

“A Word Spoken with Authority”

In today’s Gospel, Saint Mark tells us that the people were astonished at Jesus’ teaching because he taught them with authority. Jesus was different from any teacher they had ever heard. Other teachers taught them with an authority that came from study and learning, but Jesus taught them with an authority that came from an intimate knowledge of God. To listen to his teaching was to hear the Word of God. To hear his teaching was to hear God’s word.

Jesus speaks with authority because he proclaims what he has seen and heard in God’s presence. He speaks with authority because he proclaims God’s own word. Jesus speaks with authority because he is the Son of God, the one whom God sent into the world to proclaim the good news of the kingdom.

Consider the words of Jesus that we heard last week: “the kingdom of God is at hand, repent and believe in the gospel.” Who has the authority to announce the coming rule of God, if not the very Son of God? Who has the authority to say he is inaugurating the kingdom of God if not the very Son of God? Jesus does not teach something he has learned or discovered after years of study; he teaches with a power and authority that comes from God.

When Jesus says, “Whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and that of the gospel will save it, these are not the words of an ordinary teacher; they are the words of someone who speaks with an

authority that comes from God. They are the words of someone so intimate with God that to hear his voice is to hear the voice of God.

The scriptures we hear every week are filled with words that can astonish and amaze us—if we listen to them with an open heart. The scriptures are filled with words that can change and transform our lives—if we listen to them with an obedient heart. For example, “I am the way and the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father except through me.” “Come to me all you who labor and are burdened and I will refresh you.” These are not the words of an ordinary teacher; they are the words of one who has stood in God’s presence.

Today we are amazed by the marvels of modern technology; and rightly so. Who would have thought of I-phones, Smart Phones, I-Pads, and so much else a generation ago? But as marvelous as these devices are, they cannot change our lives from within. To be sure they change the pattern of our lives, but they do not give us life. But Jesus is the Word of God. When we hear his word with an open heart we are amazed and astonished once more.

In today’s responsorial psalm we sang, “If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.” If we listen to the Word of God with an open heart, that word will change our lives. If we listen to the Word of God with an open heart, we will be astounded once more.