

“Wordsmith” Sermon for January 28, 2018,
Deuteronomy 18:15-20, Mark 1:21-28

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Acts 9:1-5 **[first picture-text from Acts 9]**

9 Meanwhile Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest 2 and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any who belonged to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. 3 Now as he was going along and approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. 4 He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” 5 He asked, “Who are you, Lord?” The reply came, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.

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[picture]

Saul of Tarsus was a wordsmith, but his authority came from words that contained threats and murder against the Way of Christ. He had presided over the stoning of Stephen. Yet he realized that the authority that comes from bullying and threats did not seem to stop the followers of the way of Christ. So, Saul sought the authority of a wordsmith. He asked the

high priest, the most learned and wise Caiaphas, son of Annas, who had agitated with Rome for the crucifixion of Christ, to write special letters. Unlike his threats they would be cloaked in spiritual soft sell, and make reference to customs, laws and traditions. Unlike Paul's threats, they would be civil and proper, but the effect of this wordsmith was deadlier than Paul's. Now they would have a proper ecclesiastical and theological framework for persecuting followers of Jesus Christ.

[picture]

Mark tells us that the demon recognized Jesus and called him the Holy One of God. The title "Holy One of God" refers to Jesus' authority as a high priest. The people were amazed at Jesus' authority and teaching, especially his authority over the demon. His words had full power as those from the divine wordsmith to accomplish what he said.

[picture]

Christ is the divine word of God. He is the source of authority. The demon came out not because of threats or bullying or complex religious arguments, but because it could not resist the divine wordsmith, incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth. The Scribes and the Pharisees only recognized a Jesus who threatened their words, their assumed authority through religious ordination. Jesus Christ's authority and power encourages us to make changes in our lives. An encounter with Jesus and his authority changes everything.

[picture]

The Book of Deuteronomy reminds us (18:18b):
I will put my words in the mouth of the prophet, who shall speak to them everything that I command.

The Apostle Paul met Jesus the risen Christ, while on the road to Damascus, and that encounter changed him from a persecutor of Christians to an eager disciple of the divine wordsmith of God. All of

us have been given authority to tell others about the Good News of the Gospel. Some of us have been given a particular anointing from God to use to touch the lives of others. God will reveal our anointing only if we ask him-and that asking includes prayer.

The divine wordsmith empowers and speaks through Christ, demonstrating true authority. God calls us to prayerfully and devotionally allow Christ to be our wordsmith, and hence make us authentic authoritative witnesses of the power to change lives as our own lives are transformed by the Words. Christ as God's wordsmith provides the guidance, the revealing, searching, transforming power of God. This will happen when we like the Apostle Paul, depend upon, respond to and allow Christ, the divine wordsmith, to shape and reshape our lives and actions.

Amen.