

Sermon preached by Chris Moroney at the Healing Service at St. Andrew's Cathedral,  
Sydney on Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2006. Reading Mark 1:14-28  
Topic: "Who is in Charge of your Life"

Whenever we make a decision, we are working on the basis of certain guidelines and rules. These will come from the authorities who influence or govern our lives, eg. our parents, or people around us. They want to be accepted by their friends, so they go along with the crowd. Whenever we make decisions, little ones and big ones, we can ask ourselves: how do I know what is right and wrong for me in this situation? Who will I listen to? And when it comes to things that are outside my control, to whom will I turn? Sometimes if we have been managing our lives with ourselves as the highest authority, we can be brought very low by the experiences of life. There will be many people who are able to testify that it was only when they were really down, in the depths of despair that they really learned to look up, to seek out the God who made them and ask if he really loved them. And as they looked up, and sought out their Creator, they found Jesus, and they knew that he loved them and valued them and wanted to care for them all the time, if only they would make him their King, the one who guides them in the decisions of life and the one who is able to bring good out of evil and healing out of sickness and triumph out of trouble.

### **WHO'S IN CHARGE OF YOUR LIFE?**

**JOHN THE BAPTISER Prepares the way.** John was calling on people to turn to God in repentance and faith in preparation for the coming of the Messiah. John is the link between the Old and New Testaments. Like the prophets of the Old Testament he calls people back to God. He tells them of the coming judgement of God. He baptizes people who were already Jews, which is the way in which Gentiles became associate Jews. He also looks forward to the coming of the promised Messiah or the Christ. That promised one is the anointed and appointed King. John looks forward to the New covenant to the age of the Holy Spirit. And so John baptizes Jesus in the river Jordan. We have God's endorsement of Jesus in verse 11.

The theme of being the Son of God is a very important one in Mark's gospel. It is another way of talking about Jesus being the King.

### **JESUS THE PROCLAIMER**

Jesus takes charge right from the start. He proclaims the gospel – the declaration of the new Kingdom because there is a new king, the promised one. Mark 1:14-15 When we think of a kingdom we might think of history where a king would take over a particular area of land. This is not so much ruling over a limited area of land as ruling over the whole world and especially in the hearts of the people who recognize the King, even though others refuse to. Jesus is the king in God's kingdom. He will call upon people to follow him, to go along with his plans for them and the world. We pray for the spread of the kingdom. *Thy Kingdom come.* So people acknowledge Jesus as the king and their king at the same time.

How do people recognize Jesus as their king? "*repent and believe in the gospel.*" In terms of Christian living, it means giving up our self directed way of life, turning around from being self-centred to being Jesus centred. To **repent** means to have a change of mind, a new way of life, a renewed mind, a fresh direction in life, having turned our back on the old way of life. To **believe** the gospel means that we believe and accept that Jesus is the king of all and the king of me, that he is in charge of my life and my eternal destiny. It means that what Jesus accomplished on the cross is more than enough to pay for all my sins, and provide the forgiveness of sins that I need. As hard as it is to believe, we accept it as God's truth, that through Jesus I can be forgiven by God and he takes me in as one of his sons or daughters. I am his and he is mine forever. And there is nothing that can separate us from the love of God. But what does it mean for Jesus to make that call, to give that proclamation of the gospel?

### **CALLING DISCIPLES**

Jesus follows it up with a personal invitation to Simon and Andrew who had been some of the disciples of John the Baptist. With John's job finished, these men have gone back to their former occupations. Now Jesus starts to build his team – his 12 disciples. Simon and Andrew, James and John had known about Jesus. God had prepared their hearts. Jesus calls upon all sorts of people to follow him and become true believers, but in this particular case he is calling certain people to leave everything and spend time with him, learning to go out and tell even more people about Jesus. The disciples were to learn from Jesus and be trained by Jesus

to spread the word about the Kingdom of God. Mark 1:16-17 The call is personal in that it is about spending every day with Jesus. Follow me: walk with me, listen to me, watch me, talk with me. It is a beautiful picture of discipleship. It is the sort of picture that we should have in our minds as we seek to live as Christians ourselves. It is never just a matter of picking up a few general moral guidelines or ethical values. There is all the difference in the world between having a Christian lifestyle and living as a Christian. But we also need to note that it is a call to be outgoing, not just self centred. Jesus is building this team, so that they can be involved in calling others to be involved in this kingdom of God. As they have been fishermen, he calls them to be fishers of men. As he declares the gospel, so he will train up these men to proclaim the same message of God's love and forgiveness.

Mark 1:18 *And immediately they left their nets and followed him.* At the word of Jesus, people respond. At the touch of Jesus healing comes. At the call of Jesus disciples follow, immediately. And the theme is the authority of Jesus. He really is in charge of what's going on, because he can make things happen.

### **CLEANSING PEOPLE**

Jesus starts out in his ministry on his own.

Baptised by John. Into the desert to be tempted by the Devil, back in 1:12-13. Then down by the sea of Galilee to call the four new disciples. And now in verse 21 Jesus and his team walk the 7 kilometres from the edge of the Sea of Galilee to the township of Capernaum. His first task is to get to church. Jesus already has some level of recognition, because the person in charge of the synagogue invites him to speak on the passage for the day. What is surprising to the people there is that Jesus teaches with such authority. He is not only confident, he is teaching them from his own mind and heart. The scribes quoted other rabbis all the time. But Jesus tells them how it is from his own standpoint. *"I say unto you. Truly truly I say to you."*

Jesus is confronting the powers of evil as he teaches the truth. He is revealing the mind of God. He is driving back the powers of darkness and despair. Surprisingly, there is in the synagogue someone who is demon possessed. The demons feel threatened by Jesus. They know that they are part of Satan's, kingdom. Satan is going to be defeated. The light is going to dawn. They know that they are doomed. They know who Jesus really is. They acknowledge he is from God, his Holy One. They can see clearly what so many people cannot or will not see. Jesus is Lord. Jesus tells them to be quiet. And the demons came out of the man. No matter how many of Satan's agents Jesus comes up against, the outcome is always assured. Jesus is the king in God's kingdom. Satan's power will not prevail.

See the response of the people. Mark 1:27-We notice the link between the teaching of Jesus and the casting out of the demons. It is the word of Jesus that is powerful. He comes to bring in a new world order, through his person and through his teaching. We can make him King and leave him to deal with all our pain and troubles. We can ask him for healing, knowing that he is compassionate and powerful. He is the one who has the authority to call us to follow him, to lay our lives before him and to trust him with all our problems. We come to him, in believing prayer. When it comes to making decisions in our lives, there is only one person who we should acknowledge to be in charge of our life, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ.