

St Columba Newsletter 20 January 2021

Hello everyone,

This is just a catch up to see how everyone is doing. It has been a while since I wrote to you. As we now seem to be at the peak of this epidemic it is important that we take extra care of ourselves and, unfortunately, it means we are unable to meet in church for the time being. The New variant has unfortunately been spreading in the few churches that have remained open. The Town Council has asked the remaining churches that are open to close their doors.

If you are struggling, you are in good company. Few of us are thriving at this difficult time. If you would like to talk do call me on 555020 and leave a message if I am unable to respond immediately. May I encourage you to look forward to Easter and the spring when everything, I believe, will look much brighter. Ultimately our hope is in Jesus, and we should never allow the present tribulations to so take over our minds that we lose sight of our future. Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

It has been really good to see many of you at the zoom Sunday Service and Tuesday morning meeting. In fact, there were more on line last Sunday than I have seen since the beginning of the first lockdown. If you would like help in joining us do get in touch. You are welcome to join us on a Sunday or Tuesday morning. However I am aware that zoom is not for everyone; so, I have asked Simon Bridgens, who gave the sermon on Sunday to write an article for this newsletter. I trust this will be of help to you. But first.....

Coming together to read and study

Many churches in Northampton are joining together to read a book during lent. The **Big Church Read in Northampton** provides the chance to come together (with other churches) to read Pete Hughes book **All things new**. As many of us are feeling a bit stuck indoors at the moment, it seems an ideal opportunity to join in and be part of something beyond ourselves. Steve Kelly has read it and recommends it, I have ordered my copy; why not join us in this project? And before you ask, No I'm not getting commission!

Please do order your copy in good time by visiting this page:-
<https://thebigchurchread.co.uk/allthingsnew/>

Mark 3:20-35

Jesus accused by his family and by teachers of the law

²⁰ Then Jesus entered a house, and again a crowd gathered, so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat. ²¹ When his family^a heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, 'He is out of his mind.'

²² And the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said, 'He is possessed by Beelzebul! By the prince of demons he is driving out demons.'

²³ So Jesus called them over to him and began to speak to them in parables: 'How can Satan drive out Satan? ²⁴ If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. ²⁵ If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. ²⁶ And if Satan opposes himself and is divided, he cannot stand; his end has come. ²⁷ In fact, no one can enter a strong man's house without first tying him up. Then he can plunder the strong man's house. ²⁸ Truly I tell you, people can be forgiven all their sins and every slander they utter, ²⁹ but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; they are guilty of an eternal sin.'

³⁰ He said this because they were saying, 'He has an impure spirit.'

³¹ Then Jesus' mother and brothers arrived. Standing outside, they sent someone in to call him. ³² A crowd was sitting round him, and they told him, 'Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you.'

³³ 'Who are my mother and my brothers?' he asked.

³⁴ Then he looked at those seated in a circle round him and said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers! ³⁵ Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother.'

Comment

C S Lewis who wrote the Narnia stories and many other Christian books used to broadcast over the BBC to the nation during the 1940s and 1950s. In these broadcasts he would seek to explain the Christian faith and answer many of the questions and objections people had about Christianity. One of his famous arguments concerned the person of Jesus Christ. A common position people would take would be that Jesus was a good religious teacher but nothing more. By so doing people could deny the divinity of Jesus and avoid the claim he made on their lives.

Lewis argued that there were only three possibilities in answer to the question of “who is Jesus?” Jesus is either mad (i.e. self-deluded), bad (i.e. a charlatan) or the real deal (i.e. son of God and Messiah)!

In this passage from Mark we see all three possibilities set forth.

1. Mad

Much of Jesus’ early ministry took place in and around Lake Galilee and the house Jesus entered was probably in Capernaum and possibly even Simon Peter’s house. Mark frequently refers to the large crowds that were present and here gives us an insight into the pressures that such numbers created. Jesus and his disciples were not even able to have a break and eat! With stories of exorcisms and miracles, rumours must have filtered back to Nazareth and to Mary and his brothers painting a picture of chaos and Jesus the cause. “He is out of his mind” they said and immediately they all set out to take charge of him and bring him home. Although they were later to believe in him at this stage in the story they did not and thought him mad.

2. Bad

Jesus’ miracles and particularly his deliverance ministry was attracting the attention of the religious establishment in Jerusalem

and senior men (the teachers in the law) had been sent to investigate. How did Jesus deliver possessed individuals from evil spirits? Their conclusion was that Jesus must be evil himself and was in league with the devil. Such a conclusion was both ridiculous and illogical as Jesus points out. If Satan was divided against Satan his kingdom would soon fall.

3. Real deal

Meanwhile back in the house where Jesus was teaching Mark tells us the disciples were sitting in a circle around him. No doubt engrossed in what they were hearing. They did not think him mad or bad. To follow him and obey his teaching was to do God's will and to be a member of God's family, with fellow believers as your brothers and sisters.

In her Christmas message the Queen again spoke of her Christian faith being "her inner light" and Jesus as the light of the world. In these dark days we need again to see Jesus as he truly is "the real deal" because we need His strength and guidance as never before. And in these lonely, isolating times we need the support and encouragement of our brothers and sisters to persevere to the end.

Thank you, Simon, for your contribution.

Do take care everyone and God Bless.

James Howson.