

## **Reflection for the Week: June 6<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> 2021**

### **Read Mark 3: 20**

#### **Jesus disrupts the social order**

Revolutions are never neat and tidy; there are clashes between received opinion and new ways of thinking and being. Revolutions are marked by upheaval and threat, especially when the march of progress seems unstoppable or will lead into the unknown.

Jesus' ministry was all about ushering in a new order of things. Crowds were thronging around Jesus. Literally hundreds of people were hanging around him because they needed help. The needs are so great that Jesus and his companions have not even got time to eat. Jesus' ministry was revolutionary and it was unnerving to those with a vested interest in maintaining the old order of things. The crunch comes at the very start of the chapter when Jesus heals a man with a withered hand *in the synagogue on the Sabbath* – a confident, compassionate action which called into question the legal priorities of the Jewish leadership. Nobody wants their established mode of operating challenged. The Pharisees and the Herodians join forces. They can see where this story ends, and it won't be on their terms. They plot to kill Jesus.

Let's face it, if Jesus did these same things today, would we react any differently? When people who have been in psychiatric care claim to be fully healed, we proceed with caution. We are suspicious of gifted, charismatic leaders who draw substantial crowds. Society needs time to adjust to revolutionary movements. The top thought of the ancient Jewish authorities must have been: 'How and why is this happening?'

We would have asked the same question - *perhaps we are asking the same question* - and, like them, would have been reticent to acknowledge the failures of a broken system.

Jesus' mother and siblings can't explain what is going on either. Jesus is drawing too much attention to himself. All this talk of the Kingdom of God coming near in him; maybe he has lost his mind? They set out to restrain him. Others put out the rumour that Jesus is possessed by evil spirits.

Then comes the moment of familial redefinition; Jesus' family are those who do the will of God – a seismic shift in thinking for a society that was tightly bound by strict notions of ethnic loyalties to kin, tribe and ancestral inheritance.

**To reflect:** When we read these gospel accounts do we domesticate the radical nature of Jesus' teaching? If so, we lose something. Jesus' ministry was all about liberation of one type or another. When liberation truly happens, some still prefer to restrain Jesus, or say that those who follow him have lost sanity and harbour unclean spirits. The response of Jesus is simple: whoever discerns and does the will of God is his kindred and will remain in his family.