

MEDITATION 7

Mark 1: 14-15

¹⁴ Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the good news of God ¹⁵ and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."

"Now after John was arrested..."

Why do people get arrested? Presumably because they have broken the law and acted criminally in some way. But what if the regime is corrupt or vengeful, seeking retribution against all enemies? Think about what's happening south of the border. Why is John arrested? Is it because he has done something wrong? Or is it because he has been identified as a threat to the power of those who rule the nation?

If Jesus is aligned with John, then, what will happen to him? The scene is set in this opening chapter of our gospel account...

Have you ever been on the wrong side of the law? Perhaps you may know someone who has if it's not you. Has it always been justified in your mind? Has the person been treated with fairness, dignity and a process that has integrity when it comes to justice?

We are fortunate to live in a part of the world where we can expect proper justice and where arrests are justified against those who do wrong or are predatory to the innocent and vulnerable.

However, we also know that if you are part of a marginalized group - indigenous or black, or if you are protesting for human rights, or if you are taking sides in a social conflict over values, laws or the climate, things can escalate and the lines of justice can turn more oppressive.

Have you ever been held to account or sought to hold someone else to account because you have felt wronged in some way?... How did that go?... Are you still carrying the trauma, the hurt or the injustice of it because it has not been resolved properly or you are still holding on to the hurt?...

We all hurt... And we all feel unjustly harmed from time to time, and sometimes seriously...

Prayer: Grant me some peace, O God... Open up my heart to compassion, O God... Open my heart to forgiveness, O God... But also open my heart to accountability for my part in the wrong... May I grow in my commitment to justice and truth, but may I equally grow in my openness to see and acknowledge other perspectives and truths also... Help me, O God... Open up my heart further, O God... Deepen my soul, O God...

"Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the good news of God"...

What is this good news? There's more to come in the next verse, but at this point it is good to pause and ask ourselves: What could good news be for us personally?... Would it have to do with our health, our finances, our acceptance into a program, a school, a job, a home?... Would good news be about someone opening their heart to us or acknowledging our pain in a way that we feel seen, heard and loved?... Would good news be about receiving news that the treatment has worked, that we are healed, that our family member or friend is open to reconciliation with us?...

We all need good news and often... What is your good news?... What good news do you need?...

"Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the good news of God and saying, " The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near" ...

The good news Jesus is proclaiming is the good news of God. What is this news? Answer: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near." In other words, the wait is over and the time has arrived. The kingdom of God is just around the corner. Isn't this exciting?! But what is the kingdom of God?

The answer to this question is the rest of the gospel. Jesus' purpose, his vocation is to proclaim this message with his words and his life. What will that look like?... What will that be?

People had all kinds of ideas about what the kingdom of God could and should be. Should it be about health, wealth and social success for the people? Should it be about ousting those in power now who are corrupt, inept and simply out for themselves? Should it be about getting rid of enemies, or those against whom we have a grievance?...

No... The kingdom of God is about love. The kingdom of God is about our lives and relationships being filled with love. But can such good news about this kingdom of God really shape the quality and fullness of our lives, despite the wrongs in us and the wrongs in others in relation to us?... Is any of this truly possible in a way we have not seen or believed it yet?...

"Repent, and believe in the good news"...

Will you repent of your doubt, your cynicism, your disbelief, or the bitterness of your hurt and disappointment? Will you turn from your despair? Will you open your heart to some really good news for your life despite all that can make you question and doubt it?...

PRAYER: I believe, O God, help my unbelief... Is there really good news for me?... Despite all that is wrong, despite all that makes me question myself and others, despite all that I struggle with and fear, is there really good news for me?...

Help me, O God... Help me believe... Help me to live... What are those steps I can take today and tomorrow?... Don't give up on me... You believe in me... Help me believe in myself in a whole new way the way a child believes new things are always possible beyond what cannot be imagined possible... Open me up to such possibility, O God... Keep me open to such possibility, O God... In Jesus' name I pray this way... Amen.