



Sunday Reflection

Season of Epiphany

in the Charges of St Margarets, Renfrew
& St Johns, Johnstone



For Sunday 7 February 2021

Epiphany 5

In our reading today Jesus is setting the scene for helping people to realise the full extent of his mission and his journey to the cross and beyond. He is not just another miracle worker for those looking for a quick fix.

Reflection for this week's Gospel

"And Jesus cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him. In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. "

Mark 1.34-35

An Illustration to set the scene

Driving down the High Street of almost any town today will reveal something about what sort of people we are (or perhaps the sort of people we were before coronavirus came along!) - McDonald's, KFCs, Burger King, Greg's, Pizza Express, Kebab shops, Oriental Express, take-away coffee shops - we know what we want, we want it our way, and we want it now.

This is an age and a society of fast food, junk food. At home, microwaves promise meals in minutes and anything that is frozen, dried or packaged is almost assured of success. We are people in a hurry. We don't take time to cook, we can't slow

down to eat, we no longer spend time together at table. Or Perhaps COVID19 has changed things in your home, or perhaps is hasn't as people vie for table space to work and navigate the internet connections for meeting, home learning and studying!

We are a nation of instant breakfast followed by fast relief.

Nor is it just meals we rushed through: we rush through much of life. We want not only instant soup but instant success and instant solutions to problems.

Perhaps that accounts for the enduring popularity of Superman and indeed Superwoman. Their adventures never involve planning or wondering, uncertainty or waiting. There is just a hero who swoops in, cape fluttering behind them, scoops up the character in need of rescue and flies off to safety. That's how we like our heroes - fast and flashy.

That's true of religion, too. Many of the churches we see growing today offer that sort of approach to faith: simple, unambiguous answers, healing on the spot, perhaps even promises of immediate success in business. It's all very appealing. We'd like a superhero to save us, to solve our problems, to erase our sorrows.

Looking at the teaching of the Gospel

The people of Jesus' day were not very different. They too were impressed by miracle workers offering instant cures. They too looked for a hero to save them. No wonder they were drawn to Jesus. Here was someone special- of wonder-worker, a healer, perhaps the solution to their problems. Here was one who could say the word and make it all better.

But the evangelist Mark knew that Jesus was more than that, and for that reason he tells us something peculiar in verse 34 of chapter one: Jesus "would not permit the demons to speak because they knew him". Over and over in St Marks gospel, Jesus seems to want to keep his identity secret. Why? Why doesn't he want anyone to know who he is?

The answer lies in how people saw him- miracle worker, healer, almost magician. At the beginning of his ministry, his acts revealed him as one with power, a superman doing mighty things, reaching out and curing instantly. But miracles were only part of the story. Jesus knew that those who saw him only as a wonder-worker would miss the real meaning of his life.

Therefore he commanded silence until the rest of the story could be told, the story which leads to the cross. It was not that he wanted to hide his identity. Rather, it was that he wanted to reveal it fully, and that would be possible only after his death and resurrection. Only then could he be seen as more than a performer of miracles.

How can we reflect on the application to our lives?

To us, Jesus' silencing of the demons serves as a reminder. We, too, may look for wonderful cures, miraculous answers, speedy solutions. The word responds by pointing us towards the rest of the story. To a world which wants a superman, Christ comes not with a cape but with a cross, reminding us that there is more to it than that. God offers us not a hero but a saviour, not magic tricks but victory over death.

And when we look for fast food Christ offers real spiritual food, himself, body and blood given and shed for us. That's who this Jesus is- healer, wonder-worker, one with authority- all of those things, but only because he is also the one who has

passed through death in order to bring us new life. That is the rescue that is offered. It does not involve easy answers of instant solutions. Instead, it comes through struggle and pain but leads ultimately to victory.

Come, then, and be spiritually fed in your isolation, spiritually eat the meal that is offered. Come, not just to a miracle worker with instant cures and easy answers, but to the one who hangs on the cross. Come, and be nourish, spiritually fed, for here is real spiritual food, spiritual food to satisfy us, spiritual food to give life.

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Mark 1.34-35

Please share your response to this reflection to Rector@SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk – did anything speak to you? Did you feel challenged, angered, consoled by something in the words? How did God’ spirit move you as you read it? Have you shared the words with someone else? Is this a worthwhile thing to make available to folk whilst we cannot meet for corporate worship to share in word and sacrament? What are your thoughts?

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