

Words of Life
Mark 1:21-28

Discussion Question: Share with each other what you sense that God is doing in you and possibly what you sense God is doing in us as a church community at St Pauls.

Read together: Mark 1:21-28

There have been threads and themes over the last number of weeks that have been important for us as a church, that reflects this image of people with a lot of experience, who are attentive to a new word, a new paradigm, that Jesus wants to bring.

I want us to remember Nathan's words to us a couple of months ago. That we are as a people to be waiting not working, participating not producing. A sense of being attentive to what Jesus is saying to us afresh and to each other; and giving space in our lives together for that to happen.

For as Matt has said, there are new growth opportunities for us in this time. And, a chance to express our gifts so that we might be life to others, not in an economic fashion, not in trying to produce, but participating because we can support and encourage one another.

Then a few weeks ago, Rachel had the opportunity to share her testimony, which I think was incredibly powerful for a number of us. There was a sense in which we all felt like we could take a deep breath, and even let go of some the things we were trying to hold on tightly to, knowing that God is there to catch us. Well, during her story Rachel touched on a verse from John 6:68 in which many people had left Jesus because of his hard teaching. Jesus asks his disciples "You do not want to leave too, do you?" (I can imagine Jesus' pain here), and in verse 68 Peter replies "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life...."

As both Matt and I heard that verse, our hearts melted, because that verse captured our sense for the community. You have the words of eternal life Jesus, to whom else should we go.

Then the following day, Matt and I were praying out of the liturgy of common prayer and the repeating prayer throughout the liturgy had these words in the prayer:

"I call with my whole heart: your word will give me life"

And we looked at each other, and we both knew, that was it.

Where else can we go Lord Jesus, you have the words of eternal life, for each of us, and for us as St Pauls.

For Jesus' words are not simply for a future age, they are like music to the oppressed, that speaks into our present to bring healing and new life.

For the religious, the proud and the powerful, Jesus' words are an anathema to their way of being, they are a hard teaching. But to the poor, the broken, the naked, the outcast, Jesus' words are beautiful, they are astounding! To the ones who say to whom else can go? They are amazing.

As we go through this series together, let us be attentive to the words of Jesus that he wants to speak to us afresh!

Discussion Question: When was the last time you were amazed by Jesus, by his words, that created a paradigm shift for your understanding or way of being?

Secondly, in the story, we read that Jesus' teaching does not simply amaze people, but his words had authority to set people free.

It was not just the people sitting at Jesus' feet listening who were transformed, but it was the second character in the story, the man who was bound and captive by spiritual powers.

For Mark's Gospel makes it clear that as Jesus goes around the countryside, all sorts of principalities and powers begin raging. Jesus is not simply there to bring a new kind of teaching, but is binding up the strongman, the accuser, who is raging against humanity.

And in all the instances, the people are helpless before these spiritual powers. They have no authority in and of themselves. They were vulnerable.

However, when Jesus speaks, it is laden with power!

It is not by a significant orchestration of events, not an outlandish display of actions, but simply by Jesus' words! His words have the authority to set captives free, to cleanse the leper, and to heal the lame.

Our prayer for this time is as we share stories of people meeting Jesus and our own stories over the next number of weeks, that we might experience the authority of Jesus' words and the amazement of His words, so that new life might spring up.

Discussion Question: Do you have any stories you could share with one another where you felt bound, or stuck, by something beyond yourself? Was there a moment where Jesus set you free from it?

If not, then give each other room to pray for one another to be set free, in the authority of Jesus.