

Toetrede

Liturgie van die Lig

Woorddiens

Lesing 1: Markus 1:21-28 (1953)

²¹ EN hulle het in Kapérnaüm gekom, en dadelik op die sabbat het Hy in die sinagoge ingegaan en begin leer.

²² En hulle was verslae oor sy leer, want Hy het hulle geleer soos een wat gesag het en nie soos die skrifgeleerdes nie.

²³ En daar was in hulle sinagoge 'n man met 'n onreine gees; en hy het uitgeskreeu

²⁴ en gesê: Hou op! Wat het ons met U te doen, Jesus, Nasaréner? Het U gekom om ons te verdelg? Ek ken U, wie U is: die Heilige van God!

²⁵ En Jesus het hom bestraf en gesê: Bly stil en gaan uit hom uit!

²⁶ En die onreine gees het hom stuiptrekkings laat kry en met 'n groot stem geskreeu en uit hom uitgegaan.

²⁷ En almal was verbaas, sodat hulle onder mekaar vra en sê: Wat is dit? Watter nuwe leer is dit, dat Hy met gesag ook aan die onreine geeste bevel gee en hulle Hom gehoorsaam is?

²⁸ En die gerug aangaande Hom is dadelik versprei in die hele omtrek van Galiléa.

Broodjies vir die Pad

The season of Epiphany is an invitation to reflect on the many places and ways God reveals Godself to humankind. With the mystic Meister Eckhardt, Epiphany is grounded in the affirmation that all things are words of God. Anyone of us – and also the non-human world – can be a vehicle of divine revelation. Yet, revelation is always contextual, concrete, and variable. (PaF)



In the historical matrix of life, some persons and places are more transparent to the divine than others. This is a matter of call and response – God's call and our responses as individuals and communities. Still, even though all of us turn away from God at times, some more than others, all persons have something of the divine within them. As John's Gospel proclaims, the light of God enlightens all, even when we pursue darkness rather than light. (PaF)



The good news is that "God is still speaking" and we can find enlightenment for our path. Still, these words are ambiguous and raise a number of questions:

- Can finite, time bound, and imperfect human beings speak God's words "perfectly?"
- Can prophets and spiritual leaders ever escape their historical, ethnic, and religious perspective?
- Can we directly speak for God or are our words, by nature, indirect and opaque despite their insight and inspiration?

- How do we know which words come from God and which are self-promoting and manipulative? That is, in a pluralistic environment, how can we discern the difference between "true" and "false" prophecy? (PaF)



In the course of more than thirty years as a pastor and professor, I have encountered a number of authoritarian leaders and high pressure religious groups. They assumed a one-to-one correspondence between the leader's words and God's inspiration. They saw all questions as threatening and signs of pride, self-will, and apostasy. They shunned and silenced any alternative visions. (PaF)



In the Christian tradition, revelation always implies a receiver, living in a certain time and place and with certain biases. Everyone – even the mystic – who speaks for good must balance the *kataphatic* and *apophatic* ways, what Paul Tillich calls the tension between the sacramental and prophetic. All things reveal God, but nothing fully reveals God. Every word can point to the holy, but no word encompasses the holy. What this means is that authority is always relative, relational, historic, and imperfect, whether religious, political, or biblical. Humble affirmation is the appropriate approach to speaking about God. (PaF)



We must always ask the following questions: Does an authority figure promote justice, creativity, and beauty? Does an authority figure seek what is truly best for the community, including honoring diverse opinions and lifestyles? Does an authority figure enable people to be more creative, more adventurous, and more compassionate?



Today's readings promote spiritual practices that enable us to attentive to God's "whispered word." Discovering our personal authority involves a commitment to prayer, devotional reading, communities of support and accountability, and concern for others. They also challenge us to embody the values we affirm as we seek the wellbeing of our companions and communities. Contemplation and action are one dynamic reality: our insights lead to healing and affirming actions that shape people and communities. (PaF)



Jesus speaks the word of God as none had spoken it before. The Rabbis supported their statements with quotes from other authorities. But Jesus needs no human authorities to back his statements. When he speaks, God speaks. Led by the Spirit of God, Jesus confronts and destroys the power of evil. (SS)



Lord, I am faced with a world filled with violence, greed, hunger and evil. I struggle to believe that you have overcome evil. Help me to see that you are at work in the small signs of love, justice and truth around me. (SS)



Galilee in the time of Jesus

In recent years research into the Galilee in the Roman period has made significant advances.

A few points of interest:

- Until the time of Antipas, Galilee had not had to support a local aristocracy as those with power had always been based outside Galilee.
- Galilee had no historical association with Judah/Judea and Jerusalem, and even after the annexation in Hasmonean times seems to have had little sense of affiliation with Jerusalem.
- While Herod the Great began his career as governor of Galilee, his efforts (and his publicly-funded building projects) were all based in the south.
- Antipas began to invest in public infrastructure in part to keep the tourist dollars local, rather than encouraging his subjects to visit (and spend their carefully hoarded shekels at) the Temple in Jerusalem.
- There were no unambiguously "purpose-built" synagogue buildings in Galilee until around the third century CE, and the term is best understood as "community gathering" (assembling outdoors or in any other convenient space) rather than as a dedicated Jewish religious centre.

Jesus was most likely illiterate, like his peers in small Galilean hamlets; but seems to have been a gifted oral poet, a prophet, a healer and a holy man. He was not a scribe, a priest, a rabbi nor a rebel.

We may presume Jesus practiced his Jewishness in ways typical of early 1C Galileans in small hamlets. One of our problems is that we have so little data about just how such Galileans practiced their Jewishness in that place and at that time. The on-going excavations at **Bethsaida** are increasing our knowledge of Jewish identity markers in specific Galilean sites during the Herodian period. Some Galilean sites may have been founded (in the case of Nazareth) or ethnically-cleansed (in the case of Bethsaida) under a Jerusalem program to increase the presence of Jewish settlers with a stronger affiliation to Jerusalem than would otherwise have been the case in the region. (FF)

Brood vir die Pad

Mark inaugurates Jesus' public life with a revealing event. With his first few followers, Jesus goes to synagogue and, as was the custom, joins in the commentary on the scriptures read that day. All present notice that he does not meander among possible understandings, but he speaks boldly, clearly, decisively, "with authority," revealing a distinctive authenticity. And then, to emphasize his capacities, Mark says he acts just as boldly, performing an exorcism. The unclean spirit recognizes Jesus as "the Holy One of God." Right away, we are off on Mark's fast-paced journey with Jesus to Jerusalem.

The expected tendencies are to complicate religion. Perhaps it is a human way to exalt its importance. Such human complications also have a way of enhancing the status and prejudices and piety of those who create them. Paul deals patiently with those who obsess on such minutiae, but does not miss a chance to return to the one singular experience that changed his life. In the

synagogue in Capernaum, the community is engaged in its routine sabbath discussion when they hear a new voice who speaks clearly, plainly, directly, understandably, "with authority."

Luce Irigaray, credentialed in both psychoanalysis and linguistics, is usually described as a leading European Feminist. More currently, she is visiting professor at various British universities. Influenced by Freud, Lacan, Levinas and Derrida, she explains to the West some consequences of our preference for abstraction to understand and describe ourselves and relationships with one another and to influence our actions. In her 2002 work, *The Way of Love*, she writes: "The philosophers of the West are without doubt the first technocrats of whom we suffer multiple avatars. Including suffering through the destructive confusion between essences that they have cleverly fabricated and the flesh, the breath and the energy that we need to live." (p.4) When it comes to others, she insists, they "must remain flesh, living, moving. Not transformed into some idea, no matter how ideal." (p. 156) And in this excerpt, she offers a definition promised in the title *The Way of Love*: "This place of hospitality for the other becomes built as much as, if not more than, we build it deliberately. Made of our flesh, of our heart, and not only of words, it demands that we accept that it takes place without our unilaterally over-seeing its construction." (p. 154)

Words can lead to avoidance as effectively as understanding. They can dazzle with "knowledge" that "puffs-up." They can seem quite impressive and even necessary-- for awhile. But then comes an authentic voice, gesture, person who speaks as one "with authority," leveling all prior constructs. Even (especially?) the religious are prone to words and abstractions which seem urgent, important-- at first. But as Paul wrote in the middle of yet another church controversy, the over-arching reality is that "anyone who loves God is known by God." As he did so often, especially with the wrangling Corinthians, Paul returns to what makes the gospel not just another religious argument, but a transforming experience, to what changed his life, to what can change any one's life. The only "knowledge" that really matters is the knowledge that only comes from love, of others, of God because I **know** God loved me first and always. This is the consistent theme of the scriptures and provides the only necessary criteria for distinguishing between "true" and "false" religious leaders. And, there is always some iteration of "healing." We become witnesses to this change. And witnesses talk about very different priorities and with very different affect than those engaged in religious controversies, no matter how important they might seem at the time. It is the same loving God to whom the ancients gave witness to whom I now give witness from first-hand, personal "knowledge."

Wegsending

Liefdegawes

Mededelings

Doof van die Kerse

Seën

wynandnel@iafrica.com

082 901 5877