

Mark 14: 53-65

53 They took Jesus to the high priest; and all the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes were assembled. 54 Peter had followed him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest; and he was sitting with the guards, warming himself at the fire. 55 Now the chief priests and the whole council were looking for testimony against Jesus to put him to death; but they found none. 56 For many gave false testimony against him, and their testimony did not agree. 57 Some stood up and gave false testimony against him, saying, 58 'We heard him say, "I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands."' 59 But even on this point their testimony did not agree. 60 Then the high priest stood up before them and asked Jesus, 'Have you no answer? What is it that they testify against you?' 61 But he was silent and did not answer. Again the high priest asked him, 'Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?' 62 Jesus said, 'I am; and "you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power", and "coming with the clouds of heaven."' 63 Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, 'Why do we still need witnesses? 64 You have heard his blasphemy! What is your decision?' All of them condemned him as deserving death. 65 Some began to spit on him, to blindfold him, and to strike him, saying to him, 'Prophesy!' The guards also took him over and beat him.

Meditation: What a dreadful scene. Jesus is taken to the high priest for questioning. The council has worked hard at finding anyone who would testify against Jesus. Their witness is not rehearsed enough. They contradict one another. But they offer sufficient testimony to prove Jesus' threat to the established order and its sacred center of power: the temple. When pushed to confess his own status before God, of being the Messiah, Jesus declares 'I am.' But already he is looking beyond the events that will take place in the next day or so: 'and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the power,' and 'coming with the clouds of heaven.'

The key issue here is still the same one that has accompanied the witness of Jesus throughout the gospel - faith! Can this same person who appears impotent and weak before the ruling powers of the day, abandoned by his closest followers, and reserved in his speech; can this same person truly be who he claims to be? For the people around Jesus that night, the answer was clearly no! The high priest tears his clothes and cries out: 'blasphemy!' The last stage of Jesus' suffering in body and soul begins.

If you were among the group of people that night, seeing someone seemingly so weak, silent and helpless, would you believe his confession: 'I am'? What is it about weakness and vulnerability that may also be a doorway to a different kind of strength? To resist reacting, but choosing rather to listen, to resist becoming defensive, but choosing rather to acknowledge, understand and recognize the need for change in yourself, to resist blaming, shaming and judging, but choosing rather to open up in trust and acceptance and the possibility of a new pathway in a relationship... Jesus whole vision is about a new way for his people Israel and a new way for the world. Call it weakness and vulnerability. The alternative is all around us whether we think of protests on our streets or conflicts of other kinds. When we don't listen to one another and open

ourselves to understand each other, we blame and shame, react and judge, put others down and shut ourselves to any listening and understanding. We know Jesus' fate. Will we keep crucifying him in our own world and in our own personal lives each time we are being called out to a different way of being and relating?

Prayer: We need Jesus, O God. We need his way, his vision, his kind of love, strong in its vulnerability, potent in its apparent impotence. We need to recognize what your love demands if we are to become the change we want to see more of in our world. This is a critical time, O God, for our world and for us personally. Please do not give up on us. Please keep working on us, in us and through us. We know we have yet to become. Give us faith in the beauty and splendour you see in us to keep becoming; Amen.