

Mark 6: 1 – 13

'Jesus in Nazareth'

Dramatic Gospel Reading before Talk:

Narrator: Hear the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Mark

All: Glory to you, O Lord.

Narrator: Jesus came to his hometown, and his disciples followed him. On the Sabbath, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astounded.

Worshipper 1: Where did this man get all this?

Worshipper 2: What is this wisdom that has been given to him?

Worshipper 1: What deeds of power are being done by his hands?

Worshipper 2: Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joseph and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?

Narrator: And they took offence at him. Jesus said to them:

Jesus: Prophets are not without honour, except in their hometown, and among their own kin, and in their own house.

Narrator: And Jesus could do no deed of power there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and cured them. And he was amazed at their unbelief.

All: This is the Gospel of the Lord
Praise to you, O Christ

“Do you know that they let any riff-raff preach nowadays?”

“It doesn't matter if you've no qualifications or no family pedigree – you can just get up there and speak!”

Well, I'm not sure anyway if you would have that reaction as I stood up, not least because you're used to me! But it was the reaction that surrounded Jesus in that place of worship.

This passage in Mark starts with showing us just how misleading status can be, and how our assumptions can deafen us to God's voice.

In his home town of Nazareth, everyone is astounded by the wisdom that comes out of Jesus' mouth and the confirming 'deeds of power' that he performs. A rush of light comes into all their lives, but some greet it not with joy but with suspicion: ***“Where did this man get all this?” “Who does he think he is???”***

Rather than judging by the fruits of what he says and does, they judge by social rank and privilege: ***“Is not this the carpenter?”*** You can almost hear the muttering that I began with – ***“They let any old riff-raff preach these days.”*** This grudging prejudice prevents them from receiving God's grace. Jesus continues his mission regardless, but is amazed at their unbelief, their stubborn resistance to an experience that could have been life-changing.

The question of “To whom do we listen?” or “Who can we trust or believe?” has become an obviously important one during COVID-19. If we are worried about illness for ourselves or our loved ones we want **PTO**

to take heed of the medics and their advice. If we are worried about our business surviving or about employment prospects perhaps we pay more attention, and want others to pay more attention, to the economists.

But this gospel passage is more subversive than that. Medics and economists are experts in their field. Jesus was not regarded as such. Yet the wisdom of God dwelt in him.

Who should we listen to about child poverty?

The Children's Society?

The NSPCC?

The children's commissioner?

I wonder who would have said 'a professional footballer' until Marcus Rashford spoke out? And yet the wisdom of God permeated his words.

How about wisdom on climate change?

How can a teenager possibly have gained the knowledge in all the necessary areas to have anything worth listening to? And yet Greta Thunberg has, I think rightly, gained a hearing at all levels and with all age groups.

This Gospel passage gives a strong and possibly stark reminder that God's voice can be heard from unexpected people. This matters. It matters in terms of being willing to listen and to discern God's voice whoever is speaking. It matters because each of us may be the one through whom God wants to speak – however unlikely we, at times, may think that may be!

And the more we come to know Jesus through the Gospels and through other Christians, the more our minds are transformed by the presence of the Holy Spirit – the more the wisdom of God will dwell in us and be made known through us. And that will bring blessing to many.