

Luke: 4:31–37

From Catena Aurea:

31. And came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and taught them on the sabbath days.

32. And they were astonished at his doctrine: for his word was with power.

33. And in the synagogue there was a man, which had a spirit of an unclean devil, and cried out with a loud voice,

34. Saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art; the Holy One of God.

35. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the devil had thrown him in the midst, he came out of him, and hurt him not.

36. And they were all amazed, and spake among themselves, saying, What a word is this! for with authority and power he commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out.

37. And the fame of him went out into every place of the country round about.

AMBROSE. Neither indignation at their treatment, nor displeasure at their wickedness, caused our Lord to abandon Judæa, but unmindful of His injuries, and remembering mercy, at one time by teaching, at another by healing, He softens the hearts of this unbelieving people, as it is said, And he went down to Capernaum.

CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA. For although He knew that they were disobedient and hard of heart, He nevertheless visits them, as a good Physician tries to heal those who are suffering from a mortal disease. But He taught them boldly in the synagogues, as Esaias saith, I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth. (Isa. 45:19.) On the sabbath day also He disputed with them, because they were at leisure. They wondered therefore at the mightiness of His teaching, His virtue, and His power, as it follows, And they were astonished at his doctrine, for his word was with power. That is, not soothing, but urging and exciting them to seek salvation. Now the Jews supposed Christ to be one of the saints or prophets. But in order that they might esteem Him higher, He passes beyond the prophetic limits. For he said not, “Thus

saith the Lord," but being the Master of the Law, He uttered things which were above the Law, changing the letter to the truth, and the figures to the spiritual meaning.

CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA. But He generally intermingles with His teaching the performance of mighty works. For those whose reason does not incline to knowledge, are roused by the manifestation of miracles. Hence it follows, And there was in the synagogue a man which had a devil.

AMBROSE. The work of divine healing commenced on the sabbath, signifying thereby that he began anew where the old creation ceased, in order that He might declare at the very beginning that the Son of God was not under the Law, but above the Law. Rightly also He began on the sabbath, that He might shew Himself the Creator, who interweaves His works one within another, and follows up that which He had before begun; just as a builder determining to reconstruct a house, begins to pull down the old one, not from the foundation, but from the top, so as to apply his hand first to that part, where he had before left off. Holy men may through the word of God deliver from evil spirits, but to bid the dead rise again, is the work of Divine power alone.

CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA. But the Jews spoke falsely of the glory of Christ, saying, He casteth out devils by Beelzebub the prince of the devils. To remove this charge, when the devils came beneath His invincible power, and endured not the Divine Presence, they sent forth a savage cry, as it follows: And he cried with a loud voice, saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, &c.

AMBROSE. It ought not to shock any one that the devil is mentioned in this book as the first to have spoken the name of Jesus of Nazareth. For Christ received not from him that name which an Angel brought down from heaven to the Virgin. The devil is of such effrontery, that he is the first to use a thing among men and bring it as something new to them, that he may strike people with terror at his power. Hence it follows: For I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God.

ATHANASIUS. (ad Epise. Æg. et Lib.) He spoke of Him not as a Holy One of God, as if He were like to the other saints, but as being in a remarkable manner the Holy One, with the addition of the article. For He is by nature holy by partaking of whom all others are called holy. Nor again did He speak this as if He knew it, but He pretended to know it.

CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA. (et Tit. Bost.) For the devils thought by praises of this sort to make Him a lover of vainglory, that He might be induced to abstain from opposing or destroying them by way of grateful return.

CHRYSOSTOM. The devil wished also to disturb the order of things, and to deprive the Apostles of their dignity, and to incline the many to obey Him.

ATHANASIUS. (ut sup.) Although he confessed the truth he controlled his tongue, lest with the truth he should also publish his own disgrace, which should teach us not to care for such, although they speak the truth, for we who know the divine Scripture, must not be taught by the devil, as it follows: And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Be silent, &c.

THEOPHYLACT. As if they said, What is this word by which he commands, Go out, and he went out?

AMBROSE. In a mystery, the man in the synagogue with the unclean spirit is the Jewish people, which being fast bound in the wiles of the devil, defiled its vaunted cleanliness of body by the pollution of the heart. And truly it had an unclean spirit, because it had lost the Holy Spirit. For the devil entered whence Christ had gone out.

THEOPHYLACT. We must know also that many now have devils, namely, such as fulfil the desires of devils, as the furious have the dæmon of anger; and so of the rest. But the Lord came into the synagogue when the thoughts of the man were collected, and then says to the dæmon that dwelt there, Hold thy peace, and immediately throwing him into the middle he departs out of him. For it becomes not a man always to be angry, (that is, like the brutes,) nor always to be without anger, (for that is want of feeling,) but he must take the middle path, and have anger against what is evil; and so the man is thrown into the midst when the unclean spirit departs from him.

From Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture:

4:31–41 Casting Out Demons and Healing Diseases

Miracles Testify that Jesus the Physician Heals Creation.

Cyril of Alexandria: People who cannot be brought by argument to the sure knowledge of him who by nature and in truth is God and Lord may perhaps be won by miracles to a quiet obedience. Therefore helpfully, or rather necessarily, he often completes his lessons by going on to perform some mighty work. For the people of Judea were not ready to believe. They snubbed the words of those who called them to salvation. The people of Capernaum had this character especially. For this reason the Savior reproved

them. He said, "And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, shall be brought down to hell." Although he knows them to be both disobedient and hard of heart, nevertheless he visits them as a most excellent physician would visit those who were suffering from a very dangerous disease and endeavors to rid them of their illness. He himself says, "Those who are healthy have no need of a physician, only those who are sick." He taught, therefore, in their synagogues with great freedom of speech. For he had foretold this by the voice of Isaiah: "I have not spoken in secret, nor in a dark place of the earth." Commentary on Luke, Homily 12.

New Creation Begins on the Sabbath.

Ambrose: He describes the works of divine healing begun on the sabbath day, to show from the outset that the new creation began where the old creation ceased. He showed us that the Son of God is not under the law but above the law, and that the law will not be destroyed but fulfilled. For the world was not made through the law but by the Word, as we read: "By the Word of the Lord were the heavens established." Thus the law is not destroyed but fulfilled, so that the renewal of humankind, already in error, may occur. The apostle too says, "Stripping yourselves of the old man, put on the new, who was created according to Christ." He fittingly began on the sabbath, that he may show himself as Creator. He completed the work that he had already begun by weaving together works with works. Exposition of the Gospel of Luke 4.58.

Jesus Heals Men and Women.

Ambrose: St. Luke did well to first set before us the man freed from a spirit of wickedness, then substituted the healing of a woman. The Lord had come to heal both sexes, and man must first be cured because he was created first. But woman, who had sinned by an uncertain mind rather than depravity, must not be overlooked. Exposition of the Gospel of Luke 4.57.

The Power of Jesus' Word.

Cyril of Alexandria: The bystanders, witnesses of such great deeds, were astonished at the power of his word. He performed his miracles, without offering up a prayer, asking no one else at all for the power to accomplish them. Since he is the living and active Word of God the Father, by whom all things exist, and in whom all things are, in his own person he crushed Satan and closed the profane mouth of impure demons. Commentary on Luke, Homily 12.

Jesus Rebukes Fever Possessing Peter's Mother-in-Law. Cyril of Alexandria: Jesus arrived at Simon's house and found Simon's mother-in-law sick of a fever. He stood and rebuked the fever, and it left her. Matthew and Mark say that the fever left her. There is no hint of any living thing as the active cause of the fever. But Luke's phrase says that he stood over her, and rebuked the fever, and it left her. I do not know whether we are not compelled to say that that which was rebuked was some living thing unable to sustain the influence of him who rebuked it. It is not reasonable to rebuke a thing without life, and unconscious of the rebuke. Commentary on Luke, Homily 12.

Unclean Demons Know Jesus is the Christ.

Cyril of Alexandria: He would not permit the unclean demons to confess him. It was not right for them to usurp the glory of the apostolic office or to talk of the mystery of Christ with polluted tongues. Yes, nothing they say is true. Let no one trust them. Light cannot be recognized with the help of darkness, as the disciple of Christ teaches us, where he says, "What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever?" Commentary on Luke, Homily 12.

We are Never to Listen to Demons.

Athanasius: Even when the demons spoke the truth, for they spoke the truth when they said, "Thou are the Son of God," the Lord himself silenced them and forbade them to speak. He did this to keep them from sowing their own wickedness in the midst of the truth. He also wished us to get used to never listening to them even though they seem to speak the truth. Life of St. Anthony 26.

Jesus the Chief Physician.

Jerome: "Now Simon's mother-in-law was kept in her bed sick with a fever." May Christ come to our house and enter in and by his command cure the fever of our sins. Each one of us is sick with a fever. When-ever I give way to anger, I have a fever. There are as many fevers as there are faults and vices. Let us beg the apostles to intercede for us with Jesus, that he may come to us and touch our hand. If he does so, at once our fever is gone. He is an excellent physician and truly the chief Physician. Moses is a physician. Isaiah is a physician. All the saints are physicians, but he is the chief Physician. Homilies on the Gospel of Mark 75.

Jesus Has Power Over Death.

Athanasius: What irreverent men do not believe, the spirits see—that he is God. So they flee and fall down at his feet, saying just what they uttered when he was in the body. On the Incarnation 5.32.

The Holy Flesh of Jesus Heals His Creation.

Cyril of Alexandria: Jesus laid his hands upon the sick one by one and freed them from their malady. He demonstrated that the holy flesh, which he had made his own and endowed with godlike power, possessed the active presence of the might of the Word. He intended us to learn that, although the only-begotten Word of God became like us, yet he is nonetheless God. He wants us to know that he is easily able, even by his own flesh, to accomplish all things. His body was the instrument by which he performed miracles....

Jesus, then, entered Peter's house, where a woman was lying stretched upon a bed, exhausted with a violent fever. As God, he might have said, "Put away the disease, arise," but he adopted a different course of action. As a proof that his own flesh possessed the power of healing, because it is the flesh of God, he touched her hand. "Immediately," it says, "the fever left her." Let us therefore also receive Jesus. When he has entered into us and we have received him into mind and heart, then he will quench the fever of unbecoming pleasures. He will raise us up and make us strong, even in spiritual things, so that we might serve him by performing those things that please him. But observe again, I ask, how great is the usefulness of the touch of his holy flesh. For it both drives away diseases of various kinds, and a crowd of demons, and overthrows the power of the devil. It heals a very great multitude of people in one moment of time. Although he was able to perform these miracles by a word and the preference of his will, yet to teach us something useful for us, he also lays his hands upon the sick. For it was necessary, most necessary, for us to learn that the holy flesh which he had made his own was endowed with the activity of the power of the Word by his having implanted in it a godlike might. Let it then take hold of us, or rather let us take hold of it by the mystical "giving of thanks." May we do this so that it might free us also from the sicknesses of the soul, and from the assault and violence of demons. Commentary on Luke, Homily 12.