

Lyn Valley Mission Community

Trinity I

Genesis 3:8-15 Psalm 130 2 Corinthians 4:13-5:1 Mark
3:20-end

In speaking and listening, writing and reading, may God be known, who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen

From the midst of an intriguing gospel sketch of Jesus' relationships with various characters in his story, I think we are offered a striking challenge:

- Do you know what the work of the Holy Spirit in the world looks like and are you excited about joining in with it?

Today's events follow Mark's breathless account of a series of miracles, healing and exorcisms which present Jesus' mission as one of overcoming all the forces that oppose God's will for human flourishing. Jesus has crossed swords with the religious authorities by claiming the Sabbath is God's gift for human wellbeing, not an end in itself. And just before this story he has commissioned his disciples to share in his ministry of preaching God's kingdom and furthering it through miracles and healing. There is an urgency about him, an inner impulse to free people from all that diminishes them, and is not in God's will for the kingdom of God.

Mark conveys this urgency in today's passage by the fact his commitment to the needs of the crowd has left him missing meals, and his family are concerned that he has things out proportion, he has got too carried away, and, it seems they are wanting to protect him from himself and from the rumours that he has "gone out of his mind"

This has been seized on by the religious scholars who have come from Jerusalem with suspicions about this young enthusiast. They have translated into an accusation that his miracles have a sinister origin: it is by the prince of demons he casts them out.

It is a very human pattern of spiralling division – we can look at the media gossip of our own time to see the same escalation of

conflict in prominent figures, especially when they are challenging the status quo.

In answering Jesus moves from logical argument in to parables, offering pictures and contrasts to help his hearers find a new perspective.

He uses images of Satan (literally "the adversary" a personification of all that seeks to oppose God's will in the world) of a kingdom (a territory under the same rule) and a house (a clan or kinship). The adversary is not going to try and over through itself. A kingdom that divides weakens itself, as does a kinship)

And he sets alongside these images the image of a strong man's house, which needs to be taken by force, for plundering – the removal of what is held there.

So he presents himself as the one whose mission is the binding of the strong man: the binding of all the forces that keep humans in thrall and hold them from the life God has willed for them.

This is what his miracles and teaching signify, and what his death, resurrection and gift of the Spirit enact.

As if to underline the importance of recognising this intention in his work, the tired and hungry Jesus is blunt: calling the work of the Holy Spirit the work of the evil one is an unforgivable sin. In other words, a distancing of one from God's will that is a permanent obstacle to reconciliation. He is giving his opponents a warning to look again at their assumptions and discern more deeply what the God they worship is up to in his actions and teaching.

It is perhaps part of a human tendency to get caught up in spiralling conflict that this comment has created centuries of speculation about what exactly the unforgivable sin is. It would seem to me it is a far better use of energy and exploration to respond to it by seeking to become sensitive to recognising the work of the Holy Spirit with clarity and therefore never be at risk of committing it!

The final episode of this story offers us Jesus' invitation for how we might do that, how we become those who discern the action of

the Holy Spirit in the world and join in. We return to the relationship between Jesus and his concerned family. Still concerned, they are outside the house, calling him. His answer is actually an invitation to come and join in with his work – those who do the will of God are my mother, my brother and my sisters. “Those who sit around me and get excited with me about the urgency of healing the sick, casting out false spirits and drawing people back into the experience of God’s love, they are my brother and sister and mother.” From the accounts of his mother at the foot of the cross and his brother amongst the leaders of the early church in Jerusalem, we know members of his blood family did come in and join the work, recognising that the zeal for God’s mission would consume him, but all that he was doing was of God.

“Looking at those who sat around him, he said: Here are my mother and mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother” Those around him were those who recognised in Jesus’ life and action the transformative presence of God to restore all things to life in its fullness, they were those who wanted to join in with that way of life.

And the community Jesus was building was what we now call “the body of Christ” in the world (those who further the flourishing of the life of Creation for which God created all things), the undivided kingdom of God, the house that is held together in love, sharing in the life of the Holy Spirit which is at work to reconcile all things to God.

And, Jesus call us in, to be those who are sitting around him to discover our own place in his mission, the impulse of the Holy Spirit at work in us, with its own urgency to bring God’s love and life to others in our own particular way. He calls us to be his brothers, sisters and mothers in the world.

In a moment of stillness, I invite you to reflect, or talk to Jesus about what act of healing, of opposing false spirits, of drawing other’s to experience God’s love you could make this week.

I pray that as Jesus’ brothers and sisters and mothers across the Lyn Valley we can together be instruments of the Holy Spirit in

bringing forth the freedom, life and love of the Kingdom of God which is the flourishing of all creation here. Amen.