

Mark 1. 21-28

Reflection

Mark's gospel is full of action and urgency. Jesus begins his ministry with a dramatic confrontation against evil. Mark wants us to understand God through the teaching and actions of Jesus. This story signals that Jesus has come to oppose anything that keeps us from abundant life. "I have come that they may have life and have it to the full to the full". John 10:10. He launches the Kingdom of God through teaching and healing.

Jesus' teaching astounds the people. The scribes taught by explaining the law, dependent on what others had said or written. However Jesus has no need of support to back his teaching, when he speaks God speaks.

It is a strange story from a distant time. Jesus confronts and expels the unclean spirit, a destructive force which dominates and controls this man. He uses his power and authority to heal not to dominate or control. We can all be vulnerable to "unclean spirits" when our emotions and thoughts are dominated by anger, resentment, grief, choking anxiety, loneliness or fear of the future. Mental health is not a description that appears in the Bible but today it is recognised that our mental and emotional health is very important and can destroy lives in the same way as a physical illness. We are very fragile creatures living through endless cycles of miserable news but remember the wonderful scene in Litchfield Cathedral. People receiving their vaccinations in a place where people have come for healing over hundreds of years. A journalist described vaccination as "Salvation at the end of a needle" It is a modern miracle. Through scientific intervention God is offering us rescue and safety from this evil virus.

We continually pray "deliver us from evil" as Jesus taught us. Through prayer and reflection we can find God's reassuring presence in difficult circumstances. We can learn to trust in God's love, and allow the Holy Spirit to change our minds and attitude. As it says in today's psalm "Listen to his voice", the voice of authority. There are chaotic and disruptive influences in our lives but in our deepest need we are secure in him and he offers us healing, resilience and strength. God has promised "When you pass through the waters I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers they will not sweep over you." Isaiah 43:2

God has a vision for our lives – wholeness. No broken relationships, no ailing bodies, no fractured minds. God is at work. Look for signs of his love, healing and truth.

Shirley Brown –Reader Good Shepherd, Lake and St Saviour's, Shanklin.