

Mark 6 1-13

Today's gospel opens with a perplexing proposition. Jesus states that a prophet is not without honour except in their own hometown. The narrator of Mark's gospel explains the consternation around Jesus as people asked "where did this man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been given to him? Is this not the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James? Perhaps we could concur and say nothing changes. The people we mix with, family and friends might well wonder about the beliefs we hold and the priorities which influence our behaviour. I wonder if you ever feel that the perceptions of other people limit your scope and ability to live out kingdom values? If you have you are in good company. 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.

Jesus gives emphatic advice to his disciples. He knew that the path ahead would be challenging for his followers and that the human response to God's power that he would demonstrate through word and action would be demeaned and disavowed by scoffers. For this reason, Jesus calls his disciple into close relationship because it is out of this deep bond that they will connect with the power to bring healing and wholeness.

We hear Jesus exhorting his disciples to take particular action. While he spoke to his followers thousands of years ago, but he speaks directly to us as well. The de specific details may be less significant for us. We don't carry a staff, but we can learn from this account if we let it wash over us in an imaginal way. This Jungian term may be new to you. It isn't about what is imaginary or made up. It is about the experience of image that is very real. I will return to this concept later.

The instructions; take no bread, no bag, no money, and one tunic. This was to distinguish them from wandering preachers of ancient

Greek philosophy of Cynicism. Those teachers were allowed the trappings denied to the disciples. The disciples are not to rely on their own resources, rather they are to rely on the One whom they proclaim.

They were to arrive in a village and to stay in the first house that offered accommodation. The next recommendation is linked to a practice reported in later Jewish literature. Shaking off the dust from one's feet comes from the belief that Israel was God's "holy land". Returning from impure lands that surrounded Israel, travellers would shake the dust from their feet indicating the impurity and godlessness of the land they had left and the holiness of the land they were entering. In this instruction, Jesus gives his disciples the authority to proclaim judgement.

With their authority resting in their relationship with Jesus, the disciples are sent to preach and heal. I wonder how you hear this instructions. It would be a dangerous for you and I to be casting judgement on others, but what **should we be doing** as followers of Jesus? We need to find our own unique path. Our personality type will steer us towards a form of spirituality that suits us best. You may know the Myers Brigg's classification or Hermann Brain typology. We're all different. We have any number of tools at our disposal, but Jesus was the first and greatest psychologist and he knew the human heart!

I am going to introduce you to Rowan Williams book *Meeting God in Mark*. William's explains that it is **in our heart** that the deep work of God takes place. You'll note the starting place isn't about what we do. It is what happens internally to us. Williams theme dovetails to my understanding of Ignatian teaching. Ignatius tells us to turn inward to become aware of the movements of the heart and to be aware of the images that are part of our experience. How do we do this? What are we looking for? We might notice the words we use when we open our mouth. We might be aware of our dreams or

what pervades the mind's eye. There are many methods we can use in order to observe and understand our inner world. We could draw, sing or dance. Some may opt for conversation, others prefer quiet reflection.

Here the bridge between our 21st century knowledge and today's gospel. Jesus' teaching and commissioning of the disciples was grounded in relationship. So is our destiny. Rowan Williams' writes beautifully on how God works in the world. He examines Jesus' use of parables and metaphor as examples to explain of how God works like...the processes in the natural world. Like a seed growing, like flour rising because of yeast. Like light radiating from a candle or lamp and so on. God doesn't work with thunderclaps from the sky but slowly from the depth of being. Or steadily, irresistibly like the light reaching the corners of the room. From the heart of being into the everyday. Not outwards from a distant heaven.

And here is the point of emphasis. It is from the inner world that God brings change. God transforms the world healing its wounds and forgiving and overcoming our failures by being with and in the processes of the world- above all in the unique process that is a human life: the life first of Jesus, but then the lives of those who have been called and commissioned to be like him- because of him- places where the work of God can start to blossom and expand in the world.¹ You and I are squarely in the picture.

So I return to the Jungian term I used at the outset. If we become aware of our **imaginal realm**; the words, the colours and the emotions of that inner place, the experience of the heart may be calling us to stand defiant against the scoffers; where did this person get all of this? Where has this wisdom come from? We have it on good authority that a prophet is without wisdom in his or her own

¹ Rowan Williams p 43

town or family. But we know that a deep relationship is holding us strong.

AMEN

Reference

Rowan Williams *Meeting God in Mark* Society for Christian Knowledge London 2014

Linda Fiske 4.7.2021