

SERMON NOTES Sunday 28th January 2024

sunnysidechurch

Theme: **Action stations**

Passages: **Mark 1.21-28, Deuteronomy 18.15-20**

Some of the main themes from the sermon

Genius

I have always loved watching geniuses at work. People who just had something extra in their craft. It was not that they were just a little bit better than others. Their command of their chosen field of operation meant that their performances were just breathtaking, jaw-dropping, amazing. The geniuses we think of have perfected a particular gift. But what of someone who simply perfected the art of being?

'They were amazed...'

An important theme that runs through this Bible passage is the amazement of the people of Capernaum at Jesus. We see it in v22 and v27.

'At once...'

Our particular translation of this passage robs it of some of its immediacy and intensity. It begins, 'At once, on the Sabbath...' (v21) and the same phrase appears in v23, v28 and v29. There is a real sense of Jesus arriving like a whirlwind in Capernaum.

Why were they amazed?

Jesus' teaching: 'In the past you were told. But I tell you...'

Jesus' command over unclean spirits

He had authority. This came from knowing who he was (v11) and what God had called him to do (v15).

Does Jesus amaze us?

We often rightly focus on what Jesus has done for us. It is valuable sometimes also to marvel at who he was. He is worth following because he just is. Peter said as much in John 6.68-69. It was a time when many disciples had deserted Jesus and Jesus asked the twelve whether they too wanted to leave. Peter says, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the word of eternal life. We have come to believe that you are the Holy One of God.'

What realistically can we do to be Jesus' people here and now?

As we grow in the confidence of who we are in Jesus, we can afford to care less about what other people think of us and more about what Jesus would have us do in our own situation. We can do this by immersing ourselves in the Gospel narratives and imagining ourselves as onlookers and participants as the 3 year ministry of Jesus unfolds.

Heads and hearts

It is important to remember that the journey of growing in confidence of who we are in Jesus is a lifelong one. In particular, if we do not have experience of those closest to us being 'well pleased' with us and treating us as 'beloved', it can be hard to accept that our loving Father in Heaven does.

A couple of quotes from 'The Divine Conspiracy' by Dallas Willard to get us thinking:

"We must understand that God does not "love" us without liking us - through gritted teeth - as "Christian" love is sometimes thought to do. Rather, out of the eternal freshness of his perpetually self-renewed being, the heavenly Father cherishes the earth and each human being upon it. The fondness, the endearment, the unstintingly affectionate regard of God toward all his creatures is the natural outflow of what he is to the core - which we vainly try to capture with our tired but indispensable old word "love"."

"Jesus does not call us to do what he did, but to be as he was, permeated with love. Then the doing of what he did and said becomes the natural expression of who we are in him."

Some questions for thought and discussion this week:

1. *Imagine yourself in Capernaum as Jesus comes to town. How might you react?*
2. *Think about the two Dallas Willard quotes above. Does either of them change your perception of what it is to be a Christian?*
3. *Is it helpful to think more about who Jesus was (and is) rather than what he has done for us?*
4. *Is following Jesus different from believing in him?*
5. *Think about Peter in John 6.68-69, then in John 18.25-27 and again in John 21.15-19. What do they show us about being a follower of Jesus?*

Worth a look

<https://jasonqoroncy.com/2010/06/12/the-musician-by-r-s-thomas/>
The poet compares Calvary with a musical performance of genius.