

**Mark 3:20-end**

**2 Corinthians 4:13-end**

***Jesus' purpose continues in us***

In our Gospel reading today, Jesus, the young man from Nazareth, has been causing quite a stir as a preacher and healer. He has taken time out, away from the hubbub these have caused, and been up on a hillside hard at work teaching a specially selected group of apostles, explaining that their calling would be to preach and heal, just as he has been doing.

This is Mark's fast-paced Gospel, and we move swiftly from one scene to the next, and so we're suddenly gathered with Jesus in a house at the foot of the hills, possibly in the little community of Capernaum by the Sea of Galilee. Everyone who travels, from the hills to the sea, or along the coast, passes through Capernaum, and so has news of this young man, his teachings, and the miracles he has wrought. So, there are people inside the house, outside the house, and there's not even room to sit down and share a meal.

Part of the attraction, the clamour to see Jesus, are the miraculous and dramatic healings that have occurred around him; minds and lives changed beyond all recognition. But it's not just the sick and the inquisitive who are gathered: his family arrive, and the authorities are present to challenge or police what is going on. As is often the case when people feel unable to define or explain something, or when people feel conflicted or threatened by the logic of what they are witnessing, questioning turns to name-calling, and then abuse starts to be hurled. In this case his family question his mental state, and the authorities his humanity; is Jesus the devil in disguise?

Jesus of course knows only too well who he is, and what he is doing. He isn't just in a house that lies between his hill-top teaching venue and the people he is called to heal, but he is in very essence God, made man, the link between heaven and earth. This fact wasn't, as Mary may have feared when she came to visit, causing him an episode of mental instability that required her to step in and try to protect him from himself. Neither was it, as the authorities' hyperbole suggested, the prince of darkness turning out his own underlings. But it was very much Jesus proclaiming what he had been born to do; welcoming all-comers into his Father's new Kingdom, invading spiritual spaces occupied by both Satan and spiritual tradition, bringing in a new order where the Holy Spirit had free-rein and was free to reign.

By right of birth, Mary's child, born of her willingness to accept the work of the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35), is positioned clearly here between his work of teaching and

moulding those who will proclaim his divinity and humanity and the practical actions that proclaim likewise. He's also talking two languages, both simple words that state his priorities as being among those who recognise that he is doing God's work, and the iceberg layer underneath them, which fires warning shots across the bows of those who seek to control him. Jesus' Mother through her experience of his conception, and the authorities by dint of their knowledge of all that scripture had prophesied toward his very existence, should have been best equipped to recognise the work of God's Spirit when they saw it. The very fact that they were prepared to label it a work of madness or the devil, showed them to be blind to the truth.

For those who would go on to be responsible for Jesus' trial and crucifixion, that blindness continued making it impossible for them to recognise God's work in the world, whether Jesus was living or, in their eyes and understanding, dead. They would never see the truth of the resurrection, the continued unveiling of God's new Kingdom in the work of not just one man, but through all those who accepted the reality he presented to them; that God was at work in the world in a new way.

For Mary, this lack of sight was temporary. We're not told when, or why, but at some point, she makes, or remakes, the connection between the miraculous means of his birth, the words that were spoken to her in the early months and years of his childhood, and the actions of the man he had grown into. This must be the case, or why else would she would stand and mourn at the foot of the cross not a mad-man, but her divinely-purposed son (John 19:25). Nor would she, one of the first of that generation to have done God's will (Mark 3:35), have hidden herself with his new family, the apostles, to pray and wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit to all people who recognised the significance his resurrection (Acts 1:14).

When we gather to listen to Jesus' teaching and seek his healing in prayer, when we remember in bread and wine the price that had to be paid for his divine nature being revealed in human form, we are placing ourselves with Jesus in a crowded house full of people who don't really understand him. We are in effect in a place between God and the world, where there is a clamour of confused interest in who Jesus is, but also authorities who are keen to check up on him or us. Here we need to be very sure who we are and why we are here. We need to have the same spirit of faith as St. Paul did, and speak of it with the same assurance.

When he quotes Psalm 116 at the beginning of our Epistle this morning, St. Paul is pressured on many sides for his faith in Jesus, and yet his belief in Christ's death and resurrection gives him the confidence to continue his prayers to and praise of God. Just as Jesus knew that his new family of followers were more important to the fulfilment of his ministry than his human family, St. Paul knows that his current

difficulties are necessary to the purpose of reaching out to more and more people with God's grace.

As Jesus' family, we mustn't lose our enthusiasm for our part in sharing his mission of teaching and healing, however much we may feel we're flagging, especially if we've taken our share of the load for many years. The nature of our creator God is that he is always doing a new thing, in and through the name of Jesus, with us and so that others can experience this new life too. There are always those who will question our beliefs and may even abuse us, suggesting that what we are saying or doing is the work of the devil and not of God; but that didn't stop Jesus or St. Paul, and it shouldn't stop us. There will also be some among the family of faith who might think we're a little mad at times, or perhaps trying to do too much, or acting too soon, but if we continue with the work, they will in time understand and come once again to stand at the cross with us, and wait upon his Holy Spirit.

Jesus came to teach people about the significance of his life as the only person who was both human and divine, and the necessity of that fact in relation to his death and resurrection. We are now his apostles, those who not only teach this to others on his behalf, but are called to share his work of healing, renewing a broken world step-by-step and day by day. This is God's work of reaching beyond the temporary nature of our human circumstances, to the hope of his eternal presence. This was Jesus purpose, and it must continue in and through us.