

The First 100 Days : The Start of Jesus Ministry

Mark 1 vv 29-39

We are still in the first 100 days of a new American presidency. Ever since Roosevelt first coined the 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.

Mark chapter 1 is something like the equivalent of the 'first 100 days' in Jesus' ministry. Mark seems to present it like that. Or, rather, it has in it a little bit of everything that will be revealed and explored in a little more detail in the rest of Mark's Gospel account. In short order, it tells almost all you 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. Interestingly, this happened on the Sabbath. Later, healing on the Sabbath would get Jesus into hot water – but here it seems to go unnoticed, perhaps because it was not a public event.

The next day, Jesus has gone off into the desert to think over what next? The disciples try to get him to return to Capernaum for more of the same, but Jesus is adamant that it is already time to move on. The message and the work must be taken to other places.

How many of us would have walked away from a project that had only recently started and was flourishing? How many of us prefer to stick with what we know, and what we know works? God had other plans for Jesus. Perhaps his early morning prayer-time in a deserted place had something to do with it.

Perhaps if we spend enough time with God, and truly listen, we will learn what God really wants us to do – and not make assumptions that it is what we are already doing.

This week the Leadership Team will meet for its first meeting with new members. One of its first tasks will be to consider how the church emerges from the pandemic. It will be very tempting to think that we can just go back to the familiar recent past. But the world for us will be different. I want to introduce to you all four words, which will be my repeated mantra over the coming months. **Gathered** and **Connected**, **Worshipping** and **Serving**.

Gathered

One of our strengths here is the joy of our regular Sunday worship where we are **Gathered** together. The church through history has always stressed the idea of a 'gathered' congregation. And it has done everything possible to re-inforce the notion of as many people as possible gathered together on a Sunday for worship. In fact the success of churches has often been measured by how many it can get into church together on Sunday. That has been the mode of operation. We will certainly return to that. And we will want to find more ways to invite others to join our gathered community.

Connected

But haven't we discovered more about ourselves through the pandemic. Churches that have learnt how to be connected, as we have, have noticed the great strength that connection has. We have

been able to maintain contact with people otherwise not kept in touch with. We have found new friends who have wanted to join our online activity, even though they have not been with us before. Some of them are near and some are far. It has been amazing how being connected has enabled us to learn more about each other as individuals. Our lives, our families, our hopes and fears, and needs and delights.

Being **Connected** has added an immense depth to our relationship as disciples, and we never did that by just coming to church on Sundays. Strangers now are friends.

And I am particularly struck by how we have been able to stay in touch with some of our congregation who would not be able to come to a 'Gathered' Sunday service, and there will be more of such members and friends as we emerge from this. We cannot go back to only that Gathered worship. We have to reach out with worship and connectedness to those who want to be gathered but cannot. In what new and effective ways will we do that?

Gathered and Connected is HOW we do things.....

Worshipping and Serving is WHAT we do

Worshipping

Our worship is the wellspring of our faith. Its needs to continue to be so in ways that are powerful, sustainable and relevant. We have found worship continues to be at the heart of our expression of faith. We will continue with that in both gathered and connected ways. Perhaps we will see ways to help others to feel our worship is relevant and supportive to them too, as well as us who know what we have liked. Simon has shown us how to include children in creative ways. Rachel will help us develop Messy Church. We will need to have a more shared approach to worship as ministers fade away and local preachers are no longer able, and John Cornell and Jenny Clarke has led us so far in this and we need to work with them.

Serving.

We have done brilliant things in serving our neighbours, and we hope that these will emerge from the pandemic. In a sense they will have been re-invigorated by the pandemic, because we have learned even more how important our sense of community and support for each other has been during the pandemic. And we have learnt more strongly than ever how desolate it is for those who are not connected or supported.

We haven't got the resources to start lots more 'projects'. But who is around who wants to work alongside, in our premises, to provide real acts of care and support? We need to use our building more in partnership with those who are providing community and individual support, and less with those who are using the building for their own purposes, to help us with their rent.

Our mission is to worship and serve, and invite others to join us.

This is the work of the Leadership Team, to help us think through how we do this. Not by going away into the desert, but by deep thought and reflection. We can see the light at the end of the tunnel now. What kind of church will we be as we emerge into the light?

What will we want to get moving with in our first 100 days?

Gathered and Connected, Worshipping and Serving. Amen