

Mark 1: 14-20

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying:

“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.”

As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake – for they were fishermen.

And Jesus said to them:

“Follow me and I will make you fish for people.”

And immediately they left their nets and followed him

As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets.

Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

Meditation

“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.’

I have always had trouble with the word ‘repent’...

Lord knows, it’s not that I never need to say I’m sorry...

for me that word is connected with “or else”

Repent or else...Repent or be punished...

Repent or be toast.

I certainly understand the need for apologies and amends,
but... to pressure people into behaving compassionately and justly
by threatening them with the 'or else' of eternal punishment...
well....that doesn't make sense....and it is not the Gospel!

So when I read this gospel story I wondered –
even though many of us have been taught the fear of hell –
is that really what Jesus taught?

The word Gospel literally means “Good News” ...

So if Jesus did mean: repent or else...

How would that be anything different than how most religions
throughout the ages have tried to get people to behave and be good?

Well...I found out, when you read the ancient texts,
the word that is usually translated as 'repent'
is the Greek word, 'metanoia'.

Some modern scholars interpret metanoia as “turn around” or
“change your mind”.

They say that Jesus was telling us that we need to turn our lives around,
turn our behavior around, make a change for the better ...ok...

But here's something even more interesting, I think!

Other scholars even draw the word back further into its more ancient
understanding: they say that the word metanoia is a combination of two
ancient Greek words: 'meta' which means bigger than big

And “noia”.

“noia” comes from the Greek word 'gnosis' which means knowledge.

So metanoia literally means “cosmic knowledge or big knowledge”

Today we call 'cosmic knowledge' consciousness...
Consciousness... is our way of understanding the world.
It is through consciousness that we have perspective on life
It is a person's way of seeing and interpreting reality.
Much of the time we live life, unconsciously...
we have knee jerk reactions to events and people....
and other times when we are aware and intentional
choosing to be compassionate and kind...
we are living consciously...we literally raise our level of
consciousness....

So what if we translate Jesus' proclamation this way:
"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near;
open your self to a new consciousness,
a new way of seeing and being life and God...
and believe in the Good news"!

Hmm..now that has a totally different feel than "repent or else".
It's not threatening...it sounds more like an invitation
and, I would suggest it peaks our curiosity.

Could this understanding of metanoia
be closer to what Jesus was actually trying to do?
Could he have been more concerned with a person's perception of
reality than punishing people when they didn't follow the Law?
I believe that the answer is yes and here's why:

I am sure that you remember Jesus did not hang out with the goody two
shoes of his day.

He hung around with the vagrants, the disconnected, those considered unclean and sinful.

And he *never* threatened them!

The only people he ever got angry with were all those “good people” who thought they were in God’s favor because they followed all the Temple rules.

He became upset with them when they passed judgment and punishment...that made Jesus really angry...

But to all those ‘sinful’ people...

Jesus constantly reassured them of God’s love, he fed them and clothed them and healed them.

He wanted to convince them that they were worth everything in God’s eyes no matter what they had done..

because when they were able to believe in their inherent worth they could trust God’s love for them.

When they deeply understood this “Good News”

they saw themselves differently and then they changed their lives: not because they were afraid that God would catch them with their hand in the cookie jar...

but because they wanted to.

They could not, not change their lives.

It was almost as if they didn’t even have to try...

it just happened.

Jesus understood that Laws and the threat of punishment only controlled external behavior...

He desperately wanted people to see with eyes of Love...

because with eyes of Love, a person automatically, without effort has a true change of heart.

Jesus passionately wanted people to live in a new world with a new consciousness where the Love of the Holy One offered the framework in which people could understand the meaning and the purpose of Love in their lives.

Jesus invited, he did not threaten,
people to live in the Reign, the Kingdom of God
right here...right now.

Because he understood, when you live in Kingdom consciousness
you live compassionately and justly and kindly
whether there is a rule for it or not!
and the threat of punishment – Hell-- becomes unnecessary.

This is his invitation to us this day in 2018.

Jesus invites us to this new consciousness.

One that Sees see the presence of God freely, fully and abundantly
present everywhere in everyone.

Does that mean we all live with that awareness all the time?

Of course not!

But it does invite us to see the Holy One's presence in

Christians *and* Muslims,

in believers *and* atheists,

in multinational corporate CEOs *and* in environmental advocates,

in mountains and rivers, in stars and in song birds

and garbage dumps and tenement slums.

Today, there are 7 billion people living on this one planet that has been
the same size since there were just a few of us..

Cultures and religions are co mingling like never before....

The internet and travel has allowed peoples of all stripes and colors to know each other and about each other in ways never possible before....

All of this demands a new set of eyes and a larger heart than humanity has ever had before!

Will we accept Jesus' invitation into a new consciousness?

It is not just a theoretical question...

it is a question of the mind and the heart that will determine the future for all of life on Earth...

Can you hear his invitation being extended to you?

Are you willing to make known the Reign of Love,
to live in Kingdom Consciousness?

Are you?

amen.