

PREGO EXTRA

Background notes for the Gospels of JANUARY 2012 Year B



ST BEUNO'S OUTREACH
IN THE DIOCESE OF WREXHAM

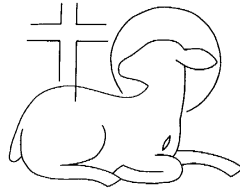
SAINT BEUNO'S OUTREACH IN THE DIOCESE OF WREXHAM

“Where do you live?” “Come and see”

The Gospel this week focuses on the call of the first disciples Andrew and his friend. The account comes from John’s Gospel and is very different from the call of the disciples as told in the other 3 gospels (Matthew 4:18-22, Mark 1: 16-20 and Luke 5: 1-11). Only in John’s Gospel do we learn that the first disciples were originally followers of John the Baptist.

Look, there is the Lamb of God

This title given to Jesus seems to have different possible origins. The image of the lamb was used in Isaiah’s song of the suffering servant (53: 7, 12) and also in the book of Revelation (5: 6 and 7: 17) where the lamb is linked to sacrifice and to the Messiah. The other explicit reference is that of the Passover lamb (Exodus 12: 21-23).



John portrays Jesus as dying at the time when the Passover lambs were killed (18:28; 19:31) and describes his dying using terms associated with Passover imagery (19:29,36).

As so often in John’s gospel we can see multiple layers of interpretation.

Where do you live?

This question is not designed to elicit a precise address. It is rather a way of wanting to find out where Jesus dwells. It is asking: “ Where can we stay with you?”

Come and see

The Greek word used for “see” implies not only physical sight but also spiritual insight.

Unlike the Scribes, He taught them with authority

Jesus is not like the Rabbis or the Scribes bound by traditional interpretation of texts and Laws.

The Greek word for Jesus’ authority is *exousia*. It is related in meaning to notions of being free, being permitted to do something.

Whereas scribes would only repeat the same teaching interpretation, Jesus joins action to his words. What he says comes to pass.

Society at the time of Jesus was very structured and static; your social status depended on where you came from and what your father did. Teaching with authority on the part of a carpenter’s son from Nazareth would indeed have been astonishing.

A man possessed by an unclean spirit

At that time, it was believed that sickness was caused by evil spirits. In a synagogue where ritual purity was all important, this man was unclean. Jesus challenges social conventions by dealing with him.

I know who you are

The possessed man acknowledges Jesus’ true identity, but as happens several times in Mark’s Gospel (1:43-45, 3: 11-12, 7: 36, 8:30 for example), Jesus does not wish to reveal who he truly is at this stage. Scholars call this the “Messianic secret”.

Naming an adversary was supposed to give power over him. The name “Holy one of God” was given to charismatic prophets such as Elisha (2 Kings 4:9)

Come out of him!

Exorcisms can be seen as ways of setting people free, of bringing a deliverance beyond what the person can request. Those affected are unable to ask for help. Twenty first century medicine does not speak in terms of unclean spirits, but in terms of mental illness and possibly epilepsy.

He taught them with authority

Jesus and his new disciples now go back to Capernaum and begin their ministry.

The structure of the account is typical of Mark's gospel. It starts and ends with two general comments about his authority (vv21-22 and 27-28) and in between tells us of an exorcism performed by Jesus. This technique, known to scholars as "intercalation" is more commonly referred to as the "sandwich structure". It underlines the true focus of the story.

Capernaum

It can be considered as Jesus' home town as an adult. It is a prosperous town on the sea of Galilee situated on the main trade route from Eastern Syria to Palestine and its ports. At that time it would have about one thousand inhabitants. It suited Jesus' ministry much better than Nazareth, a mountainous and isolated hamlet. Moreover, Capernaum was sufficiently apart from the big centres and especially from Tiberias where Herod Antipas had set his capital. There Jesus would not get into too much trouble with political and religious leaders.

In Capernaum fishermen, farmers, artisans, merchants, publicans lived together peacefully. The relations between the inhabitants of Capernaum and the Romans were fairly cordial.

He went to the synagogue

We see Jesus here actively involved with his own religious tradition.



The tenth hour

It will be remembered that at that time hours were counted from the rising of the sun, so we can assume that it was four o'clock in the afternoon.

One of these two...was Andrew

We do not know who the other person was. Some scholars suggest it might have been John himself. In Jewish law two witnesses were required to verify an event.

Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter

He is perhaps not one of the best known apostles; yet, throughout the gospel we find him bringing people to Jesus: his brother (1:40), a boy with five loaves and two fish (6:8) and some Greeks (12: 20).

John's Gospel is a book of Signs, that is things, events or people pointing to someone else. To help others see Jesus, a witness is usually necessary and so here Andrew and in later verses Philip bringing Nathanael to Jesus fulfil that role. (1: 45)



You are to be called Cephas—meaning Rock

It is John's practice to translate Hebrew or Aramaic words (Rabbi, Teacher or here Cephas, rock). Giving someone a new name is a very powerful sign. It indicates a profound change, a new way of life.

In John's Gospel there is no mention of the promise to Peter of primacy in the new Church (Matthew 16:18). The change of name, though, is connected to the recognition of Jesus as the Messiah.

The beginning of Jesus' ministry

St. Mark's Gospel was the first and shortest to be written. There are two key elements in his account; the identity of Jesus, and the type of person he calls to follow him. Mark addresses the first element at the outset (Ch.1: v.1) and the second in today's reading. Mark tells us that John has been arrested, he will provide us with full details later. (Ch.6:14-29) The Greek word for arrested (*paradidomi*) literally means "handed over" and is the same word translated as "betrayed" when used in the passion narrative. (14:10-11,18).

The time has come

Jesus began to preach by declaring a time of fulfilment (v.15) meaning a time in human history for God's messianic promises, as proclaimed through the prophets, to come to fruition. There is an urgency about his words.

Repent and believe the Good News

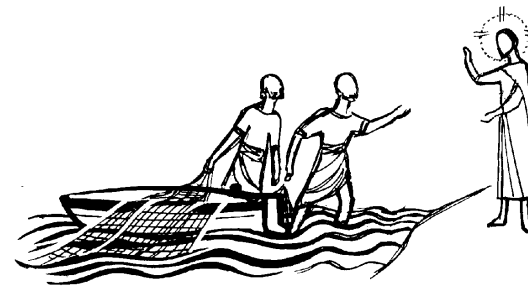
This is the second time Mark speaks of the Good News, this time linking it with repentance. When Jesus preached repentance to the Jews he was literally calling them to a 'change of mind'. He wanted them to turn away from a religion preoccupied with rules and formality to a more sincere form of worship. Repentance for the Gentiles involved turning from the worship of pagan idols to the worship of the one true God.



Follow me

Here Mark shows Jesus laying the foundations of his kingdom; calling his first followers. Jesus called ordinary people doing ordinary things and he called them personally.

There were many fishermen in Galilee. Josephus who was once a governor of Galilee and the great historian of the Jews tells us that 330 fishing boats sailed the waters of the lake. Fish was the staple diet of the people. The names of the towns of the lakeside reflect the importance of the fishing trade. Bethsaida means House of Fish and Tarichaea means the Place of Salt-fish.



They left their nets and followed him.

When the Bar-Jona brothers Simon and Andrew and the Zebedee brothers

James and John, left everything to go with Jesus, their response typified the 'change of mind' Jesus was preaching. Their **response** is what identifies them as disciples, Mark does not mention any other attributes or characteristics of these men.

Fishermen used two kinds of nets at that time, the one which Peter and Andrew were using was a small net called an *amphiblestron*. It was skilfully cast into the water by hand and was shaped rather like an umbrella.