



Parish of Finchampstead and California

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

16 - 21 AUGUST 2021

INTRODUCTION

We continue our readings from Mark's Gospel. As usual the text in bold type gives a focus for the day's Thought.

MONDAY - Mark 5:1-20

¹ Jesus and his disciples came to the other side of the lake, to the country of the Gerasenes. ² And when he had stepped out of the boat, immediately a man out of the tombs with an unclean spirit met him. ³ He lived among the tombs; and no one could restrain him any more, even with a chain; ⁴ for he had often been restrained with shackles and chains, but the chains he wrenched apart, and the shackles he broke in pieces; and no one had the strength to subdue him. ⁵ Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains he was always howling and bruising himself with stones. ⁶ When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and bowed down before him; ⁷ and he shouted at the top of his voice, 'What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me.' ⁸ For he had said to him, 'Come out of the man, you unclean spirit.' ⁹ Then Jesus asked him, 'What is your name?' He replied, 'My name is Legion; for we are many.' ¹⁰ He begged him earnestly not to send them out of the country. ¹¹ Now there on the hillside a great herd of swine was feeding; ¹² and the unclean spirits begged him, 'Send us into the swine; let us enter them.' ¹³ So he gave them permission. And the unclean spirits came out and entered the swine; and the herd, numbering about two thousand, rushed down the steep bank into the lake, and were drowned in the lake.

¹⁴ The swineherds ran off and told it in the city and in the country. Then people came to see what it was that had happened. ¹⁵ They came to Jesus and saw the demoniac sitting there, clothed and in his right mind, the very man who had had the legion; and they were afraid. ¹⁶ Those who had seen what had happened to the demoniac and to the swine reported it. ¹⁷ Then they began to beg Jesus to leave their neighbourhood. ¹⁸ **As he was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed by demons begged him that he might be with him.** ¹⁹ **But Jesus refused, and said to him, 'Go home to your friends, and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and what mercy he has shown you.'** ²⁰ And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him; and everyone was amazed.

Thought for the day

It's perhaps not surprising, after being freed from such a tormented life, that the healed man wanted to go along with Jesus (v18). But Jesus had other ideas for him - he wanted him to tell the people who knew him best about what had happened - and he made it clear that the power to heal which he displayed came from God (v19). Perhaps we are sometimes tempted to think that if only we could go somewhere else or do something different we would be better followers of Jesus, when all he wants us to do is tell those closest to us about him and God's love which he revealed.

TUESDAY - Mark 5:21-34

²¹ When Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered round him; and he was by the lake. ²² Then one of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus came and, when he saw him, fell at his feet ²³ and begged him repeatedly, 'My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well, and live.' ²⁴ So he went with him.

And a large crowd followed him and pressed in on him. ²⁵ Now there was a woman who had been suffering from haemorrhages for twelve years. ²⁶ She had endured much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had; and she was no better, but rather grew worse. ²⁷ She had heard

about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, ²⁸ for she said, 'If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well.'²⁹ Immediately her haemorrhage stopped; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. ³⁰ **Immediately aware that power had gone forth from him, Jesus turned about in the crowd and said, 'Who touched my clothes?'** ³¹ And his disciples said to him, 'You see the crowd pressing in on you; how can you say, "Who touched me?"'³² He looked all round to see who had done it. ³³ But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, fell down before him, and told him the whole truth. ³⁴ He said to her, 'Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.'

Thought for the day

Jesus may have been the Son of God (remember Mark 1:1), but it always seems significant that he was a human being too. His ability to heal was not without cost to him. So when that ability was surreptitiously tapped into without his consent, he knew that something had happened (v30). Here as in so many other places, Jesus didn't glide over the surface of humanity, unaffected by it; he experienced it to the full. Yesterday's reading saw Jesus releasing a man from mental bondage; today he frees a woman from physical bondage. We recognise the power but we don't always realise the energy needed to sustain such a ministry.

WEDNESDAY - Mark 5:35-43

³⁵ While Jesus was still speaking, some people came from the leader's house to say, 'Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further?' ³⁶ But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the leader of the synagogue, 'Do not fear, only believe.'³⁷ He allowed no one to follow him except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James. ³⁸ When they came to the house of the leader of the synagogue, he saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. ³⁹ When he had entered, he said to them, 'Why do you make a commotion and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping.'⁴⁰ And they laughed at him. Then he put them all outside, and took the child's father and mother and those who were with him, and went in where the child was. ⁴¹ He took her by the hand and said to her, 'Talitha cum', which means, 'Little girl, get up.'⁴² **And immediately the girl got up and began to walk about (she was twelve years of age). At this they were overcome with amazement.** ⁴³ **He strictly ordered them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.**

Thought for the day

After two healings against all odds, the raising of Jairus' daughter drives home just how exceptional Jesus was. The derision of the mourners (v40) was replaced by the amazement of the parents as they saw their child walking about (v42). Jesus does two more things - first he enjoins them to silence, even though word was bound to get out. Secondly he brings everything back down to earth - the girl needs food. What would Peter, James and John have thought about Jesus at the end of this eventful day? How do you react to reliving this familiar account?

THURSDAY - Mark 6:1-13

¹ He left that place and came to his home town, and his disciples followed him. ² On the sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astounded. They said, 'Where did this man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been given to him? What deeds of power are being done by his hands. ³ Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?' And they took offence at him. ⁴ Then Jesus said to them, 'Prophets are not without honour, except in their home town, and among their own kin, and in their own house.'⁵ **And he could do no deed of power there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and cured them.** ⁶ And he was amazed at their unbelief.

Then he went about among the villages teaching. ⁷ He called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. ⁸ He ordered them to take nothing for their journey except a staff; no bread, no bag, no money in their belts; ⁹ but to wear sandals and not to put on two tunics. ¹⁰ He said to them, 'Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave the place. ¹¹ If any place will not welcome you and they refuse to hear you, as you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them.'¹² So they went out and proclaimed that all should repent. ¹³ They cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.

Thought for the day

On Tuesday we read about Jesus' reaction to the power going from him when the woman intentionally touched his cloak. Today we see the other side of his humanity. The woman had known Jesus only from his reputation as a healer, but had faith in him. At Nazareth by contrast many people would have known Jesus from their own experience. And knowing him they couldn't believe his teaching; that is, they had no faith in him. So we read that he could do (almost) no 'deeds of power' there (v5). Are we tempted to put more trust in our own limited experience and understanding than we do in the testimony of Christians down the ages and in God's word in the Bible? And if we give in to such temptation, are we not the only losers?

FRIDAY - Mark 6:14-29

¹⁴ King Herod heard of it, for Jesus' name had become known. **Some were saying, 'John the baptizer has been raised from the dead; and for this reason these powers are at work in him.'** ¹⁵ **But others said, 'It is Elijah.'** **And others said, 'It is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old.'** ¹⁶ **But when Herod heard of it, he said, 'John, whom I beheaded, has been raised.'**

¹⁷ For Herod himself had sent men who arrested John, bound him, and put him in prison on account of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, because Herod had married her. ¹⁸ For John had been telling Herod, 'It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife.' ¹⁹ And Herodias had a grudge against him, and wanted to kill him. But she could not, ²⁰ for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he protected him. When he heard him, he was greatly perplexed; and yet he liked to listen to him. ²¹ But an opportunity came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his courtiers and officers and for the leaders of Galilee. ²² When his daughter Herodias came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his guests; and the king said to the girl, 'Ask me for whatever you wish, and I will give it.' ²³ And he solemnly swore to her, 'Whatever you ask me, I will give you, even half of my kingdom.' ²⁴ She went out and said to her mother, 'What should I ask for?' She replied, 'The head of John the baptizer.' ²⁵ Immediately she rushed back to the king and requested, 'I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter.' ²⁶ The king was deeply grieved; yet out of regard for his oaths and for the guests, he did not want to refuse her.

²⁷ Immediately the king sent a soldier of the guard with orders to bring John's head. He went and beheaded him in the prison, ²⁸ brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl. Then the girl gave it to her mother. ²⁹ When his disciples heard about it, they came and took his body, and laid it in a tomb.

Thought for the day

In the main part of this passage Mark records, in the equivalent of a flashback, what had happened earlier on, and how it was that John the Baptist came to be executed by King Herod. But first he throws light on how Jesus' ministry was understood. Both Herod (v16), perhaps with a guilty conscience, and some of the crowd (v14) thought that Jesus was John restored to life. This is an interesting idea because for most people the idea of someone coming back to life would have been the least likely of possible explanations. It implies that Jesus' message and effect on his hearers was seen as similar to John's. This, and the alternative ideas of him being Elijah or 'like one of the prophets of old' (v15), showed how impressive Jesus' teaching and healing was.

SATURDAY - Mark 6:30-44

³⁰ **The apostles gathered around Jesus, and told him all that they had done and taught.** ³¹ **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.** ³² **And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves.** ³³ Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they hurried there on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of them. ³⁴ 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. ³⁵ When it grew late, his disciples came to him and said, 'This is a deserted place, and the hour is now very late; ³⁶ send them away so that they may go into the surrounding country and villages and buy something for themselves to eat.' ³⁷ But he answered them, 'You give them something to eat.' They said to him, 'Are we to go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread, and give it to them to eat?' ³⁸ And he said to them, 'How many loaves have you? Go and see.' When they had found out, they said, 'Five, and two fish.' ³⁹ Then he ordered them to get all the people to sit down in groups on the green grass. ⁴⁰ So they sat down in groups of hundreds and of fifties. ⁴¹ Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he

looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to his disciples to set before the people; and he divided the two fish among them all. ⁴² And all ate and were filled; ⁴³ and they took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish. ⁴⁴ Those who had eaten the loaves numbered five thousand men.

Thought for the day

The prelude (v30-32) is often overlooked in the overall account of the remarkable feeding of the 5000. Verse 30 takes us back to 3:14-15 when Jesus appointed the Twelve as apostles to be sent out. Here they return and report what had happened. On Tuesday we considered the effect on Jesus himself of his healing ministry - now he is concerned for his disciples that they too should have an opportunity for relaxation and rest (v31-32). As it turned out, it was not to be - the deserted place was not deserted enough. But the general idea of finding times and places to recharge our batteries must be a good one, not just in relation to Christian ministry and witness, but to the whole of our lives, which perhaps we know are more busy than is good for us.

JRE / 6.7.21