

Sunday 19th September 2021
Mark 1:21-39 – Authority, Hospitality, & Humility

We are embarking on part two of our journey through Mark. In our reading we see a snap shot of 24 hours of Jesus' earthly life. Mark's objective is to set the context for Jesus' ministry. This can be summed up by three words: authority, hospitality and humility. These are represented by three scenes.

Scene 1: Jesus Goes To Church & Teaches With Authority (Mark 1:21-28)
Capernaum was the home of Peter, Andrew, James and John and it became the place where Jesus set up his own home/base (Matt 4:13). One Sabbath, Jesus went to the synagogue in Capernaum and he was invited to speak (v21).

What Jesus actually said we are not told – but we are told the effect it had on the people. They were 'amazed' (v22) because they had never heard anything like it before. They were used to Rabbi's who taught the law to them and who operated under the authority of 'the Law' to which they themselves were subject. Jesus however, as God's Son taught with a different authority and his authority did not depend on anyone else it came from him.

The effect of Jesus' teaching on the people is emphasised by the reaction of the 'demon possessed man' – who has previously been unaffected by the teaching of the Rabbi's. But now with the coming of Jesus the demon is disturbed and cries out (v24):

What do you want with us ... I know who you are, the holy one of God!
Jesus turns to him and says – 'be quiet ... come out of him' and the demon obeys instantly for he knows his fate is sealed.

Once again the people are amazed:

'What is this? A new teaching – and with authority!' (v27)

They didn't understand fully - yet they instinctively knew they had experienced, in Jesus, something of God's presence and authority that day.

Authority:

Have we lost sight of the sovereign authority of God? We live in a society increasingly dependent on science and technology, where life has become consumer driven and the national church has in many ways lost its way. It's easy to make your Christian faith into a personal side show that has no real relevance to daily life.

But the truth is that God has revealed himself to us in Jesus Christ. To him all authority has been given – the resurrection, the ascension and the out pouring of the HS reminds us that this is – Jesus Christ, the Holy One of God!

Scene 2: Hospitality & Healing: (Mark 1:29-34)

After teaching in the synagogue Jesus retired to the home of Simon and Andrew to relax. Much of Jesus' ministry take place in the context of hospitality, either his own or that of others:

- Here in the home of Andrew and Simon (Mark 1)
- Also the home of Matthew (Mark 2), and Simon the Leper (Mark 14)
- And in the other gospels -the home of Lazarus, Mary and Martha and the home of Zacchaeus.

Perhaps most significantly Jesus' final farewell before his death is set in the context of a shared meal in the upper room.

Many of Jesus' healing miracles take place in a context of hospitality, such as Peter's mother in law here in Mark 1. Lazarus is raised from the dead during a wake (see John 11). Hospitals are so called because they were originally seen as places of hospitality through which healing could be found.

Again there are exceptions but as you look at the overall ministry of Jesus portrayed in the gospels you see not a preaching campaign with advertising posters, big meeting halls and a set timetable of events. Rather you see a man travelling from one home to another talking with people as he went, sharing the love of God in everyday situations.

Both St Paul and St Peter encouraged the early church to 'practice hospitality' (see Rom 12:13, 1Peter 4:9). But the church for many years has lost sight of the gift of hospitality, focusing instead on services, committees and missions.

But we are rediscovering it – gradually – aren't we?

Scene 3: Humility and Prayer (Mark 1:35-39)

This third strand to Jesus ministry manifests itself in our reading in two different ways. Firstly there is recognition by Jesus that he could not do it in his own strength, he needed God's help. So after a busy night at Peter's house we see him early in the morning slipping off to pray (v35).

The gospels are full of references to Jesus taking time out with God, to pray. Jesus knew that even he was dependent on God's help and strength.

Then secondly Jesus clearly shunned ‘popularity’. Simon Peter and his friends came looking for him (v36) because, as they said, ‘*everyone is looking for you*’ - they wanted more of him.

Jesus response however is to move on (v38) and not stay around to be applauded. Crowds often followed Jesus but he never seems to have sought them out for himself.

St Paul, St Peter and St James all encouraged the early church to ‘be completely humble’ in their writings: (see Eph 4:2, 1 Peter 5:6, James 4:10). Humility is not always easy to find in the church however. We have our own celebrity culture. We like to have titles and positions of responsibility, to be recognised by others for what we do – not so says Jesus!

Hospitality and Humility:

As Christians we are called to follow the way of Christ, to become like him. (see Col 3:12-14). I believe that learning to show hospitality and humility to others would be a very good place to start, both individually and as a church.

So let us follow in the footsteps of Jesus, to learn from him the way of hospitality and humility. Just as the first disciples did.

For Discussion and Reflection:

Reread Mark 1:21-39

Do you relate, or connect, with any of the characters in this passage?

- Have we lost sight of God’s sovereign authority in our lives, and in the world around us?
- What difference should it make to our daily lives to acknowledge the authority of God/Jesus in everything we do and experience?
- Why is hospitality so important? (*see Rom 12:13, 1 Peter 4:9*).
- How could you, or the church, be more hospitable to others?
- Why is humility important? (*see Eph 4:2, 1 Peter 5:6, James 4:10*).
- How can we show greater humility, in the way Jesus did, in our daily lives?

Prayer:

Almighty God, who sent your Son Jesus Christ to show us your love through the humility of his death upon the cross. Grant that we might learn to follow his example and to demonstrate hospitality and humility in our daily lives. Through Jesus Christ, your Son our Lord. Amen.