

Grace, Mercy, & Peace from God our Father & our Lord, Jesus Christ.

I've shared before that during high school and college I spent my summers working for my uncles in my mother's home town. After a couple of years I graduated to working as a carpenter's helper to the company fixer; Stanley Morris fixed everyone else's botched jobs. To do his job, Stanley had to know just about everything, and uphold a higher standard than just about anyone else in the company. He expected a lot of himself, and took pride in a job well done. He had ***the authority that comes with craftsmanship.***

Unfortunately, that meant that because I did not have the carpentry skills to the level of his satisfaction **I was mostly relegating to loading and unloading the work van, fetching things, holding things, and occasionally driving to pick up materials.** Now I've always been mechanical, and I've always loved working with my hands, so **this state of affairs frustrated me to no end.** ***And like most entitled 19 year olds I was quite good at telling Stanley what I could do and incessantly whining that I was fully capable of handling some of the skilled work.***

One day as we drove to a job, I whined at him that I'd been watching him for months and I'd learned a lot, and I knew I was ready to do things on my own. ***I kept after him for the entire 30 minute drive*** to the job. You could always tell when Stanley was annoyed; he stopped making jokes and got real quiet.

After about 20 minutes of listening to me whine, Stanley threw down the gauntlet, and said, ***Enough already. You're so sure that doing my***

job is so easy. We'll just switch today; you'll be the carpenter and I'll be the helper. We'll see just how good you watched, how much you learnt. I'll do what you usually do; I'll hold what you tell me to hold; unload what you tell me to unload from the van; I'll even clean up after we're done. But I won't say a word, and we'll see how you do."

"What's the job we're doing?" I asked.

"We're – you're replacing the backdoor. It's hung crooked – doesn't fit in the jamb correctly. It's that Norbert Janis; he couldn't set anything plumb after lunch if his life depended on it. Don't know what he's got in that thermos, but I'm pretty sure it ain't just coffee. I'm sure you'll do better."

***I arrived with the confidence only someone who's never been responsible for anything could have.** Sure enough, that door was crooked, the jam was skewed. It was a wreck.*

"I'm allowed to ask questions, since you rattle on that way all day long." Stanley said. *"So, what did he do wrong?"*

"Could be a lot of things," I said uncertainly. "But we'll know more when we get the trim off."

Once that was done, it was pretty clear what was wrong. Norbert didn't shim behind the hinges. Actually, Norbert didn't use any shims at all. *"No shims. What was he thinking."*

"He wasn't thinking," Stanley said. "He probably didn't bring any shims, and was just too lazy to go and get some."

We tore the door and trim out. And I commenced working. *Stanley was true to his word.* He **unloaded, held** the door, and **didn't say a word**. I **did everything that I could remember**, and an hour later it all looked good –

until we hung the door on the hinges, and saw that there was a ¾ inch gap under the door.

I thought that top jamb was awful flush to the framing, but I was just the helper. So I didn't say anything," he commented. "You forgot to trim the bottom of the jamb. My turn now."

Thirty minutes later – including the tear out – the door was perfect. *After that day, I listened more, said less, and watched every detail, because frankly I had a lot to learn. I did all this because I understood Stanley was more of an authority and teacher for me after that.* He pointed things out and explained more about what and why he was doing things, because he understood that I wanted to learn, and not just earn a buck.

At first glance *most of us hear this morning's gospel reading from Mark, and think it's a healing story.* Jesus does heal plenty of people, to be sure, but this isn't the point Mark makes today. *The overarching point he makes is that Jesus speaks as one who has authority.* Jesus doesn't speak about what every other rabbi throughout the ages says about a given topic. He simply pronounces the truth.

Mark makes this point after the previous healing of the man in the synagogue with that slightly awkward comment the people make following that healings. **The people don't say,** *"Wow, he can heal people, all sorts of people of all sorts of illness."* – which would make sense given the circumstances. **Instead they say,** *"What is this? A new teaching—with authority!"*

Our attention – at least most people's attention – is drawn to the Jesus miraculous healing power. But Mark wants us to know that **all**

these miraculous healings serve only to prove Jesus authority over all things – demons, nature, illness, and later on even death when He raises Jairus daughter from the dead. *St. Mark wants us to know that Jesus' teachings are the point* – *that we need to listen to this one who teaches with authority.*

St. Mark hammers this point home near the end of this morning's gospel. People have gathered in Capernaum, looking for Jesus to heal more people, but Jesus can't be found. **When they finally find Him off praying off by himself, He doesn't return to heal the crowds, but rather says,** "Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do."

Here is One who came teaching with authority and proclaims the Father's message of mercy, forgiveness and peace. *Mark makes this point in the first chapter of his gospel because he wants us to listen carefully to what Jesus says, and let His words guide our lives.*

The question before us: *Do we look to Jesus' words and teachings to direct our days and deeds into the way of His peace?*

Jesus will lay down His life for the truth He teaches, will we listen?

We can learn from one with authority and live lives of peace and meaning, or we can go on along thinking we know everything. I made that mistake once. I hope I learned to listen to authority.

Our world is full of people who think they've learned a lot and are ready to tackle life on their own; just look at the results. Just imagine what a little humility could do to heal our world and our lives.

Amen!!!

