

The Power Of Jesus – Rvd Christina Hunt

If you have missed the last 2 weeks, we have started looking at the Gospel of Mark. It was the earliest written, the most simple; almost childlike, and is often overlooked by academics. Mark was young, and not an obvious eye or ear witness to hear the wisdom of Jesus first hand, but he was the son of a Christian woman and his home in Jerusalem was a meeting point; a place where all the followers of Jesus would be in and out and so he would have heard all the stories as people chatted. What he heard filled him with enthusiasm.

His book is full of astonishment, and a spirit of amazement. He was the nephew of Barnabus, who introduced him to Paul, and although they had a tempestuous relationship at times, at his death it was Mark that Paul wanted to see. Mark spent time with Peter, as his translator. Many believe this gospel is a record of Peter's sermons to the early church, an authentic account of an eye witness to Jesus life.

Mark begins where the ministry of Jesus begins. Two weeks ago we heard of his baptism and mission, affirmed by a voice from heaven saying 'You are my beloved Son'. Then last week we heard how he called those who would be close to Him in His ministry.

Today we come to the power he demonstrated. The word power does not appear in the passage, but the Greeks had a group of words related to each other and showed power in these words. They were energion, energein, energema, and energas. Words in everyday use. One was to be found in a military setting-it means an army which needed to be ready for active service. In industry, it was used for effective working and in farming it meant using the land productively.

These words had a meaning of vitality, as opposed to deadness, activity as opposed to slackness. God's use of power was shown to

be effective activity. It was often used for the work of God through the miracles of Jesus.

It also works for the power of God in our Christian life- such a privilege is a miracle in itself-for us humble humans. Not only is power available, but effective power- the power of love through prayer. The power of God through the resurrection of Jesus. The power of God in effective ministry and in the church.

We see in the church, the ministry of teaching and healing, stewarding of money, administration, or music, or flower arranging etc. I always remember when I was a young church member ,thinking I was being helpful when I said to an old lady I would get someone else to clean the brasses – she did it every week. She said ‘No, please do not take it away from me. I have no money, and I can’t do other things’.

We need effective action of all in church life. This is impossible on our own, but with God’s help we shall see real and effective action, not a moonshot or pie in the sky. We all have different gifts to offer, but it is the same power of God at work through all of us. St Paul in his epistle describes the importance of each gift in the body, essential to the working of the whole. Once I preached a whole sermon on my big toe.

I thought watching the last night of the proms, how St Paul might have today made the analogy with a symphony orchestra; certainly an analogy which would work well in our period of social distancing. We see in the Orchestra, all the individual’s skills and effort being used to play in harmony with each other, playing at the right time, playing the right notes.

So how did Jesus go about his mission? He had been baptised and tested by evil. Then, ready to begin, he goes to the synagogue. So

you today are gathered here as part of God's army. The war, between God and evil; love and hate, justice and greed.

As soldiers you needed to be reunited, and accepted as you were in baptism. You need to be fed and clothed – the importance of the sacraments and the word of God. You need to be trained in prayer, bible reading. You need to work together in the church.

On that first day of ministry in the synagogue, the listeners were astonished with how Jesus spoke with authority -he was not like the other teachers- the scribes had careful quotes from the abundance of Jewish moral law, Jesus did not quote others. He spoke with personal authority- it was like a wind from heaven to hear such positive certainty. If the congregation were astonished by his words, they were overwhelmed with his deeds. The man who shouted was believed to be harbouring a demon. There were many people who tried to exorcise such behaviour with spells and potions, yet Jesus uses one phrase and he is cured.

From the large numbers seeing this, Jesus goes to Peter's house and uses his power to cure his mother in law of a different condition, again with a word and touch.

Then all who heard these deeds came to be healed too, and the God of love, the God of compassion must hurt to see his children in need. But not all are healed; why? The great question so many ask, and we cannot answer. We might sometimes have suspicions but no universal reason. Yet, when we have the privilege to see a miracle, it leaves a great impression.

Let me tell you of one. There was a young family in one parish at a time. Their two children were the only children in the church, and they were like a breath of fresh air ready to join in the service. The mother had cancer, but it was in remission and when 5 years had passed, it seemed to have gone. The family moved to another village

to live and worship, when the cancer returned more vigorously. Their vicar knew we had a healing prayer group, and he asked if we would go one evening with him and lay hands on her which we did.

When we stopped, she looked radiant and said 'I am cured. It may not be physically, but I am whole'. She died shortly afterwards leaving a husband and two young children; sad for themselves, but pleased she was spiritually whole.

God's power had been effective. What about his army at St Francis, are we fighting fit? God loves you and he puts up with our waywardness, but there will come a time when he chooses which troops are fit to represent our Lord in the passing out parade-a time of judgement.

What will Jesus look out for in our church?

- 1) It is the duty of the church to preach- to tell the good news of Jesus to those who have no knowledge of it.
- 2) The church has a healing task. Jesus wished to bring health to the body and health to the soul.
- 3) The church has a source of power. The Christian is filled with power to cope with life that others do not possess.
- 4) The Christian life is lived in the presence and the power of him who was crucified and rose again. If this is our belief, how can we be less than active for his cause?

I think soldiers are taught when they are not progressing. They often leave of their own accord or repeat the training. I think that will be how it will be for us when we meet God face to face in the light of his goodness. We shall see our true selves and our excuses, and we will judge ourselves. May God in his bountiful grace help us that we may be found in a state of fitness to march behind Christ, our Lord and King.