



Alstonville
Anglicans

Sunday 4th February 2024

Welcome



Sharing the Good Life

We acknowledge the Bundjalung people, traditional custodians of the Land.

Our doors are open: LGBTQIA+ welcome here.

Streaming licence: CCLI 102220

Alstonville Anglicans are committed to ensuring that all people who participate in our worship, programs and ministries have a safe and rewarding experience.

Tel: 66280231 www.anglicans.live

Bank account: BSB 705 077 / Acc:00032931

4th February – 11th February

4 th February	9am	Sunday Holy Communion
	4pm	Waterslide Afternoon
5 th February		Monday
	9am-12pm	Parish Office Open
	9am-3pm	Op Shop
	10am	Anam Cara
	10am	Deadline for bulletin items
	1pm	Sew Helpful
	3.30pm	Op Shop Meeting
	6pm	Spirit Ability
6 th February		Tuesday
	9am-12pm	Parish Office Closed
7 th February		Wednesday
	9am-12pm	Parish Office Open
	9am	Anam Cara
	9am-3pm	Op Shop
	11am	Pastoral Care Meeting
	3.30pm	Property Meeting
	4pm	Messy Church Meeting
8 th February		Thursday
	9am-12pm	Parish Office Closed
	9am-3pm	Op Shop
	9.30am	Play Place
	6pm	Anam Cara
9 th February		Friday
	9am-12pm	Parish Office Closed
	10am	Holy Communion
10 th February		Saturday
11 th February		Sunday
	9am	Holy Communion

This bulletin contains current announcements and the week's calendar and the sermon notes from the previous Sunday. Use our welcome booklet for info and contact details for regular activities. Keep it as a reference tool. We welcome any feedback on the booklet. [../..../welcomeBooklet_v3.pdf](#)

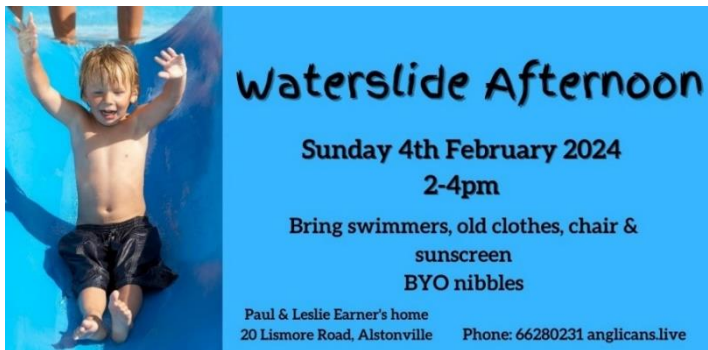


Anam Cara

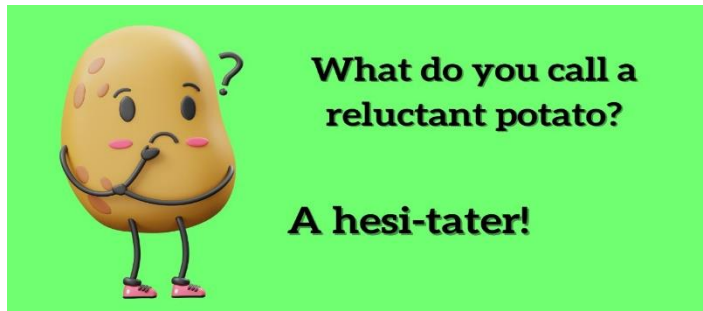
Anam Cara recommences Wednesday 7th February 9am and Thursday 8th February 6pm.

Pastoral Care Meeting

Wednesday 7th February 11am.



To Make you Smile



Spirit Ability

Providing Spiritual and emotional support to people living with a disability, their carers, families and supporters.

Monday 5th February 6-8pm

The evening will include a meal and sharing time

Alstonville Anglican Hall
6-8 The Avenue, Alstonville
0428 404 783



Sermon Notes Sunday 28th January Desiree Snyman Mark 1:21-28

Pre-modern vs modern vs post-modern



As a Ph.D. student I interviewed women living in South African townships and squatter camps who were HIV positive. I would meet with them on Saturday mornings in their homes. One Saturday I arrived but was told I could not meet with them as they had to attend the graduation of a new sangoma, a traditional healer. I was invited to the ceremony and given the front row seat. Against the backdrop of deafening drums, piercing cries, convulsions and dancing, the experience of the ceremony was otherworldly. Glancing up from this

supernatural ritual I noticed all the cars parked outside. What a contrast! The pre-modern ritual, the modern cars and postmodern research were all at home with each other.

The terms pre-modern and modern possibly imply a pejorative judgement but I want to highlight the collision of a magical, surreal very ancient practice alongside scientific modern inventions such as the car. The point of relating this experience of witnessing a sangoma's graduation is to encourage us to have an open mind when we engage the Gospel story of Jesus and a demon. Our postmodern and modern mindsets can glean much from Mark's pre-modern story; we need not be dismissive of exorcism.

Mark records twenty-one miracles, seven containing exorcism, and that an exorcism heads the list. Exorcism is tricky for us. Perhaps the idea of exorcism seems medieval. Today we offer bio-medical explanations for illnesses and events to which a previous epoch attributed supernatural causality. Mark's Gospel is rich with symbol. As such the angels and demons of the gospel stories are layered, dense symbols that can speak to us beyond the cognitive mind and beyond a literal fundamentalist reading.

At one level angels and demons may be **intellectual realities**, like good or bad thoughts that come and go. While positive thoughts bring an emotion of joy, negative thoughts have a palpable effect on our bodies and psychology. Very negative thoughts raise cortisol levels, and cause potentially toxic emotions such as irritation, agitation, and even anger or depression. Persistent thought patterns can become attitudes that take root and infest our whole lives with bitterness and sadness, hate and intolerance. I think that's one way we should read these stories: in his exorcisms Jesus confronts, unmask, and ousts parasitic attitudes.

At another level demons and angels may be **energetic realities** in addition to intellectual or attitudinal experiences. There are beautiful people whose goodness, humour and kindness are naturally contagious such that the air around them is brighter. Such people have a positive energetic effect on others, lifting the mood or calming a room. The energy of such saints can literally cast out "demons" through the sheer authority of their connected, calm, confident and compassionate presence. Similarly, the negative tendencies of a group of people can stain the atmosphere around them, breeding more animosity or draining life and colour out of you, like the death eaters in Harry Potter novels.

At a third level the exorcism has **a literary function**. The conflict between Jesus and the demon represents graphically the political conflict between the new authority of Jesus and the traditional authority of the scribes and later also the pharisees, the Herodians and the Romans. For example, when the demons recognise Jesus they ask, "have you come to destroy us?" Jesus the new wine will literally and figuratively burst the old wineskins.

Having read the Gospel story at a literal level, we can mine the layered symbolism that speaks beyond a flat reading. Beyond a purely biomedical rationalisation for the exorcism, beyond the symbolic

function of the healing there is also the literary function scaffolding the actual text.

Sacred place sacred time

Our exorcism pericope is a neat unit framed by Jesus entering the synagogue in verse 21 and leaving the synagogue in verse 29. Jesus has moved from the wilderness into Galilee and now into the synagogue in the city of Capernaum.

I said before that Mark's writing is densely symbolic. Jesus is in sacred space, the synagogue, and in sacred time, on the sabbath. The sabbath is significant. While Jesus undermines the authority of the scribes in this pericope, in later episodes he will undermine the pharisees by healing on the sabbath. The synagogue is significant. It represents the public inauguration of his ministry.

Parallels

The scene in the synagogue connects with several other scenes including the dove at the baptism of Jesus (Mark 1), the stilling of the storm at sea (Mark 4.35-41)

1. Baptism

At his baptism Jesus saw heaven torn apart and the Holy Spirit embrace him like a dove. Jesus heard the voice of God saying, "You are my beloved son, and I am well pleased with you". In the synagogue it is the voice of the demon that recognises Jesus as the beloved son. After his baptism Jesus is tempted in the wilderness by the accuser, the Satan. In the synagogue the confrontation continues with the voices of Satan's demons.

Jesus commands the demon to be silent, his mission is a secret. The reason Jesus' mission remains secret at this stage is because God's Messiah is revealed through authentic, wholesome love. As we saw in the wilderness, it is easy to confuse the concept of Messiah with success, power, popularity, and wealth. Tendencies toward success, power, wealth, and popularity taken to unhealthy extremes are demonic forces that can poison the self-emptying inclusive love that Jesus the Messiah wants to incarnate.

2. Storm

People are amazed at Jesus' authority and teaching that even the demons obey him (1.27). The same phrase is repeated when Jesus stills the storm at sea, people are amazed at his authority that even the wind and the seas obey him (4.41). Jesus' rebukes (*epetimēsen*) the spirit

commanding it to “be silent” (*phimōthēti*) in 1:25. Similarly when there is a storm at sea Jesus rebukes the wind (*epetimēsen*) commanding it to “be still” (*pephimōso*) in 4:39.

These similarities suggest that, for the early Christians who formulated and transmitted these stories, the exorcism and the stilling of the storm illustrate a similar point: Jesus has power over both the natural world (winds and sea) and the supernatural world (demons).

The mention of the scribes clarifies for us that the conflict between Jesus and the demon is a symbolic demonstration of the clash between Jesus’ authority and that of the scribes. The exorcism is a literary tool demonstrating the politics of Jesus who does battle with an oppressive ruling class, in this case the religious authorities.

Authority – to be free.

The whole point of the story is to highlight the authority of Jesus. Authority is a key focus of this passage – it is mentioned four times. Jesus did not have religious, political, or military power. He was not of the priests, who had the power in Roman Judea. He was not even a scribe with the authority of Jewish tradition. The only authority he had was the supreme confidence that he was the embodiment of God’s love.

The word for authority, *exousia*, is related to the verb *exesti*, meaning “it is free” or “it is permitted” or “it is lawful.” In other words, *exousia* is the “sovereign freedom” of one who acts without hindrance. Freedom is key here.

To return to where I started what attitudes or energies bind us in our personal lives, in our corporate culture as church and community? What freedoms are we missing out on that the authority of authentic self-emptying love can offer? Where is energy stuck or where are there blockages in our personal lives and in our community? What holds us back from being truly free?

Jesus’ authority was in his sheer presence rooted in the lived experience of being utterly one with Creator God and living in tune with Spirit. Jesus used his authority not to obtain power for himself but to manifest the unitive love that is life giving and liberating for serve humanity and creation (Mark 10:41-45). Jesus’ authority brought blessings to people—health and healing (1:23-28). He left people more: more human, more whole, more healed...more. This is our acid test. Do we leave people “more”?



Sentence of the Day

Those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles. Isaiah 40.31

Collect

Saving God,
whose Son, Jesus Christ,
healed the sick
and brought them wholeness of body and mind:
inspire us, his disciples,
so that we may constantly proclaim his gospel
by our words
and by the dedication and integrity of our lives;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Mark 1:29-39

²⁹ As soon as Jesus and the disciples left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. ³⁰ Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. ³¹ He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them. ³² That evening, at sunset, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. ³³ And the whole city was gathered around the door. ³⁴ And he cured many who were sick with various diseases and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him. ³⁵ In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. ³⁶ And Simon and his companions hunted for him. ³⁷ When they found him, they said to him, 'Everyone is searching for you.' ³⁸ He answered, 'Let us go on to the neighbouring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do.' ³⁹ And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.