# Congregational-Presbyterian Church

 **“He Taught with Authority”**

**Matthew 7:28-29**

 **May 28, 2023**

We have spent these past five months together reading and discussing Jesus’ teaching in the Sermon on the Mount found in the Gospel of Matthew chapters five through seven. As we come to the final two verses of chapter seven, we are going to ask not so much what we make of Jesus’ teaching, but what we make of Jesus himself. I invite you to turn with me to Matthew 7:28-29

When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, for he taught with real authority—quite unlike their teachers of religious law.

Jesus taught with authority. When I think of authority I think of a law enforcement officer. The job of the police officer is to know the law, interpret the law in any given situation, and enforce the law if need be. When a police officer pulls you over and writes you a ticket for speeding, he is acting with authority.

In my work as pastor, I am responsible for knowing the law of God and interpreting the law in such a way that you and I can apply it to a given situation. But, I am unable to enforce the law in your life. You will hear from me about Jesus and his authority this morning, but whether or not you do anything about what you hear I have absolutely no control over. My authority is limited.

There are those who hear Jesus’ teaching in the Sermon on the Mount, accepting that he knows God’s law and is good at applying it, but they are unwilling to put what he speaks into practice. For them, Jesus’ authority is limited. Like their pastor, they may listen and even agree with what he has to say, but they feel no compulsion to do what he teaches. Essentially, they are their own authority. I pray that neither you nor I are in this category of persons for, according to Jesus as stated earlier in this seventh chapter, they are on the broad road that leads to hell, their life produces bad fruit, Jesus will say: “I never knew you,” and the faith that they think they have will collapse with a mighty crash.

Those who call themselves a Christian, a follower of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, must recognize that his authority is complete. At the end of the Gospel of Matthew, he declares: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” In his life here on earth he demonstrated that authority in miraculous ways. He had authority over nature, stilling the storm and walking on water. He had authority over illness and death, healing a wide range of diseases and afflictions and raising people from the dead. He had authority over evil, rebuking and casting out demons. Most importantly, he has authority to forgive sins and, on the last day, he will have authority to judge you and me.

Are the teachings of Jesus just another way of speaking and interpreting wise sayings for how we should live our lives, or will we put them into practice, seeking with the help of the Holy Spirit to live the kind of life Jesus is describing? It all comes down to whether Jesus has real authority of our life.

When Jesus gathered with his disciples in an upper room, he used the common elements of bread and cup to teach them why he must die on the cross. When he had finished teaching them, he said: “Do this in remembrance of me.” This morning we acknowledge the authority of Jesus as we do this together, participating as the people of God in the sharing of the Lord’s Supper.