

**Sermon**  
**7 February 2021**  
**West Kirk of Calder/Polbeth Harwood**

By: Rev Dr Jonanda Groenewald

Reading: Mark 1:29-39

Hymn: CH4 457 All hail the power of Jesus' name

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**PRAYER**

Everlasting God, creator of heaven and earth,  
your love causes our hearts to soar.  
You know the number of stars in the universe  
– just as you know the number of hairs on our head.  
Mighty God, we praise you...

O God, we come to you out of the week just gone –  
with its successes and disappointments,  
its joys and its struggles.  
By your Holy Spirit,  
help us to focus on you now,  
to listen as you speak to our hearts,  
so that we may be better prepared  
to serve you in the week to come.

We're sorry, Lord, that the weight of life's demands causes us to  
stumble,  
to lose our temper and at times to buckle under the pressure.

Help us to be more like you, Lord.

We're sorry for not always getting our priorities right.

Help us to know, as you did, Jesus,  
the importance of spending time with and drawing refreshment from the  
Father...

We ask this in your name, in the words you taught us to pray:

Our Father, Who art in heaven,

Hallowed be Thy Name.

Thy Kingdom come.

Thy Will be done,  
on earth as it is in Heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts,  
as we forgive our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory.

Forever,

Amen.

## **READING**

### **Mark 1:29-39**

<sup>29</sup> As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew. <sup>30</sup> Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they immediately told Jesus about her. <sup>31</sup> So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them.

<sup>32</sup> That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all who were ill and demon-possessed. <sup>33</sup> The whole town gathered at the door, <sup>34</sup> and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was.

<sup>35</sup> Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. <sup>36</sup> Simon and his companions went to look for him, <sup>37</sup> and when they found him, they exclaimed: 'Everyone is looking for you!'

<sup>38</sup> Jesus replied, 'Let us go somewhere else – to the nearby villages – so that I can preach there also. That is why I have come.' <sup>39</sup> So he travelled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.

## **MESSAGE**

On the 20<sup>th</sup> of January Joe Biden was inaugurated as the new American president. Doesn't matter whether you follow American politics or not, I'm pretty sure that this is something that everybody in the whole world took note of!

What his plans are for his first 100 days of presidency, has been all over the news ever since.

Franklin Roosevelt coined this term in 1933: the end of the 'first 100 days' has been seen by the US establishment as the point at which to assess the effectiveness and likely success of a new president.

What do you think you would have planned for your first 100 days in office if you were in his shoes?

Well, I've asked one of our very own youngsters what he would have said, and I would like to share his reply with you now!

*Video clip*

Well, what can I say, Mr Pretend President?! I would love to live in your America, with no dividing walls, a green 'white house', free sweets, and no schoolwork! Because that would mean I won't have to be a home-school teacher anymore!! Yes!!

And although this was all done tongue-in-cheek, I think our Pretend President is illustrating something very well here – you will make a success of whatever you want to do, if it's your passion, if you do it whole-heartedly...

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Mark chapter 1 is something like the equivalent of the 'first 100 days' in Jesus' ministry.

This 1<sup>st</sup> chapter of the Gospel according to Mark has in it a little bit of everything that will be revealed and explored in more detail in the rest of this Gospel account.

It tells us everything we need to know about Jesus. By the end of the chapter, you know who Jesus is and what he is about. You have enough information to make a 'first 100 days' type of assessment.

In this week's section, after a successful start to his ministry in Capernaum, and with his fame already beginning to spread, Jesus heals one more person – Peter's mother-in-law.

Her healing re-established the order of the whole household, and in a way this story is a small-scale reflection of the impact Jesus would have on society at large.

All this happened on the Sabbath. We read that that evening, after sunset – when people were allowed to travel again after resting on the Sabbath – the whole town gathered at the door, bringing their sick to be healed by Jesus.

They didn't have news reports or social media to spread news in those days, but by the looks of it word-of-mouth was even better. The people heard what Jesus could do, went to go see or experience it for themselves, and at the same time acted as witnesses for what he's accomplished.

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After watching just a little of what presidential candidates have to do in the run up to an election, I felt completely exhausted! And if it tired me out just watching it, can you imagine what Joe Biden must have felt like? Probably still feels like every day?

Working hard to make a difference, with the eyes of the whole world on him?

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Jesus might not have been the president, but he also had many eyes on him: eyes of those who followed him, believed in him, were helped by him, admired him, adored him; but also eyes of those who criticised him, who wanted him out of the way, who tried to make his life very difficult.

It must have been exhausting. Draining. Healing so many people. Trying to explain to people – who mostly struggled to understand – what it meant to belong to God.

But instead of making press releases and signing official documents – the only thing Jesus relied on to show people what he was all about, was his ACTIONS.

He didn't just *tell* them what to do, He *showed* them how to live.

But what did Jesus do when *he* felt tired, or overwhelmed?

- Did he just relentlessly carry on?
- Did he lock himself in a room, crawl into bed and put the covers over his head?

These might be 2 options many of us would seriously consider doing under the same circumstances, but not Jesus. No.

He got up early in the morning, while it was still dark, went to a solitary place, and prayed.

*That's* what Jesus did when he needed to recharge his batteries: He spent time with God.

And it worked, because although his friends urged him to go back for more of the same after the successful day he's had, he says "no".

He had lots of ground to cover, lots of people to show and tell of the love God had for them.

It might have been the easy option to stay where he was, but he knew he had to go to the next village and start all over again, and then to the next one, and then the next – starting from scratch every single time, however hard that must have been.

But he could do this, because he regularly spent time with God in prayer – even if this meant less sleep for him, he knew it would benefit him in the long run.

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*In Mark 1 Jesus shows us his priorities – proclaiming the good news, healing people – no black-tie events with flashing cameras, just literally getting his hands dirty and doing what God expects him to do. Whilst always making time to pray.*

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And this brings me to a very important question: What do our actions say about our vision? What do the next steps look like for you?

With none of us being able to go anywhere and do anything exciting at the moment, this question might feel like a waste of time. But is it?

Does it mean that because we are in lockdown the opportunity to make a difference has been postponed?

I don't think so...

Let me tell you about another of one of our youngsters in the church: Hamish. He heard that at the church where he usually has choir concerts, they are collecting sleeping bags for the homeless. He was shocked that people were living on the streets in this weather! So he spoke to his mum, she emailed the paper, and a local project turned into something much bigger now, because Hamish cared. (I've posted the article on the web and Facebook if you would like to read it.)

We can still make a difference now. We have to. Because that is what Jesus teaches us to do.

Jesus worked under very difficult circumstances, yet – if you look at all the evidence of what he accomplished in roughly 3 short years, you would never think that most of what he did was a struggle from the word go.

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Joe Biden started working straight away: He said: "There is no time to start like today!"

Let's do the same. Let's make sure that our actions show that we belong to God – all the time.

But how can we do this?

We don't have to change the world, even the smallest difference we make can have a huge positive knock-on effect...



Let's start by always respecting the other people in our household, let's be kind and understanding, let's smile when we walk past someone, and if an opportunity to help someone crosses our path, let's grab it with both hands.

Let's do this now, because we don't know what our tomorrow will look like.

Let's LIVE every day that we are alive.

So that one day, if we look back on the 1<sup>st</sup> 100 days, or even the first 100 years of our lives, that we can rest assured that we touched the lives of others, even if it was just by making one day better for one other person.

And what can you do if you feel tired or overwhelmed? Don't give up. Just go talk to God. Pray. And he WILL give you the strength you need to carry on.

It's not only doctors who save people's lives – sometimes a phone call or reassuring words are all someone needs to keep going.

Let's make it our passion to follow Jesus whole-heartedly; When it's easy, but also when it's difficult. Because if our priorities are right, God will make everything else fall in the right places.

Amen

## **HYMN**

### **CH4 457**

1 All hail the power of Jesus' name!  
Let angels prostrate fall,  
bring forth the royal diadem  
And crown Him, crown Him, crown Him,  
Crown Him Lord of all!

2 Crown him you martyrs of our God,  
who witnessed to his call;  
exalt the one whose path you trod,  
And crown Him, crown Him, crown Him,  
Crown Him Lord of all!

3 Let every tongue and every tribe,  
responsive to the call,  
to him all majesty ascribe  
And crown Him, crown Him, crown Him,  
Crown Him Lord of all!

4 O that with yonder sacred throng,  
we at his feet may fall,  
join in the everlasting song  
And crown Him, crown Him, crown Him,  
Crown Him Lord of all!