

MEDITATION 24

Mark 3: 6

‘The Pharisees went out and immediately conspired with the Herodians against Jesus, how to destroy him.

Why? Why do they want to destroy Jesus? Because Jesus has criticized them, questioned their authority and undermined, in their way of thinking, the meaning of Sabbath. Rather than serving the people, according to Jesus, the Sabbath had become a way of keeping the people under control by ensuring they remain under the thumb of the authorities and their rules for proper observance. Jesus is throwing it all out the window, and by doing so is making himself out to be a higher authority of God's rule and will.

And who were the Pharisees and the Herodians? While the Pharisees were lay people devoted to the study of scriptural law and strict adherence to the law, the Herodians were of the noble class supporting the reign of Herod and the current system of rule under Rome with the Jewish aristocracy running local affairs and benefitting financially. While the Pharisees ran the synagogues throughout the land, the Herodians backed the Sadducees running the temple and the whole sacrificial system. Jesus was a threat to the whole arrangement because he was appealing to the people.

And so, they begin to 'conspire' to bring Jesus down...

Have you yourself ever conspired with someone against someone else?... Have you ever felt conspired against?... Conspiracy and conspiracy theories have become big in our world, and even more so since the pandemic... And conspiracy raises suspicion, mistrust and tension between people and groups, communities and nations...

In a world abounding in conspiracies, how do we build trust? In a world of mistrust, how do we build some deeper connection, loyalty and goodwill between people?...

Who do you trust?...

Do you trust you are loved, cherished, seen for who you are, not at your worst but at your best?...

Are you accepted for all your imperfect humanity?...

Are you welcomed as you are for all your uniqueness and diversity?...

Do you have to play games to fit in and become part of the crowd, or are you free and assured in your environments to be who you are?...

Some of us have experienced situations at work or within our families where we have been accused wrongly of something, or something we said or did has been twisted so that we have been misunderstood or maligned. Sometimes there may be truth to what we're accused of, but not all of it. Sometimes people who care for us make room for our imperfect humanity. But in

environments where there is deep mistrust, any wrong step turns the table on us and we are forced to be on the defensive.

How is Jesus going to navigate his path as Messiah for the people even as the authorities are conspiring to turn the tables on his growing popularity?

How have you found your way out of a toxic environment or even a situation in a close relationship where trust has been diminished if not broken?...

Is the relationship salvageable? Do you have to make it work one way or the other because you're family?...

At what point must you say: "enough" for your own well-being?...

In another way of seeing the situation, Jesus is in a hostile and mistrusting environment where he chooses to take a stand despite what it may cost him.

Have you ever had to say something, speak a truth, engage a situation or do something for justice or right that has cost you, maybe a relationship, maybe a job, maybe a friend?...

How have you found your way?...

Are you still carrying the hurt?...

Has the cost diminished you in some way?...

Or have you become empowered even deeper in your commitments to justice and right?...

Integrity of character never comes without choices and decisions followed through, and sometimes, oftentimes, there is a cost. But that's also how we grow.

At the same time, we need to find those people, environments and communities where we can truly be ourselves, where we can examine ourselves and our actions within a circle of trust in love for who we are, being seen in who we are despite our imperfections...

Who are your people and networks where you are so seen and loved?...

PRAYER:

You call us, O God...

As your creatures created out of love and for love, you call us...

You call us to be true to ourselves before you as we grow into ourselves...

You call us to stand with the broken and advocate for those who have lost their voice...

You call us to be true even when the people around us question us with the aim of discrediting us and cutting us down...

You call us to right even when it will involve giving up or letting go something or someone we are attached to...

Thank you for those people and networks of trust and care in our lives, where we are seen and loved no matter what we're going through or struggling against...

Thank you for those circles of trust where truth and self-examination are not threatening to our well-being but invitations to inner growth...

Thank you for those who help keep us sane and grounded when we feel caught up in negative thoughts within a web of conspiracy, and especially when such conspiracy is directed against us...

Remind us of our infinite value before you...

Ground us in your embrace of us in all our beauty despite our imperfections and the bad choices we make under stress, fear and threat...

Forgive us and reset us on our journey of healing toward ever greater wholeness...

In Jesus' name... Amen.