

Mark 1:21-28

If you listened carefully to today's reading from Mark you might be having a lot of questions. If you don't, then maybe you have settle them all because you have studied and meditated on this reading a number of times and know what it is saying to you personally. And that would be great!

However, if you have not been living with this scripture all week, you might have missed a couple of underpinnings when it was read to you today, or even if you were reading it at the same time.

I am going to assume that for most of us, we turn to Sunday's gospel reading for the first time when we read it in church. Yes, on many occasions we have heard it before, but rarely I suspect have any of us *worried it* as a dog might *worry* a bone.

Today , I want to *worry* today's scripture with you and see if it can make a difference in our lives, if it hasn't already. This is important for in many ways it is key to our mission as Christ Church as stated at the end of our bulletin:

We follow Jesus Christ.

Worshipping and serving with love and joy

We open our mind, hearts and doors to the world.

That was be hard, if not impossible to fulfill, if deep down in our hearts we don't know and accept the love of God and therefore the love of all creation (and creatures) we are here to steward in God's name!

Getting to know Jesus, his background and the God he knew and served, can be greatly helped by the study of scriptures. I don't meaning signing up for a class, as such, but taking our time to explore, pray, think and ask questions.

Do you remember that story I told several months ago about the recitation of the 23rd psalm. It bears a quick repeat to make my point today.

It comes from one of Madeleine L'Engle's books (*A Stone for a Pillow: Journey's with Jacob*)

Many years ago when it was customary in the grand manor houses of England, after dinner to have guests come together and each would share some talent to entertain one another— with story telling, a song or playing an instrument.

it happened that Charles Laughton was there, and when it was his turn he recited the 23 Psalm. Everyone applauded for it was indeed a fine performance. Later in the evening someone noticed the families great Aunt had not had her turn. But she had been dozing off and on in the corner. She was asked to perform something for they knew she had a great memory. Well, she recited the 23 Psalm, not knowing it had already been done. However, when she was finished there wasn't a dry eye in the room. Later a guest approached Charles Laughton and asked, " You did such a fine delivery of the psalm, but why were we so moved by that little old lady." Charles replied, *I knew the Psalm, she knew the Shepherd.*

Bible study can help us get to know the shepherd. By that I mean, that this great aunt did more than memorize the psalm, she prayed it and thought about it and brought it into her life!

The essence of scripture has to come from your prospective, your experience, not second hand from someone else. When that happens then we know whereof we speak.

You and I have to do much more and then act *on love* even when we don't want to sometimes.....

What does today's reading tell us that will help move us toward acting on our mission statement?

Our lesson today is in the first chapter of Mark. This story comes after a series of seemingly fast movements. Following Jesus' baptism onward, he is like like a man on the move. If you want to be really impressed with literal movement, turned to the back of almost any bible and see where Jesus walked in the three short years of his ministry!!

So by the time he walks into the synagogue in Capernaum, he been baptized by John, moved out to the desert for 40 days and nights to be tempted and to refute the Tempter, claiming the ministry God had for him.

Then John was put in prison and Jesus started his own active ministry by going about Galilee proclaiming the good news of God. Mark writes: *The time has come, Jesus said, the Kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news.*" (come back to God, don't give up, God is near) That is the essence of Jesus Ministry in Mark!

He is apparently on his own until he calls Simon and Andrew and James and John by the Sea of Galilee—

Now, with this small beginning group of disciples he goes on the Sabbath into the synagogue and begins to teach. Already he was known, for he steps up front and centre and take on the role of teacher.

Now, for a moment let us become the members of the synagogue in Capernaum, forgetting that women would not have been present. This Rabbi comes in and reads the scripture and perhaps gives an interpretations (midrash).

What is our response? We are amazed! Why? He taught with **authority**, unlike other scribes or Rabbis, who did not really seem to know what they were talking about. They were just reciting! Jesus spoke from the text at a very different level. He too seemed to know the shepherd. He had not only studied it, but prayed about it, asked for God's guidance, with the confidence he knew he was a child of God and which he would later claim we all are!

Interestingly, the word *authority* in English has as it root *author*. Jesus must have had the spirit of the law within him: justice, mercy and faithfulness, which the scribes lacked.

But then what happens? A man who considered possessed, who somehow got into the synagogue. He would not have been allowed in for he would have been considered unclean. But, this person saw Jesus in a way no one else noticed....something that others missed!

Now is he possessed? I suspect he has a mental illness which they did not have names for as we might: manic depressive, schizophrenic , bi-polar. No they only had some sense that the person had no control and therefore he was possessed.

How did Jesus respond? He saw the man as one who needed healing and came for help. He spoke sternly to that part of the sick man who was hurting and ordered him to get out and the man was released!

Jesus healed and throughout the gospel of Mark there will be numerous times when this pattern of teaching and healing will be repeated.

But how do we the congregation in the synagogue, respond to this man Jesus' teaching and his healing? We talk among ourselves but not to Jesus!

Why not?

Are we afraid to step up and be known by this Holy One? Is it safer to talk about him, rather than to him? Over time, it seems that Jesus calls those who are willing to step up and be vulnerable and willing to learn and to follow. People willing to take risks....even knowing that don't really understand what they are getting involved in yet!

Well the congregation that day did not engage him but talked among one another. Hopefully, they at least let others know what he had done and said.

Jesus knew God; he spent time in his presence, he studied and mediated over scriptures and he prayed and listened for many years.

For us today perhaps allowing ourselves to get into the story ourselves gives us a better view of what was going on and a way of coming to know Jesus better ourselves.

Jesus calls us to be listeners and learners and to share what we know. Most importantly it will not only be by what we say but by what we do and how we live our lives.

How else can we learn the way he loved and forgave...Love and forgiveness are key...everything else is just value added.

Throughout the gospel of Mark we will hear about Jesus healing and teaching.

We too need to get out of the dualism of the mind-body separation of our western view. Sickness affects the whole person and our ministry of prayer for the recovery of illness or whatever is separating the person from the love of God and our prayer shawl ministry are part of our healing ministry...but perhaps only part.....

The more we come to know the shepherd, the more we too will know that our call to be healers of whatever separates us from the love of God and God's creation is another way of expressing our mission.

Rev. Linda A. St.Clair
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Christ Church Gabriola