

Pentecost 2
14/6/2020

Mark the Evangelist

1 Peter 5:6-14

Psalm 116

Matthew 9:35-10:8

A charge I have to keep

In a sentence

1 Peter calls Christians to an extraordinary life of service

[‘]Set all hope on the grace that Jesus Christ will bring; be holy; love one another deeply; rid yourselves of all malice; let yourselves be built into a spiritual house; abstain from fleshly desires; conduct yourselves honourably; live as free people; have unity of spirit, sympathy and love, a tender heart and humble mind; do not repay evil for evil; sanctify Christ as Lord; keep your conscience clear; live no longer by earthly desires but by the will of God; be hospitable; speak and act as stewards of God’s grace; entrust yourself to the faithful creator; humble yourselves, cast all anxiety on God, resist the devil.[’]

The ‘charge’ Peter puts to his people is nothing less than, ‘*Be extraordinary*’. Know what you are, and become that ‘thing’. You *are* of God, in Christ; *Be* then what you are, where you are.

In this, Peter calls his people not to the ‘ten-million-views-on-YouTube’ type of extraordinary which dominates our sense of the marvellous today – the freak event, the apparently miraculous timing, or the just plain stupid. *Peter’s* ‘be extraordinary’ is a call to *change* our sense of what is ordinary, our sense of what is proper and appropriate.

We learn a sense for what is appropriate in the home, at school, in our engagements at work and through other aspects of human society. And much of that is very good. Yet Peter’s ‘be extraordinary’ is not, ‘Be what you have learned to be from the breast,’ but rather, ‘Be as *Jesus* was’, whose death seemed to his killers to be just what they had long learned to be appropriate. For Jesus’ death was, in this way, an entirely *ordinary* thing. It was just the cogs in the machine of one particular human society grinding on, producing what that machine is supposed to produce, which includes not a little death of things insufficiently ‘ordinary’ or appropriate, the death of who does not fit, of who is not valued.

Peter’s ‘be extraordinary’ is a call to be willing to *be* Jesus, in your own particular time and place. And do not be surprised, he reminds them, that it is hard work. There is death in the machine *and you can’t fix it*. But even if you can’t fix it, you don’t have to *fear* it, or be forced by it to be less than God calls you to be. A fearless life is not necessarily a long one, or even a wholly ‘happy’ one. It is simply a life which knows where we have come from and what we are here for.

We have *come from* the God who calls us unto being. This is not a mere calling into *existence*. It is the call issued to those capable of hearing and responding (or not). We *are* when we respond. Peter’s people have heard this call, have received themselves from God through Jesus, and now see themselves *in* the work of Jesus. Here is the new and better ordinary.

We *are here*, then, that we might *become* that new ordinary, that 'extra'-ordinary. We are here as an answer to the question, 'Where is God?' We usually ask this question in such a way as to imagine that the answer might be, 'Oh, God's just over *there*...' *Peter's* answer is that God is 'there' in the life of *Jesus*, and wherever that life finds an echo in *our* lives. God is present in humble acceptance, in the gentle word, in the grace which releases. God is 'there' when God's people speak and act 'as if the God of grace', as we saw last week. Do these things, for the remembrance of me.

To know what we are – that we are of the God of grace – and to *become* this – humble yet fearless, merciful yet strong – this is God's call to us in *Peter's* letter.

It's all rather simple, then. We have a charge to keep.

Let us, then, humble ourselves, cast our cares on God, keep alert and resist the constant temptation to be any less than the very good God seeks in us.

And may we find that this is enough.
