

Pentecost 6, 5/7/2015, Holy Trinity

Mark 6:1-13

On our journey through Mark's Gospel this morning we are faced with the rejection of Jesus by the people of Nazareth.

This incident must have been painful for Jesus.

Nazareth was his home town.

The people had seen him grow from boyhood to adulthood.

He had attended the synagogue with them.

He had learnt his trade there.

They had accepted him as their builder/stone worker.

Those who first accepted him now rejected him and it even extended to Jesus' family and the rest of his kin and those who were in the synagogue.

This is a further reflection on events recorded in the second half of Chapter 3 where we read of the responses of Jesus family to the events there.

His family was thinking that he was mad and this was followed by some of the Jerusalem scribes who said that he was empowered by Beelzebul which was another way of saying that he was mad.

This morning's reading emphasises again that they, along with the rest of his kin and the synagogue gathering, did not accept him.

One would think that this situation would not only be painful for Jesus, but it could be devastating.

Jesus' reaction does tell us something about Jesus and is part of his instruction to others: there is a higher priority than family power and obligation.

Family power is meant to lead and enable a person to independent adulthood.

Sometimes this is aborted resulting in oppression.

A frequent example of this is where the family comes from a long line of a particular profession, so the latest line of children is expected to follow the same profession.

This does not lead to independent adulthood but to oppression.

I knew a young man whose family owned a very successful business and wanted him to enter the same business.

He knew this was not his vocation in life and he spent the remainder of his life working in his chosen vocation overseas because of the oppression exercised by the family.

Mark takes us further along the path of Jesus' reaction to the situation of rejection.

He sends his followers out two by two.

We may express this in the modern idiom of "Don't worry, be calm and get on with the job at hand."

The significance of 'two by two' is that two witnesses were needed for a court charge to be made.

In this particular case the two were to reinforce their witness to Jesus and the things that he was doing.

At the same time they could expect to receive a similar treatment as had been dealt out to Jesus.

They could expect rejection and where this happened they were to move on as witnesses to other people.

They, however, were not expected to do this on their own.

They were given power over unclean spirits.

It was not all rejection, however: many followed Jesus, men and women, some remained in their own community and others followed him as itinerants, being with Jesus, learning from him and witnessing to him.

Wherever they were they were a community of missionaries.

The Church, then, is a community of missionaries who are sent: it is to "travel light" and to proclaim the word in freedom and fearlessness.

Like Jesus it is to confront the power of evil and serve as agents of God's healing power.

We, as the Body of Christ in this place, are faced with change.

We are saying farewell to one Rector or Parish Priest and looking for another who will replace Fr. Brian.

As we go through this process of grief on the one hand and expectation on the other we are looking for a leader who will lead us in being a community of missionaries who will travel light and who will proclaim the word of God's love, acceptance, forgiveness and reconciliation of relationships knowing that we will encounter rejection but will have power over evil remembering that God is with us ALWAYS.