

**SHORT TALK FOR ALL-AGE WORSHIP, 10.3.24, MARK 3:20-22, 31-35**

**“MUMMY KNOWS BEST... “ (?)**

This is something I have found myself saying sometimes a Toddlers Group. Or sometimes to our 5 month old grandson... Yes, Luca is 5 months old today ! No doubt his mummy will take another photo of him today, with some sign on his tummy, showing his age...

‘Mummy knows best...’. Usually this is indeed the case. But not always. As our story today for Mothering Sunday shows us. Our story takes us back to the early days of Jesus’ ministry, when he was suddenly catapulted to the status of ‘local hero’ - and potentially ‘national hero’. It’s interesting to see the different ways in which Jesus tackled becoming a celebrity of Galilee...

Having begun to gain a reputation as a miracle-worker & cracking storyteller, larger & larger crowds begin to follow Jesus from place to place. He & his disciples enter a house & suddenly the place is besieged by a huge crowd. So rammed is the house & its surroundings, & so demanding is the crowd, that Jesus & his disciples don’t even have a chance to eat. It looks as if Jesus’ mission is about to be overwhelmed. Not long after it has started. A victim of its own success. And there’s more. Not only are there too many needy people, but two other headstrong groups of people arrive on the scene, right then.

There is Jesus’ family, who possibly include friends or associates of the family too; but clearly include Mary, Jesus’ mum & his brothers. They had heard that things seemed to be getting out of hand. His mum was worried about him not eating, so she & others had arranged a ‘family intervention’. Some in this group are even worried that Jesus might have become a bit ‘unhinged’ by all this attention. They wanted to ‘take charge’ of him, as Mark puts it here.

A third group was also there. Teachers of the law from Jerusalem. And they have a less positive agenda. They start saying, not that Jesus might be mad, but that he must be bad. They try to portray him as the baddest of the bad guys. A popular bogey man, ‘Beelzebub’. Their twisted logic is that the only way Jesus can drive out demons is because he is the most powerful of evil beings. Their intention is to lock Jesus up & throw away the key.

Wow! This is like the human equivalent of the storm on the Sea of Galilee. Three groups of people, each wanting different things. There’s an awful lot

going on here. A lot of commotion - not a lot of common sense. It's a 'perfect storm' of the crowding in of a mountain of human need; combined with the family's concern for Jesus himself; and on top of all this, people in authority trying to make trouble & play on people's fears. Now, each of these three parts of the picture are probably all familiar to us in different ways.

We all know the understandable demands of family & friends in need. That's especially apparent these days. We also know what it is like for people in authority to play on people's fears. Our political leaders, of all persuasions, should know better. In this election year for our country & for the U.S., we need to hear more of the politics of hope & less of the politics of fear. (Amen.. ?)

Here's something from my own experience. At times my parents, out of concern for me, did try to dissuade me from going into Baptist ministry. They may have been thinking of me doing something more rewarding, more high-profile, more lucrative. I did understand their concerns. After all, there have been times when I have wondered if it might have been better if I had been persuaded by them, to do something else. But what we come back to, and what Jesus brings the crowd back to that day, & us all today, is this simple question: 'But what does **God** say? What does **God** want?'. I believe God continues to show us a new way forward, through all the surrounding chaos. God in Christ shows us a way of hope, in all the confusion of our days.

To the same crowd who are almost holding him hostage Jesus says simply: 'Here are my mother, brothers & sisters'... What an incredible turn around this is. It seems these few words are enough to quieten & satisfy most in the crowds. He affirms those who are wanting to hear what he says. Yes, Jesus first challenges the teachers of the law. And he does also deliver an implied rebuke to his own mother & family. But the story ends with this simple & profound affirmation. He says effectively: 'I feel right at home here. Here is my family. Anyone who does God's will, is a close relation to me'. (We are sis/bros of J!).

There are forces at work in the world, which are seeking to bring division & merciless hatred between different people. There are forces at work today which are trying to split churches too. There's nothing new in any of this. It's old news. The same old bad news. But Jesus brings good news. Good news that will prevail. Love & peace good news that we are essentially all one under God.

Jesus gives us a new commandment: 'Love one another as I have loved you'.  
(That's the inscription on my Mum's grave). All who follow Jesus are one family.  
God wants us - and all creation - to be one in Christ Jesus. Alleluia !