

Mark 14: 1-2

It was two days before the Passover and the festival of Unleavened Bread. The chief priests and the scribes were looking for a way to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him; for they said, 'Not during the festival, or there may be a riot among the people.'

Meditation: In these two verses we have the end result of Jesus' encounter with the religious elite. They have challenged him. He has answered them. They have witnessed the responsiveness of the people to him. And they want to kill him. They are not open to Jesus. Quite the contrary. They see him as a threat to their power and authority. They see him as one whose popularity could incite sufficient unrest to dislodge them from their status as mediators between the Romans and their own people.

What are those things in your life and mine that pose a threat? What causes us that kind of fear? When does such a perceived threat cause us to act and react in ways that are detrimental to others and to us? When does such a perceived threat need to be re-evaluated as to why it is seen as a threat in the first place, and what it may be we are being challenged to see and change in ourselves we are avoiding, denying or repressing by acting outwards in blaming, shaming, judging, reacting and acting out?

What was it that Jesus was threatening for the religious authorities? On one level it was their power and control over the people that was on the line. On a deeper level, was Jesus' vision for the people and for God's will a threat to all they had built their vision on and how that defined them in terms of their comfort and status, and how fueling people's hate and will to violence in terms of perceived external threat from gentile outsiders served their agenda of control? Would repentance and change be the greater threat still if they came to their knees acknowledging something of Jesus' truth as divine truth, letting go their control?

And what about the threat posed by a black man? What is it that causes fear, for police and for society? Why is racism so endemic to our way of being as people and as societies? Why must we 'dominate' others in order to feel safe? What is it about control that we can't let go and let be? Why can we not see others as extensions of ourselves and others in all their uniqueness which may help us appreciate and cherish our own?

Prayer: We are sick, O God... and the sickness that is worse even than a virus for most of us is the sickness within. We feel threatened and we externalize, we demonize, we judge and condemn, we blame and shame, we resist any call for change when it involves our own discomfort, inconvenience and transformation of perspective. Help us, O God, help us see others for who they are. Help us see their skin colour, their pain, their suffering, their injustice, their humanity as your precious creation... Help us to see others until we begin also to see ourselves in all our truth - the ways we have fallen from your vision for us, but also a pathway for us to rise up to newness for our own sake, and for the sake of a world that needs our wholeness ever more desperately; Amen.