

**Goal: That the hearers would listen to Jesus authority above all else.**

Can you finish this phrase? *“Sticks and stones may break my bones...(but words will never hurt me)”*? A tall, thin, 12-year old boy was trying desperately to fit in at middle school. He was trying to find his place, his identity, like most hormonally challenged youth at that age. He had some friends but he wasn't friends with the “cool” kids and that bothered him. The “cool” kids were a group of boys who were the most popular at school and they did everything together. They were athletic, funny, good looking and hanging out with them would definitely elevate his social status.

This young man tried all sorts of tactics to become part of the popular group, relying on their perceptions, but he failed to fit in. What this confused 12-year old learned was that if he allowed himself to become the group's “whipping boy” they'd allowed him to hang out with them. So, desperate to fit in, this youth subconsciously consented to being mocked and teased. When he'd walk home with them after school, he'd have to walk behind them and willingly endure their ridicule, laughter, and cruel name calling. But he thought that if he could just tolerate their taunts he would be part of this cluster of coolness. He became part of the “in” crowd, but at the cost of him losing his worth and actually believing the words those boys were saying about him were true.

*“Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.”*

Experience tells us that that's simply not true. Words do have the power to hurt and they can hurt deep. Words can be powerful enough to produce twice the pain of a broken bone and can sometimes take four times longer to heal. Words have weight and they can influence our culture. Words can be used to build up or tear down. They can enlighten or confuse. Words can soothe or anger. They can empower or control, inspire or bore. And the persuasive nature of words can be instrumental in developing our character and defining us. Many of our insecurities have roots in the history of demoralizing words. That's why we like hearing words of acceptance and welcome. The reality is, words can guide our actions and our perceptions of ourselves and what we do.

Words have power. Persuasive power. The desire to be liked and well thought of is a natural human response. But where this becomes a problem is when our need for acceptance and supportive words drives us to degrade our own self-worth and even cause us to think, speak or act in sinful ways. It can start when we're as young as 12 and we can

carry it into adulthood. It can happen in the work place when we compromise integrity for words of recognition. It happens in marriages where a lack of appreciative words forces us to look for them in other places and people. It happens in friendships and yes it can even happen in churches. We long for words of approval and when they aren't there we can look for them in unhealthy and unholy places.

Today, Mark wants us to know something very important about Jesus, Jesus has authority! ***“And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes. And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, “What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God.” But Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be silent, and come out of him!” And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying out with a loud voice, came out of him. And they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, “What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.” (Mark 1: 22 – 27)*** Jesus words conveyed authority. His actions displayed authority to the point where people couldn't stop talking about it. Mark's point of including this information is to confirm that Jesus is God, Who has authority over everything.

Heaven and earth are His Kingdom and He rules in the authority proclaimed on Him by The Father. As Paul writes, ***“Therefore God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Philippians 2: 9 – 11)*** Jesus has authority. You can't read the Scriptures and come to any other conclusion. All of the writers of the New Testament believed it and they proclaimed it to the point of even dying to defend it. It was Jesus alone Who people were to believe in because of the authority given to Him as God in the flesh. It was and is His name that the spiritual forces of evil bow. It's not Mohamad or Buddha or some spirit of volcanos or sharks that has this power. It is Jesus Christ alone who has authority over all things.

And this is what it is so important for us to understand. If Jesus has authority over all things, then the words He speaks carry that authority. That means that when He speaks ***“In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”*** and baptizes us with

water, His words make us His children, His disciples, and He promises to be with us forever. (***“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”***) ([Matthew 28:19-20](#)) And if that’s the case then we don’t need to look anywhere else for affirmation and worth, we simply need to look at what His Word says to us who are believers in Him.

And what does His authoritative word say of me and of you? *“I am complete in Him who is the Head of all rulers and powers ([Colossians 2:10](#)). I am free from the law of sin and death ([Romans 8:2](#)). I have the peace of God that passes all understanding ([Philippians 4:7](#)). Greater is He Who is in me than he who is in the world ([1 John 4:4](#)). I can do all things through Christ Jesus who strengthens me ([Philippians 4:13](#)). I am God’s workmanship, created in Christ for good works ([Ephesians 2:10](#)). I am more than a conqueror through Him Who loves me ([Romans 8:37](#)). I am forgiven of all my sins and washed in His Blood ([Ephesians 1:7](#))...I am a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a person of His own procession ([1 Peter 2:9](#)). I am a joint-heir with Christ ([Romans 8:17](#)). I am a new creature in Christ ([2 Corinthians 5:17](#)). (<https://goo.gl/JcJC9u>)*

We don’t need to listen to the world for something that Christ in His Godly authority has already accomplished and proclaims to us personally. In Christ’s authority we are forgiven, valued and accepted. And that is all that’s required to find worth and purpose in this life. And sometimes it’s just nice for all of us to hear that authoritative, truth-filled word. Because the all of those critical words we so often hear from others will not remain. Oh, they may linger in our hearts and minds for a few days or even a month, but God’s authoritative Word is forever. (***“The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever.”***) ([Isaiah 40:8](#)) And because it is an unfading and unfailling, we can always turn to it and find our value and worth through it.

*“Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.”* Words can hurt. But the authority of Jesus’ words for us give healing, life, acceptance, and worth to our lives each day. You are forgiven, you are redeemed, you are a child of God, you are Christ’s disciple, you are Christ’s and you carry Christ’s authoritative word out into this world. In Jesus name. Amen.