

Gospel of Mark

Chapter 3

Introduction

Time seems to march on at a dramatic pace during lock-down. The weeks seem to slip by one after the other in a haze of work, family time, home schooling, refereeing, and eating (far too much). Your lock-down may look and feel different to mine, but we have one thing in common, we did not choose this. We are being forced to adhere to guidelines so that we can protect ourselves and each other. We are all in a season of learning to submit our everyday rhythms of life for the benefit of the greater good, to stop the spread of Covid-19.

So, in this introduction, I would like to say, thank you. Each time you choose to take care, wear a mask, or consider if your journey is needed, you are being a blessing. Sharing this common ground reminds me of how much of each other's experiences of God we are missing! If you have some good news about God loving or answering prayer in lock-down, please email or call me – 07429105995 or lauren@ascensionsouthampton.co.uk – so that we can get your story out to the Church family, to encourage, build up and 'spur one another on in love and good deeds.' Hebrews 10:24

Short Reflection

Opening these passages and unfolding them, purposefully, slowly, and mindfully brings to light so much. It can be hard to pinpoint what to draw out for these reflections. However, this verse stands out to me time and time again, so today it is being brought to centre stage. Read those first verses again (Mark 3:13-19). Stop and re read verse 17,

James son of Zebedee and his brother John (to them he gave the name Boanerges,
which means "sons of thunder")

These brothers Jesus renames, something he did a few times. We see God rename Abraham and Sarah, for example, in the Old Testament. God seems to do this when He calls people into a new part of their story with Him. James and John are two of those who are renamed but renamed as 'Sons of Thunder'. Perhaps they were loud? Maybe they were prone to argue? Or perhaps it was something far deeper? Jesus is calling twelve chosen disciples to Himself, to 'preach and have the authority to drive out demons.' Simon too was renamed Peter, which means 'rock'. I wonder what the significance is in these men and in these names?

When I read these new names, my mind is inclined to do one of two things, the first is to think that the new name is shedding light on a flaw in their characters. Our mood can have an impact on how we interpret passages, so when I feel shame or low in myself, it is more likely that this is the way I read the words. That these men were too loud, too much, disruptive, and unhelpful. Look at Peter, the rock, it would be easy to assign stubbornness to his new name. However, there is a second way, that God is looking at the hearts of these uncut diamonds of men and seeing the potential, the redeemed nature, which will be called out. What is stubbornness redeemed? Could it be steadfastness? What is being too much, too loud, redeemed? Could it be courage?

I remember when I was a child, it was by little brother's birthday. I was a few years older but still young enough to be barely able to control my excitement. I ran into the lounge and sat next to my chubby little bro. I began to shout, loudly about how he needed help, I should help! It was all the excuse I needed to begin furiously opening all his gifts. JOY! My parents came in when they heard the screams coming from my delight and my brothers utter despair. I felt bad, but I had not meant to overwhelm the space. Fast forward to the age of 14. I was at a youth event and could not shrug off the feeling that I should ask to preach. I was now a moody teen and did not much like the idea, but after a particularly excitable sung worship time, I gave in and told my youth worker. He was excited and encouraging. I was there the next month preaching my heart out. I had not meant to be overwhelming, I just wanted to obey, but this was me as I am called to be. My redeemed confidence, in it's right place.

In this passage Jesus is calling His disciples, all uncut, still in formation, still working themselves out, to be the people He knows they are! To look at themselves honestly but then to give that which seems weak and allow Him to transform it into strength.

If you read the last part of the passage you see people attempting to characterise Jesus – we do not seem to be quite as good at it as He is! Jesus is gentle, He tells a story. He keeps calling to them to Himself. Then when His family come to rescue Him from the crowd of confused people, Jesus reaches out again, increasing His 'bubble' to include all humanity who seek Him, all who do His will.

Questions

- What do you think of when you read the names, Sons of Thunder?
- Is there anything you see in yourself that you feel is weak or perhaps even invokes shame, or needs formation, can you begin to give that to God?
- How does it feel to think of God reaching out to you as His mother and siblings?

Reflect

Reflect: Imagine yourself as a character in the story, perhaps you are His mother and brothers? Or the crowd? Or the disciples? Travel through the chapter in this role within your imagination. Stop at the end and imagine Jesus looking at you. What would He say to you? What would you say to Him?

For next week

Read through the chapter and underline or highlight the things that Jesus says.