

“A DAY IN THE LIFE ...”

Mark 1:29-39 [MW18-04]

Sermon preached by Rev Wayne Thornton at Mangawhai and Wellsford, Sunday 04 February 2018

Typical of Mark's style, this morning's gospel might well be called:

- “A Day in the Life of Jesus”
- just like a TV documentary might show us
 - “A Day in the Life of Jacinda Ardern”
 - “A Day in the Life of Kieran Read” or
 - “A Day in the Life of Lorde”

And did you perhaps get a little breathless as you listened to the gospel being read?

- I mentioned a couple of weeks ago that Mark's is often seen as the “immediate” or “action” gospel
- and we certainly see that here:
 - “as soon as” - Jesus leaves the synagogue and goes straight to Simon Peter's house where the very next thing he does is cure Simon Peter's mother in law
- “that evening” - crowds of people turn up the door of the house Jesus cures many of them and silences the demons
- “very early the next morning” - Jesus runs off to a lonely place then takes off on a round of preaching and teaching
- and we thought we lived busy lives!!!

All this in Mark chapter one, verses twenty nine to thirty nine

- just ten verses, but there's a lot going on here in which Mark manages to highlight three, no make that four vital things about Jesus and us

Let's begin with Jesus' cure of Simon Peter's mother in law

- Mark records:
 - Jesus went to her. He took hold of her hand and helped her up.*
 - The fever left her and she served them a meal*
- in this equal opportunity, justice seeking, politically correct age someone is bound to think:
 - what's new ... a bunch of guys come home, there's no food ready so instead of getting some for themselves, they have Jesus cure the lady of the house and sure enough, she gets better and gets them a meal
- surely they could have at least made themselves a sandwich! and those who say that may have a point however ... however there's something deeper and more significant here

Once a person is touched by Jesus

- remember Mark writes: “Jesus took her hand and helped her up” once a person answers that call then they immediately become a disciple - they have no choice but to serve others
- in short, the fever leaves and service begins that's how Mark sees it
- God's service to Simon Peter's mother in law becomes her service to others Mark is not on about equal opportunity, justice or political correctness but discipleship

Then when the crowds show up on the doorstep

- Jesus forced out a lot of demons
but the demons knew who he was and he did not let them speak
- excuse me?
that always used to puzzle me, that Jesus did not want who he was to be known
it doesn't seem to make sense, does it?

Those demons knew Jesus was God's promised Messiah, God's very own Son

- but Jesus did not want that to get around just yet
Jesus did not want to be a "celebrity"
- Jesus is in the business of calling followers, not courting fans
you see, fans cheer and scream and shout ... until the next big thing comes along
followers on the other hand take up the cross
- Mark asks a put-you-on-the-spot challenging question:
are we genuine followers or mere fans?

Woven through this day in the life of Jesus, as recorded by Mark

- is the motif of healing
and the careful but significant difference between curing and healing
- reflecting on this Ram Dass, an American spiritual teacher
who suffered a debilitating stroke communicates:

While cures aim at returning our bodies to what they were in the past, healing uses what is present to move us more deeply into Soul Awareness ... Although I have not been cured of the effects of my stroke, I have certainly undergone profound healings of mind and heart ... healing, which refers to the soul, can happen without cure, which refers to the body.

A man who we'll call "Fred" was diagnosed with terminal cancer ...

After an initial period of distress he says: "Something amazing happened. I simply stopped doing everything that wasn't essential, that didn't matter." His terminal life became vital and peaceful. But the doctors changed their mind. He was not terminally ill. He had a rare but curable disease. "When I heard that over the telephone," he said, "I cried like a baby because I was afraid my life would go back to the way it used to be."

Jesus cured some, not all

- Jesus was more concerned with healing
the healing of the soul
which might involve forcing out many demons ...
- these days such 'demons' may include things like:
thinking we are the centre of the universe
collecting things and discarding people
filling our heads with mindless stuff from magazines, TV, internet and overlooking the truth
excusing vice and ignoring virtue
a constricted heart over a generous one
- sometimes, it has been written
gospel wisdom tells us that an uncured body brings about a healed soul
- now, as then, Jesus cures some but heals all

Near the end of this full, frantic, fast-paced record of a day in the life of Jesus

- right after the clamour of the crowds on the doorstep comes this sentence:

Before daybreak the next morning, Jesus got up and went to an isolated place to pray

- Jesus needed some 'time out' to clarify who he was to focus on his mission what it demanded and where it was taking him
- even at this early stage Jesus needed to resist the fans and the growing fame in order to follow something deeper

Any of you heard of or remember the name 'Carl Perkins'?

- he was a popular rockabilly singer in the 1950s probably one of his main claims to fame is he wrote the song "Blue Suede Shoes" which was one of Elvis Presley's first big hits
- as a guitarist Carl Perkins influenced many of the next generations of Rock'n'Rollers especially George Harrison of the Beatles
- I know this for myself because a few years ago I watched a TV special on Carl Perkins which highlighted how many others he had inspired, helped and encouraged and the songs he had written
- he was a great singer and guitar player, as well as an accomplished songwriter I knew many of his songs and many of the artists he had influenced but I did not know him at all
- he seemed like a thoroughly nice guy but he never attained the fame and popularity of his more notorious colleagues

And he explained it like this:

I never envied Elvis, his mansion and all that. All those boys – Elvis, Jerry Lee Lewis, Roy Orbison – they all lost their wives, their families. People say to me, "What happened to you, Carl? All of them went to superstardom. Where'd you go?" I say, "I went home. And that's a good place to be."

Mark is saying that it takes some quiet time, some prayer time, to find our true home

- Mark is asking: Do we know where 'home' is? it takes some quiet time, some prayer time to grasp our identity and our mission in life
- it is highly significant that right after dealing with the throng of people immediately before heading off to preach and heal 'everywhere in Galilee' Jesus spent time alone in prayer
- it helped him to know who he was what he was to do and where he was to go

Mark's "Day in the Life of Jesus" highlights four things for us here today

- Jesus has called us to discipleship, which involves serving others our call is to be genuine followers and not mere fans Jesus desires to force out our demons and heal our souls
- the fourth thing is to take time out to reflect on the previous three how our life and direction in life lines up that we know who we are, what we are to do, where we are to go

So in the opposite of Mark's almost breathless schedule

- let's do what Jesus did
and take time to reflect and pray
- this insightful prayer, the "Prayer of an Unknown Confederate Soldier"
seems to lead in a helpful direction

[Power Point slide]

*I asked for strength that I might achieve;
I was made weak that I might learn humbly to obey.
I asked for health that I might do greater things;
I was given infirmity that I might do better things.
I asked for riches that I might be happy;
I was given poverty that I might be wise.
I asked for power that I might have the praise of men;
I was given weakness that I might feel the need of God.
I asked for all things that I might enjoy life;
I was given life that I might enjoy all things.
I got nothing that I had asked for,
but everything that I had hoped for.
Almost despite myself my unspoken prayers were answered;
I am, among all men, most richly blessed.*

[?moment for silent reflection?]

This week

- take some time to affirm you are indeed a follower of Jesus
take the hand Jesus offers
receive the healing he brings
and recognise the place he calls you to serve