

Bennochy Church 16th September 2012

We have our wee secrets don't we, those things that only we know and for a variety of reasons, we will never tell another living soul, those 'hidden' details of our life that we will take to the grave. Some of our secrets we live with day by day, a constant reminder of something or someone in the past; others have long been forgotten, even to ourselves, in the mists of time. Not everything in life is exposed to the knowledge of others. It is part of being human.

At first it seems strange that Jesus would wish to keep things hidden, but it is a theme that runs through the gospels, and raises its head here in the passage read to us from Mark chapter seven. Not once, but twice.

"Then Jesus left and went away to the territory near the city of Tyre. He went into a house and did not want anyone to know he was there, but he could not stay hidden" (v24)

"Then Jesus ordered the people not to speak of it to anyone; but the more he ordered them not to, the more they told it." (v36)

I wonder if Jesus just wants to get away from it all, so he travels to the Phoenician city of Tyre, north-west of Galilee on the Mediterranean coast? I think we can understand why? We have all been there, those busy times in life, with increased pressures and people always wanting a bit of our precious time. Who the woman in the story is I have no idea or why Jesus went to that

specific house, but clearly he does not want to be recognised, but we are told he could not stay hidden.

Like a modern day superstar, "A list" celebrity who is instantly recognisable wherever they go; life is never their own, they are mobbed by the crowds, so they go places that are hidden from view. You might say it goes with the territory and they can expect nothing less.

Maybe Jesus was becoming an "A list" celebrity, because of his miracle acts, the way he spoke words with authority and the possibility that he was the Messiah who would usher in God's rule. He knew that was his task, crowds would flock to him, confrontations would arise with the church authorities and ultimately it would lead to his death. In this moment of "hiddenness", he is not trying to escape, but before the hard work really starts, that journey to Jerusalem, he seeks a moment of stillness and contemplation away from the crowds.

Well the best laid plans come to nothing. He must have been recognised and a miracle is sought. In spite of the fact that this woman is not a Jew, Jesus does seem a bit irritable and it takes a good response from the woman to get what she wants, her daughter is healed. Reread the passage later and see if you agree with me. If this was the only thing asked of him at this time, maybe Jesus did get off lightly.

His travels take him from Tyre to Sidon to Lake Galilee, by way of the ten Towns of the Decapolis. He is now back on home turf and it does not take long for the healings to begin once again. This time a man deaf and who could hardly speak is brought to Jesus. There seems to be no hesitation here. He takes the man away from the crowd, disappointing for them for I am sure they were looking forward to witnessing a good healing miracle! You can read the description of how the man was healed for yourselves, but one comment can be made, maybe there is an allusion here to not just physical ears being opened, but this is proof of who Jesus is (Old T passage), something that Peter would soon declare at Caesarea Philippi.

Why Jesus asks the crowd not to speak of what has happened is beyond me. There was never a chance of it being kept quiet! Today the video of it on "U Tube" would have gone viral! It would be all over the national media and reports of it would be on prime time TV. *"...but the more he ordered them not to, the more they spoke."* I think I could have told Jesus that! This is the kind of thing that people do not keep a secret. If you have a piece of gossip, you want to tell someone. We have all experienced that!

What's going on? Did Jesus not actually say this, or has Mark another reason for putting such words into the mouth of Jesus? There is no doubt, that every time he spoke against the authorities, performed a miracle or was associated with

Messiah-ship, it brought forward his death. If we assume that Jesus had a clear idea of what he needed to do and say prior to that event, or if there was a particular time for it to happen, he would then want to dampen down his reputation at this stage. He did not wish his death to come premature to the will of God. He knew it was coming soon, but not yet. The path to Jerusalem still lay before him, and if he was to be the 1st century Passover Lamb, that festival was still around the corner. It was all about timing.

There are times in life when we know we have got the timing right or not. A word was spoken at the right time, the event was successful because of its timing, but we know also when we have missed the opportunity and we have got the timing all wrong. The apology that should have been given long ago or that job we should have said yes to or those exams we wish we had taken etc etc.

When the time came, it was the right time, and when we look back on the events and the words of Jesus, maybe hindsight teaches us this truth; all time is indeed in God's hands, but often, we are the ones who try to get in the way!

May we acknowledge the wisdom of God; may act when the time is right and may we wait with patience for the word of God. Amen.