- How might an exorcism be worse than demon possession?
- What is always the goal of God's word?