



A THOUGHT FOR THE WEEKEND

24th November, 2023

"...he fled naked, leaving his garment behind."

Mark 14:52

Mark is never mentioned in any gospel, although one bears his name. But he weaves in and out of Acts and the Epistles, and gives us something to think about.

His is the earliest and shortest gospel; the one from which Matthew and Luke draw for theirs. It is thought that Mark got much of his material from Peter, because when Peter features in the gospel, it is often in insightful, but sometimes in disparaging, ways (8:27-33, 14:72), as if the apostle was anxious to be true to himself but not boastful, -nor to have a gospel in his name. Mark had plenty of time to hear from Peter -and others- on their subsequent travels, Peter later refers to him affectionately as *"my son"* (1 Peter 5:13), with the implication that they'd shared a lot together.

Mark was not one of the twelve, so would not have been at the private discourses with Jesus, of which he was told later (4:10, 10:32). But it is likely that he was in the wider following, probably as a young lad hanging around Jesus and his disciples with a curiosity and desire to be part of it. Acts 12:12 tells us his mother's home was one in which early Christians met; -perhaps they did so in Jesus' time when Mark could eavesdrop!

There is an intriguing possibility that Mark *does* mention himself in the account of the arrest of Jesus in Gethsemane: *"A young man, wearing nothing but a linen garment, was following Jesus. When they seized him, he fled naked, leaving his garment behind."* Mark 14:51-52. Did he want us to know he was there? (I expect he 'caught it' from his mum for losing his pyjamas!)

Mark is far more in evidence by name in Acts and the Epistles. He is identified as the 'John-Mark' of Acts 12:12, 12:25, 15:37, and is clearly travelling with the early evangelists. He is not listed among the missionary leaders in Acts 13:1-2, -perhaps he's just a 'trainee'. He must have been with them, because along the way he left for home (13:13).

Paul was clearly hurt and angry about that (Acts 15:37-39), but was obviously fond of Mark, for not only is the relationship restored (Colossians 4:10... note he's 'cousin' to Barnabas), but at the end of his life Paul, cold and lonely in jail, seeks Mark's companionship (2 Timothy 4:11). No doubt the friendship of an intelligent, thoughtful, teachable younger person, full of potential, would have been an encouragement at the end of Paul's life, concerned also for the church's future.

My thought is that perhaps there are 'Marks' for us to encourage and be encouraged by, as our energies and opportunities wane, and there is much to disturb our thoughts and test our faith. Is there a 'Mark' in your life? -A younger person in your family, church or beyond, in whom you can invest; a source of mutual fulfilment and encouragement? Perhaps we should all find a 'Mark' or 'Marcie' whom we can mentor and build up for the future. There may be some already weaving in and out of our lives, as Mark weaves through the New Testament.