



**Whanau By What We Do**  
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Year B, Ordinary 10

1 Samuel 8:4-11,16-20; Mark 3: 20-35

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Jesus and his newly named disciples are inundated, not able to rest or eat properly. Jesus' family think he's lost the plot and is being overrun. Out of concern they want to rescue him, to take him away from those that crowd about and besiege him.

As if to confirm their concern, we almost immediately hear scholars of the religious establishment, from Jerusalem, where the religious elite reside, theologians and thinkers, those respected for deep learning and erudite scholarship, turn up. They too are seeking to bring reason and reasonableness to the table. Rather than validate the draw and gathering power of this itinerant teacher, whose power defies entrapment by convention, they generate a logic that fits their end. Such uncontrolled attracting power can reasonably be explained as that of Beelzebub, ruler of demons, source of chaos and disorder. By their very logic however Jesus' unstitches such argument. The spirit of that which disrupts and destroys would not generate the gathering of people in hope, the restoration and coming to wholeness of people. Those who deny the source of that which brings life, especially such leaders who should know better, in so doing deny the source of their own life.

This Jesus we meet in Mark is disruptive and difficult, unstitching and redefining relationship boundaries. Boundaries necessary for establishing belonging and identity for us to know who's who, and who's who in relation to the other. Rule to ensure safety, especially

when negotiating difference. They ensure outsiders are identified and suitably defended against. This is scary stuff - the rules that govern, define and structure family and religious alliances and lineages, the very bedrock for self-understanding, for knowing who you are with respect to others is being excised, cut away, redefined and reformed. If there are no boundaries then upon what can you depend, how do you know who you are or where you stand?

Jesus isn't being reasonable. He's portrayed as being passionately engaged without counting the cost. This sounds rather a lot like madness. The sort of thing I think I'd be worried about if it were my child involved.

And yet, and yet we say there is something reasonable about this. When we listen to this account from Mark, because of our religious inclinations, we're influenced to hear it in a particular way. This **is** a gospel after all, we're biased to side with Jesus and those who crowd around, rather than the side of his family of birth or with the great teachers and thinkers of his religious lineage. Because we like to think we get it, willing to walk this new way.

For those who want to join this Jesus tribe what shows you belong is how you **do** the talk of the good news you proclaim. How you **do** what you say you are. It matters more than affirmation of creed or allegiance to religious tradition. More than doctrine or dogma, familial ties that constrain, even if from loving concern. **Doing** what brings to life the abundant, transforming presence of God in real life in historical time is what it's about, what counts. This isn't about theory, comfortable armchair, keyboard warrior rhetoric it's about practice. Who'd like to leave now?

To choose to stay, to name you are part of a movement in history enacting God's transforming presence, accepting that what you do reveals what you believe is confronting. How do you know what you reveal by what you do? Do you examine what you do and then reflect on what this reveals about what you **actually** proclaim/believe? Do

you proclaim/believe and then pay close attention to what you do to make sure it has integrity with what you proclaim/believe, mindfully and consciously pay attention to what you do? Then you've got to wonder, if you're so busy self-examining where's the time to live, to do, this abandoned, dangerous, boundary busting carelessly extravagant way of Jesus.

I want to share with you a story, from a podcast that came out a while back now, it comes out of Chicago. A young man in the States, in his 20's, a Type One diabetic lapsed into a diabetic coma. He was a young man who lived in denial and defiance of his diabetes so ate all the types of foods he should not. After a period of time the medical facility where he was being kept alive suggested to his family that they should make the decision to turn off his life support for there was little hope. His close friends could not bear to participate in this so they all stayed away the week it was scheduled to take place. Instead, they began to post messages, eulogies and memorials to their friend.

In the meantime, however the family had had a change of heart, they didn't switch off the life support but did shift him to another facility. Within 3 days the young man regained consciousness. His brother actually posted this on his brother's Facebook page but as it didn't get any likes it disappeared in the out pouring of messages from friends. A week later the young man posted on Facebook that he was indeed alive.

The young man had chance to read all the tributes to him, the person his friends described was not the person he saw himself as, understood himself to be. He'd no idea that he was this person others saw him as. It provided him with the impetus to change the way he lived, to want to live and be the person others recognised him as. It gave him back his life.

It's hard to see ourselves as we are, to see the person our doing reveals. We need people and a process that enables us to see the

outcome and consequence of our action and behaviour. For us to see in ways we're willing to receive and able to learn from, so we can choose whether to modify, adapt and change, actually **do** differently. Be the people we aspire to be and/or realise the person we are that may surprise and empower us. We need this especially if we're to be people willing to break the bonds of relationship that ensnare and prevent the unconventional, justice bringing love insisting life of God into being. We might understand a witnessing community of faith such as this one to be such context.

A place with people who are trustworthy to risk being ourselves among, to risk the vulnerability this brings. Choose as our whanau of identity and support, the community of those who are a disruptive presence in face of conventional wisdom and a benumbed society that enacts injustice and inequity with temerity. Not reasonable, not really sensible the choices these Jesus stories open before us, are they? Yet here we are.