

## SUNDAY 4 (B) (2024)

### A) INTRODUCTION

- if ever you go to a West End Show, or a musical or an opera, the very first music you hear is the overture
- often enough it consists of a series of hit tunes from the show
- it whets your appetite, and helps you to look out for those songs when they come along during the performance
- we are listening this Year to the Gospel according to St. Mark,
- these early passages from his Gospel are a bit like the overture
- they don't just set the scene, they also present us with some of the great themes of the Gospel
- today I'd like to talk about three of them, as they appear in the passage we've just heard.

### B) TEACHING WITH AUTHORITY

- the first theme is that Jesus is shown teaching with authority
- already he is presented as a Rabbi, someone with learning, someone with a group of pupils
- on the Sabbath day he goes to the synagogue: he himself is a Jew and he does what pious and faithful Jews would normally do, to meet, to hear the scriptures and to pray to God
- but he also teaches: it was customary for anyone with any learning to be invited to interpret the Scripture which was read in the Synagogue on the Sabbath.
- His impact is immediate: his teaching made a deep impression because, unlike the scribes, he taught with authority.
- what did that mean?
- He did not just quote from the scriptures, or quote from previous teachers in a way which sounded confused and complicated;
- he taught simply and directly, and from within himself.
- it was as though he himself personified God's message; in him the message and the messenger were one and the same.
- we know that this is so, because Mark has already told us, at the beginning of his Gospel, that Jesus is the Son of God
- but the participants in the story do not know that
- at least, not yet

### C) CASTING OUT DEVILS

- the second theme in today's Gospel is the miracle Jesus worked
- he cast out an unclean spirit, a devil
- what does that miracle tell us about Jesus?
- first of all it shows his compassion for someone who was suffering, and whose life was in turmoil
- Jesus wanted to heal him
- it also shows Jesus' authority over unclean spirits
- their presence was a sign that the power of Satan, the power of the evil one, was evident in the world
- but Jesus' own power is greater
- and so the effects of sin are being reversed,
- Satan's power is being curtailed,
- the kingdom of God is being established in and through Jesus

### D) MESSIANIC SECRET

- the third theme in today's Gospel is the true identity of Jesus
- Jesus' words and actions are carried out with authority
- the crowds witness his teaching, with authority behind it
- they witness his miracles: and the power he has over unclean spirits
- they ask each other what it can mean: who is this man that has such power and authority?
- in fact it is the demon who provides the answer: I know who you are, the Holy One of God!
- but Jesus silences the demon, as he was to do, so frequently, in the Gospel
- he does not want the people to imagine that he is a political Messiah, someone who is going to lead them in revolt against the Romans
- he will only reveal his true identity when he is nailed to a Cross
- he is the Messiah who is the Suffering Servant of God,
- he will lead his people to true freedom, not through political violence
- but through the sacrifice of his life and his triumphant resurrection from the dead
- this silencing of the demon is what is known as the "Messianic secret"

### E) CONCLUSION

- as we listen to Mark's Gospel unfolding, Sunday by Sunday, throughout this year, we can accompany the crowds as they listen to the teaching of Jesus,
- we too can witness to his powers of healing
- we can allow him to enthral us and transform us
- and if those same questions arise once again in us,
- (What does it all mean? who is this man?)
- in faith we too can reply: I know who you are, the Holy One of God!

---ooo0ooo---