



Peters Green News Sheet Issue No: 47

Sunday 31st January 2021

Mark 1. 21-28

Mark does not waste time in his gospel, he proceeds at breakneck speed. We are still in Chapter One and already Jesus has been baptised by John, been tempted in the wilderness, started His preaching ministry by continuing John's call to repentance and called His first disciples.

Now he comes to Capernaum, wows the people with His teaching, and calms the storm within a very troubled man.

We are told that Jesus taught with authority and not like the scribes. Those scribes, along with the Pharisees, had built up such a labyrinth of law that they had turned God's law, intended for the benefit of all humanity, into an unbearable burden, a target that only the most meticulous adherent could hope to achieve- and then it would be to adhere to a desiccated law, devoid of any mercy or compassion.

Jesus was sometimes asked by what authority He preached. His authority came from the fact that he practised what He preached. His teaching still rings true today and is relevant. My favourite sport is cricket. In cricket, you sometimes hear of a captain's innings- an innings by the captain of the side that sets an example to his- or her- side. Jesus is truly Emmanuel- God with us- even living our earthly life so that He could show us the Way. He came to reconcile us all to God. His lament over Jerusalem (How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings and you were not willing) demonstrates this. My father belonged to a pacifist organisation called the Fellowship of Reconciliation. I don't remember too much about it, but do recall that at Easter one year on the cover of their journal they had a simple symbol of reconciliation- just three crosses side by side.

Even Paul, on whom much Christian doctrine is based, divinely inspired as he undoubtedly was at times (for example in his praise of love) at other times was a man of his time who could condone slavery and an oppressive regime. Yet Jesus' teaching is timeless, can never date. He speaks eternal truth.

Though He is scathing towards the religious leaders, He refuses to condemn the sinner- indeed He is known as the Friend of Sinners- of great comfort to each of us! He is filled with compassion- and moved by compassion to help, as in the case of this poor man in the synagogue. He shows that the spirit of the law is more important than the letter of the law. To return to the analogy of cricket, there are certain things that are allowed by the letter of the law but are not practised because they are 'not cricket'.

How did Jesus demonstrate His authority and thus set us an example? Not in an oppressive, manipulative

self-interested way- His is an easy yoke- but in a way that empowered those He healed or restored. He was uncompromising. He was not always Gentle Jesus, Meek and Mild. He could rage at injustice and the abuse of power.

The recent inauguration of Joe Biden was encouraging in that the inaugural prayer, led by his Christian friend, a Jesuit, had a spiritual depth as he spoke of justice, care for the less fortunate and inclusion. It was no mere formality.

Jesus showed his compassion by coming, as so often, to the aid of one who needed him. In this direst of pandemics, we have seen God's Spirit at work, we have seen God's Image in the most selfless and sacrificial of acts- acts of charity across the spectrum of faiths but surely inspired by the one Spirit.

Jesus came to reconcile. We can be agents of reconciliation today. he calls us to follow Him with open minds and hearts, to see the best in others and to show respect and understanding and Christian love towards those with other views.

Michael Adams

Jesus, the name high over all,
In hell, or earth, or sky:
Angels and men before it fall,
And devils fear and fly.

Jesus, the name to sinners dear,
The name to sinners giv'n;
It scatters all their guilty fear,
It brings them peace of heav'n.

Jesus the prisoner's fetters breaks,
And bruises Satan's head;
Pow'r into strengthless souls He speaks,
And life into the dead.

Oh, that the world might taste and see,
The riches of His grace!
The arms of love that compass me,
Would all mankind embrace.

Him as my righteousness I show,
His saving truth proclaim:
'Tis all my business here below,
To cry, Behold the Lamb!

Happy, if with my latest breath
I may but gasp His name:
Preach Him to all, and cry in death,
"Behold, behold the Lamb!"

