

Jesus is Nuts! Proper 5, Year B – Mark 3:20-35

preached by the Rector at St. Paul's, Henderson, June 10, 2012

Lord, take my eyes and see through them, Take my lips and speak through them, Take my heart and set it on fire with love for thee, Amen.

Over the years, you will no doubt hear me remind you periodically that the world in which Jesus lived with his disciples, the world in which lived the heroes and villains, the protagonists and antagonists, every character of every Bible story you know or are ever likely to hear, the world of story become sacred scripture, that world was worlds *away* from the world you and I call home. That's not just because those people wore different clothes, and ate different food, and traveled different roads. Those people, Peter and Paul, and James and John, and all the others you love to love, and the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the Scribes and the Lawyers, and all the others you love to... well, not *love* – all those people also saw the world around them in a completely different way than you and I and anyone that we have ever known see the world around us.

That most definitely includes the whole of our reading this morning from the Gospel according to Saint Mark.

Here we are on the Second Sunday after Pentecost, right here at the beginning of Ordinary Time in the Church Lectionary. But because Easter moves around as it does, we've come in on the story of Jesus in the Gospel according to Mark, already in progress. As our story opens, Jesus has already been a very, very busy fellow. Following his baptism, you will remember from back at the beginning of Lent, Jesus was driven into the wilderness where he was tempted, and then he got to work. As Mark writes the story, in the span of a handful of weeks, Jesus called the first of his disciples, Peter (though he was still called Simon back then) and his brother Andrew, and brothers James and John, healed a man with an unclean spirit, healed a bunch of other people down by the Sea of Galilee, including Peter's mother-in-law, preached in a bunch of synagogues, cast out a bunch more demons, cleansed a leper, healed a paralytic lowered down through a hole in the roof, told off a bunch of Scribes, called another disciple named Matthew (he went by Levi at the time), ate with sinners and tax collectors, told off a bunch of Pharisees, preached some good stories about wedding guests and wineskins that we'll get to when Easter comes a bit earlier on in a Year B cycle, let his disciples pick some grain on the Sabbath (that's a no-no if you're a Scribe or a Pharisee, by the way), healed a man's withered hand – on the Sabbath (really getting to the Scribes and Pharisees again), preached to a crowd so big he had to rent a boat to get off shore, cast out a bunch more unclean spirits, called the rest of his twelve disciples, and sent them out with authority to cast out unclean spirits. It's only chapter three of Mark's Gospel, but Jesus has been a very, very busy fellow.

And here we are this morning as Jesus comes home... where things seem to get even more complicated. In the world in which Jesus and his disciples lived, the Pharisees and Scribes and such had come to the conclusion that, what with the dinners with sinners, the Sabbath breaking, and the casting out demons, Jesus was himself possessed by the Big-daddy of all demons. We don't live in that world, of course. So when we hear that kind of accusation, we know that they meant was that they thought that Jesus was *nuts*. Jesus was nuts, they figured, for claiming the Spirit of God was with *him*, instead of them. Jesus was nuts for preaching that relationships mattered more than the rules they had so carefully devised. Jesus was nuts for giving himself to all those poor and sick and needy and suffering and dying, instead of to the ones who *deserved* his attention.

We don't really care, of course, since we know the Scribes and Pharisees and such are the bad guys in all these stories. But then there's the rest of the story. Because Jesus' family were *also* worried about what was going on with him. Here he was, finally come home and he wasn't the same Jesus who had left Nazareth those handful of weeks before. He had healed the sick and preached the Kingdom of God to the needy crowds and called fishermen and zealots and tax collectors and other sinners to his side. And here he was, finally come home, and on top of the Scribes and Pharisees and such, his *family* thought

Jesus was nuts. He was nuts for following the Spirit into the middle of the wilderness. He was nuts for trekking all over the countryside preaching instead, of taking care of business at home. He was nuts for putting all those poor and sick and needy and suffering and dying, ahead of *them*.

And you know what? In the world that you and I call home, the way that you and I and anyone that we have ever known see the world around us, Jesus is still nuts.

In our world, it is nuts to provide for the poor. In our world, it is nuts to tend to the sick. In our world, it is nuts to care for the needy and the suffering and the dying. In our world that practically wallows in hyper-activity, in being connected to everything and everybody every moment of every day, it is nuts to think that “the Spirit blows where it will,” and that may just be to the stillness where we will actually hear the voice of God’s call upon our lives. In our world that encourages, no *demands* that we get what we can, when we can, and to heck with everyone else, our world where even our willingness to protect the least among us is measured in sound bites of what that can do for our bank account, or our interest group, or our party of power, it is nuts to believe that anyone should “seek first the Kingdom of God.” In our world where the ultimate goal seems always to be to “look after number one,” it is nuts to put “love your neighbor as yourself” and “love your enemies” into some sort of action that may really make a difference in their lives as well as ours.

And yet here we are, you and I, come *home* this Second Sunday after Pentecost, to the one teacher whose words of love, nuts or not, make sense in the *non*-sense of our unthinking, unfeeling, uncaring world. Here we are, come home again to the one savior whose healing touch, nuts or not, brings order and peace to the chaos of a world drowning in seemingly insatiable pride. Here we are, come *home* to *Jesus* whose life and death and resurrection, nuts or not, bring meaning and purpose and ultimate reality to the mere shadow of the world in which you and I and anyone we have ever known live and move and have our being. Here we are, to worship and praise the Life that has touched *our* lives with his mercy and his grace and his love. Here we are to be nourished once again with the Body and Blood that has turned our lives inside out. Here we are to see through the eyes of the One who left the glories of heaven for love of us. Here we are to see through the eyes of God who so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son. Here we are to see that what the world calls nuts, is in truth the coming of the Kingdom of God.

Pray that we will let that sort of madness take absolute control of us. Amen.