

## Monday Evening Bible Reading Group: Mark 6:1-29: 18/xi: Some Notes

A mixed bag: Jesus gets a cool reception in his home village; the Twelve are sent out in pairs to practice ministry; a sad footnote to the story of John the Baptist.

St George's is perhaps not well placed to understand the Nazareth story; because we are very happy to have Hilary celebrating and preaching here, and Hilary grew up in this parish. But note the differences. Jesus lived in Nazareth as a working man until he was 30 – maybe supporting his widowed mother and siblings after his father's early death. (This would provide a background to the late start of his public ministry.) Hilary trained as a teacher and as a priest, so no great surprise to have her sharing those skills with us. In Jewish society, the people who lectured in the synagogue were not expected to be working men; and this particular working man was not just preaching what the Old Testament says, he was preaching his own message; not just proclaiming the Kingdom but in effect proclaiming "I am the Kingdom". An historical footnote is that some of Jesus' great nephews were hauled before the courts for being some sort of "royal family"; and were released without charge when they showed their hands and proved they were ordinary working class. When a working class man became mayor of a London borough in the early days of the Labour Party, a lady complained about having someone from the working class in charge. Note that Jesus was limited in what he could do in Nazareth by the lack of faith.

*Is the key message here that if God thought 30 years for Jesus earning his living and supporting his family was OK, might we just get on with being ordinary – doing our best in job, family, community, without getting anxious because nobody is likely to invite us onto Desert Island Discs?*

The Mission of the Twelve: Jews at the time, men and women, wore a very simple long under-garment, an equally simple top garment, which might be hitched up in some circumstances, a strip of cloth (the girdle), and a cloth hat. They might carry a whole goatskin bag. Sandals were a simple sole held on with thongs. The dust shaking was what Jews did to get read of Gentile dust. The mission content is very simple too: basically meeting the needs of people where they are. Anointing oil was the most popular multi-purpose remedy of the time – here backed up by prayer. *Today, if we had a do-it-yourself parish mission?*

The John footnote mainly speaks for itself. But note: The Herod family's matrimonial complications and in-family brutality would probably be too lurid for even "The Daily Star". Herodias was Herod's sister-in-law and his niece. Salome's dance was in all likelihood as bad as rumours suggest, and usually reserved for a professional prostitute rather than a member of the "royal" family. Something remains of the fortress that was Herod's palace – almost impregnable but ghastly, and the dungeons, which are still there, must have been hell on earth for a man of the open spaces. Pity for a moment the feckless dancing girl handed a freshly severed head.

In fairness to Herodias, she did stick with Herod when he was sent into exile and she was offered a cushy number in Rome. There's some good in the worst people.

