



JULY

Reflections from Rev Brian Shackleton

JULY 4 MARK 6: 1-13

Today's reading is in two parts; a) a brief return by Jesus to Nazareth, and the local reaction, and b) the sending out in mission of the twelve (and this seems to have had some success).

We are used to thinking of the "otherness of Jesus" - his holiness, his kingship, his divinity. So as you read this account of the Nazareth visit, try to think of him in the human terms that the townsfolk would have seen in the Jesus who grew up among them.

The following Meditation may help.

"What Are We Supposed to Think?"

He's a carpenter.

It's the family business he grew up in, and we know him as a carpenter:

- and it's very difficult to think of him as anything else.

He grew up here

- he's a good craftsman; and he was a good son who stepped in to be the family breadwinner when his Dad died.

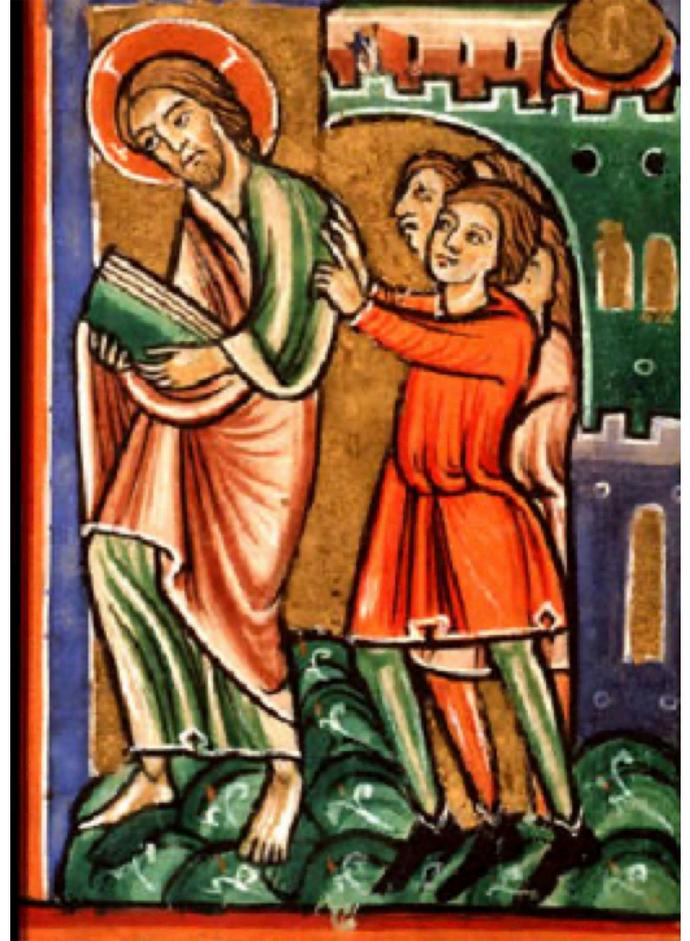
We knew he had a good mind

-there's the time when, on the village pilgrimage to Jerusalem, around the time of his bar mitzvah, he spent hours talking with some of the top religious people in the Temple.

But now,

when some people think he may be the Messiah, what are we expected to think?

He's a wood-smith, not a wordsmith.



He's not a con man
taking people in;
he was always as honest as the day is long.
He's not delusional, mad
- I don't think I've ever met
anyone more level-headed.
I don't know what to believe!
But the town made its mind up
- sceptical, we stayed as we were.
But there he was, undeterred
sending his disciples out on mission,
(seemingly poorly prepared),
in material terms deliberately ill-equipped,
apparently not selected for special gifts
or talented attributes,
he sent them to encounter the world
- and we stayed in our comfort zone.

Now look at the second part of today's reading; and think about our call to mission.

JULY 11 MARK 6: 14-29

This passage almost seems like an interruption in the Gospel story; an intrusion. And to the modern mind it takes a little understanding to see the purpose of Mark's narrative. Of course, John the Baptist is part of the story of Jesus, and an important part at the beginning. But here it seems like a coda, a tidying up, and would seem to be close to being an irrelevance.

Historical facts are thin on the ground. The best historical evidence comes from Josephus, and his work on Herod is sometimes at variance with Mark, and as 'stand alone' evidence is far from complete. Mark seems to have used popular material circulating at the time, and could be compared to the "popular press" of our day, and not all of it stands up to historic examination. So why put it in at all?

First of all, John is the forerunner of Jesus, and it is against his expectations that a section of the Jewish community would make a judgement about Jesus. He is the Elijah figure.

And in a strange way his suffering and death for what he believes to be right, anticipates the suffering and death of Jesus. Herod might not have been Caesar, but the personal power he wielded was formidable.

The death of John impacted Jesus. And it is for you, the reader, to decide whether the shadow of the Cross is now in place. Can we, from this point on, look to see whether the concept of the Suffering Servant now starts to come to the fore.

JULY 18 MARK 6: 30-34, 53-56

A reading of the complete sixth chapter of Mark would no doubt expect to focus on the feeding of the five thousand. This is to be found in all four gospels, and we shall be looking at the Johannine version next week.

But this week is an opportunity to look at two crossings of the Sea of Galilee, but most importantly in a very understated way we see amongst all the pressures caused by the crowds there is need for prayer, solitude and reflection – the opportunity to recharge batteries. If the plan was to get respite from the crowds, there was disappointment. But in a telling way Mark describes the people coming to Jesus were "like sheep without a shepherd." It is a criticism of the religious leadership, and a commentary on the way in which "the poor of the land" are those who are considered ignorant and hopeless, but precious within the Kingdom.

When we read these passages it is understandable that we look primarily at the pressures on Jesus – and so we should. But the challenge comes when we look at the people who came to Jesus, those who were among the most vulnerable. Yet again we need to understand who it is that we serve in our discipleship.

JULY 25 JOHN: 6: 1-21

The Lectionary gives us the next five weeks to think about the content of this sixth chapter of John's Gospel. (This gives the impression that a Bible Study group would be a more appropriate venue than the church service). However, I find the theologian, Rudolf Bultmann, suggests a helpful approach. He writes, "the Synoptics portray Jesus' ministry by collecting together a large number of small pieces of tradition, which they try to join up into a coherent whole as best they can, John gives his portrayal in a series of large detailed pictures. So imagine yourself in an Art Gallery, standing in front of a wall-size picture entitled "The Feeding of the Five Thousand." John sees the "miracle", however it was achieved, as illustrative of a living parable, linking this to the idea that Jesus is the "bread of life." We need to remember that there is a powerful image here because of the Jewish "Exodus" experience, and the belief that God provided "daily food" (- and this is echoed in the Lord's Prayer). We will return to this later in the chapter. But "proof by miracle" also triggers a reaction from at least a part of the crowd to make Jesus a "revolutionary Messiah" opposed to Rome – this comment is absent from Matthew, Mark and Luke.





JULY

Reflections from Rev Brian Shackleton

JULY 4 MARK 6: 1-13

Today's reading is in two parts; a) a brief return by Jesus to Nazareth, and the local reaction, and b) the sending out in mission of the twelve (and this seems to have had some success). We are used to thinking of the "otherness of Jesus" - his holiness, his kingship, his divinity. So as you read this account of the Nazareth visit, try to think of him in the human terms that the townsfolk would have seen in the Jesus who grew up among them.

The following Meditation may help.

"What Are We Supposed to Think?"

He's a carpenter.
It's the family business he grew up in,
and we know him as a carpenter:
- and it's very difficult to think of him
as anything else.
He grew up here
- he's a good craftsman; and he was a good son
who stepped in to be the family breadwinner
when his Dad died.
We knew he had a good mind
-there's the time when,
on the village pilgrimage to Jerusalem,
around the time of his bar mitzvah,
he spent hours talking with some of the top
religious people in the Temple.
But now,
when some people think he may be the Messiah,
what are we expected to think?
He's a wood-smith, not a wordsmith.



He's not a con man
taking people in;
he was always as honest as the day is long.
He's not delusional, mad
- I don't think I've ever met
anyone more level-headed.
I don't know what to believe!
But the town made its mind up
- sceptical, we stayed as we were.
But there he was, undeterred
sending his disciples out on mission,
(seemingly poorly prepared),
in material terms deliberately ill-equipped,
apparently not selected for special gifts
or talented attributes,
he sent them to encounter the world
- and we stayed in our comfort zone.

Now look at the second part of today's reading; and think about our call to mission.

JULY 11 MARK 6: 14-29

This passage almost seems like an interruption in the Gospel story; an intrusion. And to the modern mind it takes a little understanding to see the purpose of Mark's narrative. Of course, John the Baptist is part of the story of Jesus, and an important part at the beginning. But here it seems like a coda, a tidying up, and would seem to be close to being an irrelevance.

Historical facts are thin on the ground. The best historical evidence comes from Josephus, and his work on Herod is sometimes at variance with Mark, and as 'stand alone' evidence is far from complete. Mark seems to have used popular material circulating at the time, and could be compared to the "popular press" of our day, and not all of it stands up to historic examination. So why put it in at all?

First of all, John is the forerunner of Jesus, and it is against his expectations that a section of the Jewish community would make a judgement about Jesus. He is the Elijah figure.

And in a strange way his suffering and death for what he believes to be right, anticipates the suffering and death of Jesus. Herod might not have been Caesar, but the personal power he wielded was formidable.

The death of John impacted Jesus. And it is for you, the reader, to decide whether the shadow of the Cross is now in place. Can we, from this point on, look to see whether the concept of the Suffering Servant now starts to come to the fore.

JULY 18 MARK 6: 30-34, 53-56

A reading of the complete sixth chapter of Mark would no doubt expect to focus on the feeding of the five thousand. This is to be found in all four gospels, and we shall be looking at the Johannine version next week.

But this week is an opportunity to look at two crossings of the Sea of Galilee, but most importantly in a very understated way we see amongst all the pressures caused by the crowds there is need for prayer, solitude and reflection – the opportunity to recharge batteries. If the plan was to get respite from the crowds, there was disappointment. But in a telling way Mark describes the people coming to Jesus were "like sheep without a shepherd." It is a criticism of the religious leadership, and a commentary on the way in which "the poor of the land" are those who are considered ignorant and hopeless, but precious within the Kingdom.

When we read these passages it is understandable that we look primarily at the pressures on Jesus – and so we should. But the challenge comes when we look at the people who came to Jesus, those who were among the most vulnerable. Yet again we need to understand who it is that we serve in our discipleship.

JULY 25 JOHN: 6: 1-21

The Lectionary gives us the next five weeks to think about the content of this sixth chapter of John's Gospel. (This gives the impression that a Bible Study group would be a more appropriate venue than the church service). However, I find the theologian, Rudolf Bultmann, suggests a helpful approach. He writes, "the Synoptics portray Jesus' ministry by collecting together a large number of small pieces of tradition, which they try to join up into a coherent whole as best they can, John gives his portrayal in a series of large detailed pictures. So imagine yourself in an Art Gallery, standing in front of a wall-size picture entitled "The Feeding of the Five Thousand." John sees the "miracle", however it was achieved, as illustrative of a living parable, linking this to the idea that Jesus is the "bread of life." We need to remember that there is a powerful image here because of the Jewish "Exodus" experience, and the belief that God provided "daily food" (- and this is echoed in the Lord's Prayer). We will return to this later in the chapter. But "proof by miracle" also triggers a reaction from at least a part of the crowd to make Jesus a "revolutionary Messiah" opposed to Rome – this comment is absent from Matthew, Mark and Luke.

