

Yesterday morning, I walked with our group from Phinney Ridge in the Seattle Women's Day March. It was my first time ever being in a march. I know- shocking- right?! I have always been very vocal about justice issues from the comfort of my laptop and desk, but never have I gone out to participate in a march. I was told years ago as a non-citizen not to ever get caught in such activism because I could be deported. And so I haven't all these years, until now. See how well you are influencing and training your vicar!?! Ha!

But yesterday morning I personally witnessed something rather amazing: thousands having a unified voice crying out for a change in direction for justice. There were women, and men, and children. There were straight and gay, Muslim and Christian, Republican and Democrat. Yesterday morning, I was part of a unified cry of proclamation by thousands across the globe calling out for justice for women. It is much different in person than from the comfort of a desk!

➔ Some might say that proclamation doesn't need to be long winded, especially when using scripture as an example.

Look at Jonah in the text today. He had one sentence he was told by God to proclaim to the Ninevites: "Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" That was it. Those simple 8 words. Mic drop. That's all he said, and walked away. Done.

Then Jesus' first words spoken in the Gospel of Mark: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news." Yup, that's it. And then he's got fishermen dropping everything and following....

And throughout scripture God speaks boldly, directly and without being long winded to get things done: "Let there be light."and guess what...there was light.

As I was surrounded by a sea of people marching yesterday, their words of proclamation was found in the signs in which they held. It wasn't the 140 or 280 characters of a Tweet or long winded chants. It was the words which were short and sweet which would fit on a piece of cardboard.

They were words which were direct and cut to the chase:

Love Rules, Hatred will never Win, Bullying isn't Nice, We are United, Support your Sisters, Women's Rights are Human Rights, BE The New WAY.

And signs which had just one word proclamations: LOVE.....RESPECT

***But one sign caught my attention:

"The time is now. Change is coming. Justice is The Way. Join the Resistance."

Now I don't know if the person who wrote that sign was religious in any way, but that sign pretty much sums up Christ's words today.

➔ The time is now. Change is coming. Justice is the Way. Follow Me.

Just as Jonah marched through the streets of Nineveh, shouting and proclaiming in hopes of change, People yesterday also marched with voices crying for change.

As Jesus proclaimed the good news of God in the streets of Galilee, he hoped for change too. A change of heart for the people. A turning of direction towards believing and trusting in the good news. Trusting that God's goodness was near.

The term "repent" used in the bible literally means to turn, to change direction. It's not so much about focusing on guilt and sin, and groveling about how awful one might think they are, but rather to turn towards and change direction towards God. To alter behavior, to turn around and follow a new WAY...God's WAY. Jesus calls for a directional change. A change towards believing and trusting in the good news.

➔ Now I don't know about you, but I struggle with this term: GOOD NEWS

What does that mean exactly? What does that look like?...especially for us today! We throw it around so loosely in church vernacular assuming everyone knows what we are talking about. Good News. But really....really...what does good news mean?

I mean, we have good news, bad news, joyful news, true news, even false news. What can I trust and believe in, of the news in today's world?

What is presented to us via the digital screens of influence, can often glare against what Jesus refers to as Good News in scripture.

The good news of God, is the gospel of God. It is seeing God's promises fulfilled through encountering it in its embodiment in Christ. How Christ treated others and behaved is the proclamation of good news. It is the very living of good news! It is the fulfillment of God's promises.

Christ's care and love, healing and comfort – that was God's Good News in action to the poor, to the sick, and to the oppressed. Where society didn't want to see, Jesus peered directly into and at and touched and said, I see you and you are loved. You are not forgotten. You have value in my eyes. You are worthy of love.

When the world wanted to judge and cast the first stone, Jesus called out their own imperfections and said no one is better than the other. You are all broken, and yet I will still love and forgive you all.

God's gospel, God's good news- is about Justice. It is about love and forgiveness for all. It is about seeing those whom the world's systems want us not to see. It is about hearing those who have been silenced. It is about being fully present with our fellow human beings and treating them as we are treated by God: LOVED.

Jesus proclaims the kingdom of God is near, and to repent and believe in the gospel of God. Jesus calls for others to follow him. To trust that there is a better way. A way which does not oppress but gives life.

We too are called to repent, believe, trust and follow. Follow this one who shows us what good news really is. What it looks like and feels like in action. In daily living.

We have an invitation through the waters of baptism to mirror what we encounter in Christ.

➔ We are washed in the waters which have a different flow from the world of injustice and oppression.

We are fed from a table which does not label or classify and judge, but welcomes all. We have a choice to follow the flow of change and new direction and realize a new way...a better way of living....God's Way.

God's kingdom, God's gospel, God's good news... is drawing near to rescue and redeem God's people from all that oppresses them. God is not long winded, but direct in both word and action:

Love one another as I have loved you.

Love your neighbor.

Follow me.

I am the way, the truth and the life.

I will make you fishers of people.

➔ Wait?! What?! We are told to go fish too?!?! Hold the presses!! How? How can I possibly be equipped to go out and proclaim the good news?

Sometimes when writing a sermon, I realize I need to go beyond what the commentators and academic theologians translate the scriptures to mean. Especially if I want to access the current culture and attitude of the day. Occasionally, I'll crowd-source and even post on Facebook or text a group of "non-church" friends. So I did this week. I asked what they all thought and felt about the term "good news" and what it looked like to them.

Some of the responses: Good news is exciting and it is hard to keep to yourself. You want to share it with others. Good news is like a warm cozy quilt wrapped around you – It is comforting: it's being warmed by promises of love and forgiveness. Good news cannot be contained. Good news is hearing the words benign. Good news energizes my day. Good news is hopeful.

Yesterday, as I marched, I was hopeful. I was energized.

Where there is doubt on good news being present today, I see it through the imitation and mirroring of Christ's actions in others. I see it where people are feeding, clothing, and comforting others. I see it where voices cry out and march together for respect and honor. Where people provide supplies for refugees. Where homeless are sheltered. The homebound are visited. The sick and dying are prayed for. The good news today is encountering others who love and respect each other. Who honor and forgive each other's shortcomings. It is present in patience and humility.

The good news of a God who is inclusive and all merciful is exciting. It is uncontainable. It is comforting. It is energizing!

We are not just activists of justice in the world.

We are disciples, followers, and proclaimers of God's good news to the world because we are moved in a new direction- we are turned around – we are on a new course towards something much bigger than works and good deeds of our own making. By encountering God's good news in Jesus Christ, we know that God's good news is what ignites us, feeds us, and moves us into action; it is beyond our own capability, and it starts beyond ourselves. If we solely rely on ourselves we will burn out on good deeds.

- ➔ So we are fed at a table of inclusion, from one who proclaims justice for all.
- ➔ We are called by name and sent to share the exciting news- the good news- of a God who says I am with you always, go and do likewise as I have done to you. Love. Forgive. Be me to others. Be Christ to others.

We don't have to be led anywhere but to each other, then the kingdom of God appears. Go be the kingdom. God is the light of hope in you which we are sent to share. Be excited. Be comforted. Be hopeful. Be uncontainable! Go. Go share the good news....for it is here...it is in all of you.

Amen.