

## MARK 3:7-19   CBC 23.5.2021

*Please read Mark 3:7-19 ...*

I was struck this week by a BBC webpage article (Tuesday 18 May 2021). A photographer had produced portraits of girls aged 10 and 11, with accompanying quotations:

- *"I dream that no-one is homeless and everyone has a special place to go to."*
- *"I wish that there was no evil in the world and we were all nice to everyone."*
- *"My dream is to walk like my sister so I can run with her and go where she can go."*
- *"I wish nobody died in the world."*
- *"I wish to be happy forever, to always be loved."*

If that sounds hopelessly utopian, let me remind you that what these children are longing for is actually the world God created and intended for us. But at its centre was God Himself, who is the source of all life and joy. And the reason we don't have a world like that today is that we've turned away from God and now we're playing at being God, with disastrous results. That's the problem Jesus came to deal with, and in this passage we'll see how He begins to remake a broken world.

In the first paragraph, terrible problems are pressing in. In the second paragraph, we see the solution going out.

### 1. HUMAN NEED vv.7-12

v.7 *"Jesus withdrew"* from the synagogue to the lake, because (v.6) the leaders there were plotting to kill Him. He's not running away – at the right time He'll set His face to go to His death on the cross because that is why He has come (Mk 10:45). But He controls that moment, not His enemies. He has more to do and teach first.

And though the Pharisees are seeking to destroy Him, hurting people are flocking to Him from all directions (v.8). Jesus has gone viral. Mark describes a chaotic scene: the Greek literally says the crowd are *"crushing"* Him; the sick are *"falling on Him"* – that's how they'll get His attention. If we could see a video of what's happening we would weep because of the desperation of these people. Twisted limbs, broken bodies, hideous diseases, people pleading for help, demon-possessed people shrieking. Jesus has to leap into an emergency boat to save Himself from being physically crushed. There are no police to control this crowd. This is like a major disaster zone, and Jesus is the only first responder. Humanly speaking this would be terrifying. If you're not the Son of God with power, this is a catastrophe.

What is Jesus going to do? First, regarding the demons: He shuts them up (vv.11-12). The evil spirits know who He is – they call out *"You are the Son of God."* That's right – so why does Jesus silence them? Because the cry of the demons wasn't a confession of faith. It was a howl of despair and antagonism. The demons recognize His authority but they hate that authority. They fall at His feet but they're unwilling to lay everything at His feet. They refuse to submit to the One they confess is the Son of God. God forbid that any of us should be like that – confessing that Jesus is the Son of God but refusing to submit our whole life to Him. You can say He is Lord but not submit to Him as YOUR Lord. The demons did that.

They're actually hindering Jesus' ministry, because if people hear that He's the Son of God without knowing what that really means, they'll fill in the blank with their wish list. They'll get very excited for the wrong reasons. They'll start to think, "*He's going to deliver Israel from Rome!*" – but He isn't going to do that. He's going to deliver sinners from death. That's why Jesus silences these demons.

But what about the sick? They came because they knew He had healed people previously, and it seems he healed many of these people too. It was generally Jesus' practice to meet urgent needs when they were in His face.

But Mark has already told us that's not Jesus' priority (1:38). He won't settle for superficial solutions, patching up people who are still corrupt and dying. That would leave us lost. Oh, His healings were wonderful for those who received them, but they were only temporary. They're beautiful hints of a world restored – a foretaste of what's coming when our Lord returns and every knee will bow to Him, and He'll say, "*Behold, I make all things new*". Yes, He's going to solve everything. But how? Putting another patch on these people won't solve the problems of the world. What will?

That's what Mark's gospel is going to reveal. Jesus is going to Calvary, to deal with the root of the problem – our broken relationship with God. He's going to die in our place on the cross, and rise to defeat death for us, so that He might take us by the hand and lead us home to our heavenly Father. That's the Kingdom He's come to announce and to bring in. And the next step is revealed in vv.13-19.

## **2. JESUS' RESPONSE TO OUR NEED vv.13-19**

Faced with such a distressing scene, Jesus takes a hugely important step in His ministry. v.13 Jesus goes up a mountain – and if we know our Bibles we should say, "*Right! Something big is about to happen.*" Think of Moses going up the Mountain to meet with God in the book of Exodus, when God made His Covenant with the twelve tribes of Israel, appointing them to be His people in the world. Now Jesus calls 12 disciples to be the foundation of a renewed Israel. v.14 could be literally translated as "*He MADE twelve*". It's the same word that's used in the Greek translation of Ge 1:1 – God "made" the world. And now Jesus is remaking a broken world. From now on He'll be shaping these disciples. He won't ignore everybody else – but He'll give the 12 His special attention, because with this little band of disciples Jesus is going to make the world new.

How does that work? Look at what Jesus has planned for them. Here's discipleship explained in a nutshell. It involves:

- **BEING:** v.14 "*He appointed twelve that they might be with Him*". The first role of the 12 is to be with Jesus. This is the key to discipleship. To walk with Him, listen to Him, know Him, grow to be like Him. How are you doing with that? Do you really have a relationship with Jesus? Discipleship is relational. But it's not selfish –
- **TELLING:** v.14 "*that He might send them out to preach*". They were sent out with the gospel – to tell others what they'd seen and heard. How thankful we should be to have these eyewitnesses! "Telling others" might look a little different for us – your full-time job might not be as an itinerant preacher. Your "telling" won't necessarily be through sermons. But a disciple

tells the good news about Jesus. That might be teaching our children, or a simple conversation at work, or including a suitable Bible text in our Christmas cards – it all counts!

- DOING: v.15 “*to have authority to drive out demons.*” Jesus has authority, and He gives His disciples a measure of that authority to demonstrate that the Kingdom has come. Demons are fleeing, broken people are being mended – aha, the Kingdom has come! Elsewhere Jesus says His disciples are the salt of the earth, the light of the world, a city on a hill that can’t be hidden. Disciples’ lives show that we have a different Master and belong to a different world.

Do you see? Being Jesus’ disciple is much more than following Him on Twitter! It’s not just belonging to His fan club. There are parts of the world where it’s easy to be a fan of Jesus. There are no fans of Jesus in North Korea. Being a fan is not enough. A disciple is more than a fan. When we truly belong to Jesus, He makes us new people – new in our being and our speaking and our doing.

So there’s desperate need all around Jesus. And His response is to make new people and send them to make *more* new people. And what kind of people does Jesus choose to be His disciples? All kinds! There’s great diversity among the 12 named here. There are people from different walks of life and from both ends of the political spectrum (a Roman loyalist and a Jewish nationalist). There are individuals and family groups (pairs of brothers). And it’s not about Jesus trying to achieve some artificial diversity to meet quotas – rather, He’s showcasing the gospel. This is amazing grace!

They’re not special in any way. They’re not spiritual giants. We’ll see that they often fail. There’s Peter whom Jesus called the Rock – but he was often very shaky! Aren’t you glad Jesus calls wobbly people? There’s James and John whom Jesus called “sons of thunder” – a pair of hotheads, ready to explode. Aren’t you glad Jesus calls hotheads?

But how are people like this going to make any difference to the world? JESUS! Jesus has to teach them and change them. Mark’s focus isn’t really on these men. His focus is on the Christ who calls them. Their qualification isn’t found in where they came from, or who their family is, or what’s on their C.V.. Their qualification is in Christ alone. He sovereignly chooses them, pours His life into them, remakes them, and sends them to bless the world in His Name. That’s the only way these men can be part of the solution.

And what you see here is Christ’s first step in building His worldwide church. He won’t be content with evangelizing Palestine. The gospel is for the world. The proclamation of Christ by His disciples begins in this moment, and has continued to this day in the power of the Holy Spirit. And in the end, needy, suffering, sinful people from every language and ethnic group and geographical location will be brought home to God by Jesus. What a beautiful picture! It was planned in eternity, promised through centuries of Israel’s longing, and now it’s launched in this moment.

And there’s poignancy in this moment too because the final name is Judas Iscariot who betrayed Jesus. And Jesus knew He would be betrayed by this man. But Jesus was willing to be betrayed, and to hang on a cross and to die the death we deserved, bearing God’s judgement on our sins, so that He could make us new people and heal a broken world.

## CONCLUSION

Put these two paragraphs together: the first is a picture of problems pressing in; the second is a picture of the solution going out, as Jesus begins to make new people. How should we respond?

- If you're not yet a disciple of Jesus, you need to be. Not because He promises to meet all your wishes or give you everything on your bucket list. Jesus isn't interested in that. He's interested in making you new and restoring you to God. That's what transforms the world, one person at a time. He said. *"Come to me, all who are weary and burdened"* (Mt 11:28). That's the most important call you'll ever receive – not the phone call from a potential date / employer / doctor etc. I hope you'll receive and not reject the life Christ offers you.
- If you're already a disciple of Jesus, I hope you'll be ready the next time someone asks you the question, "What is God doing when the world is such a mess?" One answer is, *"He's making new people, who become a new community for the sake of others, and who are looking forward to God's new creation. That's how we get the world that children are longing for ... that adults are longing for ... that YOU are longing for. Why don't you ask Jesus to re-make you?"*

**PRAYER:** We thank You, heavenly Father, that Jesus came into the world to save people who were lost; to give forgiveness to the sinful, and life to the dying, and hope to the hurting, by restoring us to you. Renew us by the power of your Spirit, we pray. Keep us in the love of Christ, following in His footsteps, being a blessing in this world until we rejoice together in the eternal home you are preparing for us. For your glory's sake, Amen.

## **FOR REFLECTION AND ACTION**

- What progress are you making:
  - In being with Jesus?
  - In telling others about Jesus?
  - In demonstrating the kingdom of Jesus through your actions?
- What step forward as a disciple will you take this week?