

Here are words from Holy Scripture describing how important the Kingdom of God was to Paul and Jesus.

Acts Chapter 28 verses 30 to 31

For the next two years, Paul lived in Rome at his own expense. He welcomed all who visited him, boldly proclaiming the Kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ. And no one tried to stop him.

Acts Chapter 1: verse 3

After His resurrection Jesus Christ appeared to his disciples over a period of 40 days and talked to them about the Kingdom of God.

The Gospel of Mark chapter 1 verses 14 to 15

Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God by saying, "The time promised by God has come at last." The kingdom of God has come near; repent and believe in this good news.

The Gospel of Luke Chapter 4 verse 18

"The Spirit of the LORD is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor. He has sent me to heal the broken hearted, proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, and that the oppressed will be set free.

Chapter 4 verse 43

"I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to other cities because for this purpose I was sent."

Chapter 9 verse 1

Jesus called the twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority - sending them out to proclaim the kingdom of God.

SERMON RESURRECTION HOPE- PROCLAIMING THE GOOD NEWS OF THE KINGDOM

If I had to pick the pulse, of all the lockdown conversations that I've had, heard and read, it would be something like this.

We mustn't go back to how we were! We have a once in a lifetime opportunity to move forward with a different vision. It's time for a re-set.

Here's a provocative quote from Sonya Rene Taylor, that for me captures this truth.

"We should not go back to normal. Normal never was.

Our pre-corona existence was not normal, other than we normalized greed, inequity, exhaustion, depletion, extraction, disconnection, confusion, rage, hate and lack.

We should not long to return, my friends.

We are being given the opportunity to stitch a new garment.

One that fits all of humanity and nature."

The spiritual discipline of Confession is about having the humility to recognise our failings ... and in that recognition, a beautiful opportunity for change. If we are going to collectively re-imagine how we move forward differently, then first has to come the humble recognition of some failings.

Such as, we wasn't exactly in great shape pre corona.

Our old garment was falling apart at the seams.

It didn't fit or benefit all of humanity and nature.

We were living ways that left us poorer not richer

So many in material poverty - so many in spiritual poverty.

So many of us captive to greed, exhaustion, depletion, rage, and disconnection.

So much of our planet exhausted and depleted from our insatiable plunder and pillage of its resources.

So now there's big question blowing in the wind for all of us.

When we emerge back into 'normal'... which parts of normal are worth holding onto ... and which parts do we need to let go of?

You do sense that there is a desire to 'stitch a new garment' in the hearts of many.

Crisis has a way of creating realisation. Of opening our hearts and minds to a different way of seeing and being. Crisis can be the crucible for creative thinking and new possibility.

So as we, as a church and followers of Christ ask...

What does it look like to proclaim the good news of the kingdom, in these times of paradigm shift. How do we communicate this message of HOPE?

Maybe, the first thing we need to do, is to tune into this spirit of a desire for change.

And in terms of communication, I think we have to begin with this word 'Kingdom'. Because its not really a word that anyone outside of church will really use nowadays. Unless they've been watching Game of thrones. And even church people get confused about what is meant by the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Heaven.

Maybe a basic dictionary definition is helpful.

A kingdom is a realm or domain, in which something or someone reigns supreme.

In times gone by of course, this would be the king of the kingdom

But as soon as you start to dig deeper into that definition of Kingdom, you pretty much soon realise that we all participate 'in' - and we all serve a kingdom of some sort. None of us can claim to be outside their influence.

Let's just take the realm of Social Media.

What we have, is several huge kingdoms all competing for their dominance - and our allegiance. Google, Instagram, Twitter, Tic tok. And of course the kingdom of Facebook, where King Mark Zuckerberg reigns supreme.

We have the kingdoms of the **Multi-National Companies**, who control our **Food production, Energy consumption and Finance systems**. And all of these, have massively impacted the Animal Kingdom, the Environmental Kingdom, and our Eco Systems.

But the one kingdom that has probably dominated, motivated and driven, pretty much every other aspect of how we've constructed our present current reality, is the great kingdom of Production and Consumption.

This is the kingdom that has a Cathedral (a shrine) in every town, city and suburb of the world. We call them Shopping Malls. And every-day they claim our allegiance, as millions of us flock to them to fulfil our desire and need for 'MORE'.

Right now, of course, we're all existing in the kingdom realm of a pandemic, and the ruler that reigns supreme, is a virus called Coved 19. And by far the most radical and traumatic aspect of this whole pandemic... is that there isn't one single realm of how we do human existence, that's been left untouched.

Be it the kingdoms of the economy, business, trade. Education, medicine and media. Right down to our own family kingdom dynamics. Every single facet of how we live and move and have our being, has been tipped upside down, shaken and stirred. **It's a global trauma. Psychologically, Economically and Spiritually.**

Which bring us to the really big truth that's emerged from this time of what someone so rightly called, the 'Great Pause'.

So many of these kingdoms have been exposed as the broken, inadequate systems that they have ultimately become. It's not that all these kingdoms are completely bad, because many of us live privileged lives compared to our forebearers because of them.

But equally, haven't we all got a glimpse of just how much we've **allowed** these kingdoms to become the **"dominant norm"**?

We've allowed these kingdoms to reign supreme, in **too many** areas of our lives.

To claim **too much** of our allegiance.

And they've taken us **too far** down social and spiritual cul-de-sacs.

In so many ways, all these Kingdoms that we thought were serving our needs, turns out we were serving theirs. And haven't we all become a little captive, oppressed and blind to this truth.

If we want to 'stitch a new garment that fits all humanity and nature' we need to live out and serve a different kind of KINGDOM. WITH A DIFFERENT KIND OF RULER

And for me as a follower of Christ, this is where I get passionate about proclaiming the Kingdom of God that Jesus Christ was passionate about.

How relevant are these electric words of Jesus to the paradigm shift of these times?



Luke Chapter 4:18

"The Spirit of the LORD is upon me, for the Spirit has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor. Sent me to heal the broken hearted, proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, and that the oppressed will be set free.

I think we can agree that's some announcement.

This is Jesus saying that HE has been chosen to fulfil the promises and purposes of God, to save, heal and restore all that is broken.

This is Jesus ushering in a new vision for humanity, he called the Kingdom of God.

This is Jesus announcing His mission purpose.

It's time to stitch a new garment that fits all humanity and nature

So if we as the church and followers of Christ, are going to rise to the challenge of proclaiming the good news of this Kingdom, we have to remind ourselves of 2 crucial things.

The first is this.

We have to constantly remind ourselves of what this alternative kingdom looks like, when lived it out. Its very difficult to proclaim something that we don't fully understand ourselves.

- What does it look like to live in harmony with the way things were created to be?
- What does it look like to be reconciled with God - each other – creation, the environment- and ourselves.
- What does it look like to live in a realm when God's 'will' reigns supreme?
Well Jesus Christ told us. HE said **"Look at me, look at my life and teachings". It looks like this.**



The Captives are set free – The Hungry are fed – the Broken are made whole – the blind will see – the Marginalised are included – the Dividing walls of Hostility are dismantled.

"The kingdom of God is breaking in" said Jesus ... "and this is what it looks like when it does."

Turns out, the Kingdom is not so much a place, but more a way of life.

A Christ-centred way of life.

The second big truth is this.

I've re-read the gospels again this week, and you simply cannot read them and not come away realising how central and important this Kingdom message is for Jesus Himself. This IS the Good news.

In Mark 1:14.

Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God by saying, "The time promised by God has come at last." The kingdom of God has come near; repent (Change direction- change your mindset) and believe in this good news.

Luke 4:43

"I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to all cities because **this is the purpose, for which I was sent.**"

If this is the purpose for which Jesus is sent, then it has to be our purpose too.

I'LL FINISH WITH THIS.

Like everyone else, we as the Church, have now got to re-imagine and re-envision a different way forward. But we do have this opportunity to tune into this spirit that's out there, of a desire for a re-set.

There are many of us who are realising that the old garment of how we do humanity is worn and threadbare. We do need to stitch a new garment that truly fits and benefits ALL of humanity and nature. We do need to live out and serve a different kind of Kingdom, with a different kind of ruler.

For me this I why the 5 marks of Mission are so helpful.

- Because they paint the picture of what it looks like to be authentic followers of Christ.
- What it looks like to live out resurrection hope.
- What it looks like to live out the saving, healing, restoring mission of God.
- As they would. Because they reflect the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.

Our role as a church, for such a time as this... is to proclaim and live out this same message as passionately and as authentically as Christ did. The author and perfecter of our faith