

Sermon

Pentecost 8 Year B

Gospel Mark 6:30-34, 53-56

The apostles gathered around Jesus, and told him all that they had done and taught. He said to them, “Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while.” For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves. Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they hurried there on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of them. As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things.

When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored the boat. When they got out of the boat, people at once recognized him, and rushed about that whole region and began to bring the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was. And wherever he went, into villages or cities or farms, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and begged him that they might touch even the fringe of his cloak; and all who touched it were healed.

Prayer:

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost....

Sermon:

Lately, we've been reading from Mark's Gospel.

Scholars say that Mark followed Peter all around,
Sketching out Peter's sayings and stories.

That all stopped when Peter was martyred in Rome.

A horrible surprise.ⁱ

Folks expected Jesus to come back any day. Any moment.

Peter was gone. Judgment Day was pending.

Mark was kind of in a hurry.

He expected Jesus to come any moment. Time was precious.

So, Mark's Gospel bounces from one event to another.

It reads like a rough draft.ⁱⁱ

But one thing is clear: *Mark knew that Jesus was the real deal.*

*Mark's Gospel is about God intervening in time and history.*ⁱⁱⁱ

Jesus always knew he wouldn't have enough time.

So Mark shows us that Jesus was always on the go.

The crowds were everywhere.

Jesus and his guys hopped in a boat, trying to get away.

But the crowd was like sheep without a shepherd.^{iv}

They crowd Jesus and his Apostles.^v

Jesus knew that the world's demands never cease.

That's the way it was 2000 years ago,

and that's the way it is today.

Many Episcopalians are retired. But, even if you're retired,

We all know that the world will use you up.^{vi}

And in these weird and uncertain semi-COVID days,

No one under 60 wants to be seen as "unessential".^{vii}

So we take our "work" with us. Whether we want to, or not.

Trapped by the "benefit" of technology ...

work sticks with us like gum on our shoe.^{viii}

We've been trying to get away from it all, for a long time.

Those of us of a certain age still remember Timothy Leary:

Turn on. Tune in. Drop out.^{ix}

Who hasn't wanted to drop out of the all-consuming rat race?

I imagine Jesus and his Apostles as Energizer Bunnies.

Always on the go. No place to rest. And no time.^x

The world then, saw Jesus a miracle working itinerant preacher^{xi}.

Everyone knew what the System did someone pushed back.^{xii}

Jesus knew time was short.

He knew what happened to John the Baptizer.

Jesus and his crew knew they were testing their luck.

They knew that it didn't pay, *in earthly terms*,

to push the Temple Crowd, or the Romans. ^{xiii}

Time was short.

But if Jesus's life shows us anything at all it's simply this:

As Christian's we aren't free to follow worldly rhythms.

When Jesus told his guys to take a break,

he was pushing back.

Everybody knows we are busy today.

But we didn't invent "busy-ness", or interruptions,

or corruption, or hunger, or greed.

Life has never really been like "Leave It To Beaver".

The world is crazy. It's the Human Condition.

The Devil never rests, and if he can help it, *neither will we.*

When Jesus told his guys to take a break, he was pushing back.

With all the noise and commentary and angry hubbub,
It's easy to lose our way. It's easy to forget Jesus's call.
It's easy to latch onto whatever seems like it'll
make just one day go a bit easier.

Jesus knew what that's like. We are called to follow his example.
As Christian's we aren't free to follow worldly rhythms.

So, even though Jesus was exhausted, he went ashore,
To a crowd that was sad and sick and lonely.
Lost sheep, without a shepherd.
And when he saw them, Jesus was moved by "compassion". ^{xiv}

Today, we claim to follow Jesus.
We must be moved, as he was moved,
when God calls us to serve the least of His Kingdom.

In the happy days before Covid locked us all down,
We were all making plans.
But the real world interrupted us.

Now, we are making new plans. Or returning to our old ones.
But let's not forget that the Father who saw us through Covid,
Still calls us to serve His Kingdom.

We must take care of ourselves. That is a given.

But Jesus went to the Cross for everyone.

He still calls us to look after the needs of others,

Even people we aren't comfortable with or don't like.

We must hold tight to God's commands, and

let go of the traditions of men.^{xv}

The Holy Spirit moves lightly, wherever She chooses.

Slow down. Take a breath. Feel that cool breeze.

That's God, moving in your life.

Time matters. Our time matters. But now is God's time.

Where are we now?

What is Jesus calling us to do?

Who is Jesus calling us to be?

- AMEN

ⁱ Scholars differ on the time frame of Mark's Gospel, but some suggest it was written during the war between Rome and the Jews (66-74), since it refers to the Roman's destruction of the 2nd Temple in Jerusalem (see, Mark 13:2). Some scholars, who see Mark as linked to Matthew and Luke, would push Mark's Gospel out to 80-85 CE, a decade (or more) after the 2nd Temple was destroyed.

A 1' x 1" fragment of Qumran cave papyrus, sealed in 68 CE (prior to the Temple's destruction) is thought by some scholars to be a fragment of text from, an early version of Mark's Gospel. That is a pretty thin reed.

Did Mark prophesy the Temple's destruction, or did he rationally sort out the direction things were going? Or had he seen it already? Nobody knows.

But Mark's Gospel, written in Greek, contains Latinisms, as do many of the other NT writings. Many also contain Hebraisms. While Mark's use of Latin to Greek loan words, he reveals that he was very comfortable with the dominant Latin influenced social culture. For example, see his use of the words "modios/modius" (at 4:27), and legiôn/legio (at 5:9,15) and his reference to a Roman coin (at 6:37). His heavy use of Latinisms may suggest a Roman audience, but I am more comfortable with the idea that Mark was comfortable in the use of common street Latinisms, as an everyday man, no more immersed in the dominant Roman culture, than any other person in his situation would be.

ⁱⁱ I'm told that his Greek grammar was weak.

ⁱⁱⁱ For example, Mark describes Jesus' trial and crucifixion, with military precision. When Peter denied Jesus, Mark wrote, the cock crowed twice. Dawn ... 6:00 am ... 1st watch. But the Gospels are inconsistent on this issue, compare Mark 14:30 and Matthew 26:34. Whereas we might think of Dawn as the 1st cock crow, for whatever reason, the Romans thought of it as the 2nd, Mark wrote from a Roman perspective, in many ways. See, e.g., :

"He may shut the windows, cover cracks with curtains,
Lock the doors, douse the light, make everyone leave,

let no one sleep near at hand:
but before the dawn the neighborhood barkeep
will know what he was doing at second cock crow,
will hear also what his chief cooks and carvers invented." (Juvenal, Satires, IX,
105-109)

Some centuries later, Synesius of Cyrene's ship ran aground at the second
cockcrow, which was evidently dawn:

"Contrary to all prevision we had shaken off the rapacious violence of our enforced
run, and we carried along during a day and a night, and at the second crowing of
the cock, before we knew it, behold we were on a sharp reef which ran out from
the land like a short peninsula." (Synesius of Cyrene, Letter 4).

See, also, "Finally, on a previously appointed festal day, he ascended Mount
Casius, a wooded hill rising on high with a rounded contour, from which at the
second cock-crow [secundis galliciniis] the sun is first seen to rise. (Ammianus
Marcellinus, Roman Antiquities, Book XXII, 14.4).

<https://trisagionseraph.tripod.com>

iv Soon to be sheared by the Romans.

v Note that here they are referred to as “apostles” from the Greek word which
means “messengers”; as opposed to “disciples” which is from the Greek word for
“students”.

vi Others aren't. Health is important.

vii Everybody wanted a piece of Jesus, the preacher who could heal the sick, raise
the dead, and tell good stories. Jesus was, and is, “essential”.

viii See, <http://wmchapel.org/2012/07/the-rhythm-of-the-christian-life-mark-6-30-34-53-56/>

ix “... in Leary’s first public utterance of the phrase at the Human Be-In at Golden
Gate Park in 1967, drop out meant, well, drop out: “Turn on, tune in, drop out. I
mean drop out of high school, drop out of college, drop out of graduate school.”
Which was easy for him to say. He had a Ph.D. from UC Berkeley and had been a
lecturer at Harvard. *Minus those credentials, who was he but another weird old*

dude with a flower in his hair? “ See, <https://alumni.berkeley.edu/california-magazine/spring-2015-dropouts-and-drop-ins/myth-dropout-turn-tune-drop-out-never-really>

^x Notably, although not mentioned in our assigned reading, one should note that Mark’s Gospel also contains the stories Jesus calming the storm (4:35-41), feeding the five thousand (6:35-44), and the 4000 (8:1-21).

^{xi} The reading mentioned people touching the fringe (*kraspedou*) of Jesus’ garment” ; this probably refers to the tassels worn by Jewish men, to comply with the Torah (Numbers 15:38-39; Deuteronomy 22:12. Thus, even as he pushed back Jesus marked himself as an observant Jew.

^{xii} Prison if you’re lucky. A humiliating, slow and painful death, if you’re not.

Although just one or two bodies or skeletal remains have been found that show signs of crucifixion, historical records reveal that it was a frequent practice, beginning with the ancient Greeks, and their peers. It was well established, as a means both to kill and to humiliate, one’s enemies. In koine (ancient) Greek two verbs were used to for the word “crucify” *anastauroo* (ἀνασταυρόω), from *stauros* ("cross", or wooden pole, with or without attachments) and *apotumpanizo* (ἀποτυμπανίζω) "crucify on a plank", together with *anaskolopizo* (ἀνασκολοπίζω "impale").

Historians Josephus and Appian mention the crucifixion of thousands of Jews by the Romans, there is only a single archaeological discovery of a crucified body of a Jew dating back to the Roman Empire around the time of Jesus.

^{xiii} And back then just about everybody had authority over Jesus and his peeps.

^{xiv} The Greek describes Jesus’ sense of “compassion” as a gut feeling. Jesus was physically moved by compassion and sorrow for his sick, lonely and lost sheep.

^{xv} Mark 7:6-13