



Part II : Jesus in Galilee (continued)

Readings for the week : Mark 3:7-6:6

Introduction

- **Pray:** Take a few moments of silence and invite the Holy Spirit to guide your discussion.
- **Share:**
 - Last week we looked at Jesus' authority. Have you had any encounters with the liberating word of Jesus this week? (It could be through reading the Bible, listening to a sermon, or receiving a word that comes from the Holy Spirit.)
 - What did you learn from this week's reading?

Brief Summary of 3:7-6:6

- Because of the threat from his opponents, Jesus withdrew with his disciples.
- Jesus establishes 12 disciples to "be with him" and to "send them out to proclaim with authority to cast out demons" (3:14-15). He redefines the very notion of being part of God's family.
- Jesus teaches in parables. Mark presents a central parable to which he will refer again and again, the parable of the sower (4:1-20).
- Jesus repeatedly demonstrates his authority through spectacular healings and deliverances.
- Despite this, not everyone was impressed, and his own village refused to believe that the Messiah could be the son of Joseph the carpenter.

This week, we propose to read two extracts. The first because it gives us an important key to understanding Mark's Gospel, and the second because it gives us a very concrete insight into the power and authority of Jesus that can have an impact on our lives today. If you have less than 30 minutes, you can choose one or the other.

Excerpt I - A Misunderstood Revolution

Reread Mk 4:13-20

- Here, Jesus explains the meaning of the parable of the sower.
- He has come to announce and inaugurate the restoration of Israel, the coming of the long-awaited Kingdom of God. The people expected a grandiose restoration, with military victory and the people of Israel rejoicing in unison. What Jesus presents is quite different. The revolution that God brings with the message and arrival of Jesus is understood and received by only a small proportion of people. Most remain skeptical or unbelieving.
- This passage explains why Jesus spoke and acted in mysterious ways during his ministry. Did Jesus want everyone to understand his message? In one sense yes...but in another sense no! His teaching is so revolutionary (politically, socially, spiritually) that he wouldn't want the authorities (religious and political) to understand it too soon. What's more, his teaching is so different from what people want and expect that it would have been dangerous to try and tell the crowd that they were confused about the notions of "Messiah" and "Kingdom"!
- For Jesus, it's not a question of keeping his activity a secret. The revelation of the Kingdom of God is available to all who have faith, that is, trust in him.

Excerpt II - Liberation literal and symbolic

Reread Mk 5:1-20

- This story takes place in the region of Decapolis. It's a non-Jewish territory, as evidenced by the raising of pigs in the area. The pig is an impure animal for Jewish tradition.
- Another element considered impure for Jews is being in the vicinity of corpses. The man who lives in a cemetery is therefore at the height of impurity.
- In this passage, we once again encounter the notion of demonic possession. Our Western, rationalist culture often finds it hard to conceive of this kind of story as anything other than mythology or superstition. Of course, we mustn't succumb to superstition and see demons everywhere, but no scientific advance has been able to put an end to the notion of a spiritual world or paranormal realm. So, after two thousand years, we still need two readings to fully understand this passage: a literal one and a symbolic one.
- The symbolic dimension of the passage :
 - The demons take on the characteristics of the invader's power: they are the legions of Rome. What's more, like swine, the Romans were considered impure by the Jews (because of their violence, idolatrous practices and moral behavior).
 - In the Old Testament (cf. Daniel 7), monsters represent empires that rise from the sea to harm God's people. Here, however, Jesus overturns the power of these invaders over the land, sending them back into the sea like Pharaoh's chariots in Exodus (Ex 14:26-29).
- This deliverance thus manifests God's plan to establish his Kingdom, which puts an end to injustice and brings liberation and deliverance to his people.
 - However, Mark's Gospel will show that the way Jesus drives out the invader and inaugurates the reign of justice is shocking: he himself will be naked, isolated, outside the city, among the tombs, tortured by the Romans.

- Mark announces the way in which Jesus will come to bring healing and put an end to the power of the devil: by himself taking the place of the afflicted people, letting the enemy loose on him, taking the evil upon himself so that human beings may be free.
- The literal dimension of the passage:
 - This symbolism shows us the big picture of salvation through the work of Jesus. Nevertheless, it does not negate the concrete reality of this particular individual's liberation.
 - Jesus stops to meet and heal a particular person. He takes the time to bring healing and deliverance to this man who is afflicted physically (wounded and naked), psychically (lost his mind), socially (isolated and humiliated), spiritually (tormented by spirits).
 - At the end of this encounter, the man is restored and becomes the first missionary sent by Jesus!

Apply this message to our lives

This second extract allows us to reflect on Jesus' work of liberation: how does it manifest itself today in the lives of believers?

How do you react to the notion of "demon" or "unclean spirit"?

- Watch this short video and comment based on your reactions: <https://youtu.be/3792EvNFmvE?si=1u9T7H285S5m4M7N>
- Share an area (physical, psychic, spiritual, social) of your life or the life of your loved ones in which you need to see Jesus' healing and liberation.
- Pray together about these topics with the assurance that Jesus has the authority, power and desire to come to the rescue of those who call on him.

For more information on this series or for more resources to help you move forward with God, please contact Ruben (ruben.binyet@icf-ge.ch).

To deepen and develop your faith, don't forget to sign up for the next ICF-College session ([info on icf-ge.ch](http://info.icf-ge.ch)).