

“Kingdom Authority”

“...he taught them as one having authority...”

What does that mean? And why is it important for us?

The story of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark begins with his baptism  
at which God sends the Holy Spirit which gives him power and authority,  
and then says, “this is my beloved child with whom I am well pleased” which announces that authority.  
This is my beloved child, my son, my heir.  
God, the Ruler of the Cosmos, is announcing the heir to the throne.

The very next thing that happens is that Jesus is driven into the wilderness to be tempted –  
and what is he tempted to do?

Although Mark does not tell us, according to the Matthew and Luke,  
he is tempted to use the power that God has given him for his own purposes –  
to satisfy his own physical and material needs, to accumulate wealth, and to acquire fame.

The temptation goes on a long time.

But eventually Jesus understands that it is God alone who has all the power.

Without God a he can’t take a single breath, or utter a single sound or move a single muscle.

Everything that he is and everything that he has comes from God.

God is the one who created all that exists, and so all power in heaven and earth belongs to God.

Jesus comes to understand that the power he has been given has been given only to use for God’s purpose.

It’s like being hired by the owner of a company to be its executive director.

The executive director is given power and the authority to use that power not for his or her own benefit,  
but for the sole purpose of carrying out the wishes of the owner.

Once Jesus understands what it means to have been given power and the authority to use it,  
he recruits his staff and begins to publicize his vision.

The people listening immediately recognize his authority, except for one man who resists and refuses.

Upset by this new rabbi who is calling for change, big change, drastic change, hard change,  
he stands up in the middle of the service and screams at Jesus.

And that’s when Jesus uses the power that he’s been given authority to use.

He doesn’t ignore the man, he doesn’t argue with the man, and he doesn’t call for the man to be thrown out.

Instead he understands that the man is possessed by fear or rage or grief or pain,

and so speaking with the authority he’s been given

Jesus uses his power to cast out those demons which are resisting Gods will.

So what does all of this have to do with us? A lot as it turns out.

Because the power and authority which God gave to Jesus at his baptism, Jesus gave to us at our baptism!

Yes, you heard me right.

You and I have been given the power of the living God –

the power to move mountains, the power to cause walls to fall,

the power to cause chains to break, the power to perform miracles.

It’s not something we Lutherans talk much about, but it’s there in the Bible and in our theology.

If you believe you were given the Holy Spirit in baptism

then you will understand that you have indeed been given the same power

that in the beginning moved across the waters of chaos and brought the world into being.

Baptized into Christ we have been given power to further God’s kingdom on earth.

We’ve been given power to do God’s will.

We’ve been given authority to carry out God’s plans.

So as executive directors, what is our responsibility to the owner of our lives?

I see it as a three-fold task:

First, we are to make sure that we carry out our job as it is described in the employee handbook.

That is where we find the basic instructions and guidelines,  
the vision and purpose, the goals and objectives, the strategies and procedures.

For Christians that handbook is called the Bible.

And it's our job to make sure that we fulfill the roles and responsibilities laid out in it –

to love God with all our heart and mind and soul and body and to love our neighbor as ourselves;

to do unto others as we would want them to do unto us;

to do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with our God;

to care for the “widow, orphan, and stranger”, the marginalized, the disenfranchised, the oppressed;

to love one another as Christ has loved us;

to forgive as we have been forgiven,

to stop judging others;

to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us; to go out into the world and make disciples...

You get the idea.

So there's the employee handbook, but that only covers things in general.

When it gets down to the daily day to day decisions, things are not always as clear,  
especially as circumstances change in the world around us.

So secondly, in addition to carrying out all the things that were written out for us in the beginning,  
we also have to be in constant communication with the owner

to make sure that as his desires and wishes change, we're on the same page.

For Christians that means prayer, not just the part where we talk, but the part where we listen.

It means being open to the many ways God communicates with us –

through angels and human messengers, through dreams and visions,

through things God shows us and words God speaks to us,

through circumstances and events, through signs and miracles.

So there's the employee handbook or the Bible and the constant communication or prayer.

And the third way we carry out our jobs as executive directors of the life God has given us

is by being the face of the owner, by embodying in ourselves the spirit of the one we represent.

As Christians that means exhibiting the fruits of the spirit –

Love not Judgment, Joy not Negativity,

Peace rather than Anxiety, Patience rather than Impatience,

Kindness instead of Harshness, Goodness instead of Strife,

Faithfulness not Distrust, and Self-control not Rage.

So our job as Exec director of the life god has given us is 3-fold:

1. to carry out the instructions in the handbook/the Bible;
2. to be in constant touch with the owner to ensure that every decision is in line with the owners vision; and
3. to represent the owner, God, by modeling our lives on Jesus.

God gave Jesus power and the authority to use that power.

Jesus used it to preach and teach, to love and forgive, to heal and restore, and to fight for justice and truth.

He used it to move mountains, to cause walls to fall, to cause chains to break, to perform miracles.

He used it calm wind and wave, turn water into wine, walk on water, and feed thousands with a few fish.

And after he left this earth he poured out upon the disciples that same Spirit that God had poured into him,  
giving his disciples the same power and authority that God had given him

He even promised, “You will do even greater things than I”!

You have been given the power of the living God and the authority to use it to build God's kingdom on earth.

As the executive director of the life God has entrusted to you,

steep yourself in the Bible, steer your way through prayer, and steel yourself with the fruit of the spirit.

And I promise you that your life will never be the same. **Amen**