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Mark 6:30-34, 53-56
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Jesus started his ministry in the gospel of Mark declaring the coming of the Kingdom of God. This kingdom opposes the Emperor Tiberius' Empire and Herod Antipas' kingdom. Caesar Tiberius had the title DIVI FILIUS, "son of a god." His image and title were inscribed on Caesar's coins. The evangelist Mark starts his gospel by saying, "the beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (Mark 1:1). Mark tells us Christ is the Son of God not Caesar. Caesar ruled with terror and violence. He imposes taxation on the Jews because Judea was an imperial province of Rome. The revenue collected went into the treasury of Herod Antipas and then into the treasury of the emperor. Tiberius, the son of a god, exploited the Jews and took advantage of their natural resources.

Jesus proclaimed the coming of the Kingdom of God that is different than Caesar Tiberius Empire. It governs differently. Jesus announces the presence of the Kingdom on earth. It is present both now and then. God is present among God's people. Scholar John Crossan explains, "Jesus's proclamation, therefore, insisted that the Kingdom of God was not imminent but present; it was already here below upon this earth, and however it was to be consummated in the future, it was a present-already and not just an imminent-future reality."ⁱ My Friends, You are living now in the Kingdom of God.

The kingdom is about the transformation of this world into holiness and not merely evacuation of this world to heaven.ⁱⁱ God's kingdom is evident in the way that Jesus and his disciples lived, and

he invites you and me to live likewise. God is ruling on earth as in heaven. God rules instead of Caesar. Mark is inviting us to imagine how the world would look like if “God sat on Caesar’s throne, or if and when God lived in Antipas’s palace.”ⁱⁱⁱ In our context, imagine how the world would look like if God lives in the White House or the Kremlin, or in Windsor Castle, the family home of Queen Elisabeth.

Jesus Christ, the true and only Son of God, rules on earth without Caesar’s permission. He rules not through violence but as a Shepherd, he rules gently and through peace, feeding the hungry and healing the sick. Caesar, who calls himself ‘son of a god,’ couldn’t feed or heal the sick. His peace means to eliminate his opposition.

Feeding the poor and healing the sick are fundamental criteria of the Kingdom of God. Those who were socially impacted by the Roman imperialism experienced poverty, hunger, and disease. Jesus showed them a new kingdom, and he invited them to be a part of it. In the same chapter of Mark 6, Jesus feeds the 5000 hungry crowd. His action proves to the crowd that he is superior to Caesar Tiberius and he is the true Son of God. While Caesar ate with the ruling class, Jesus ate with the poor and the marginalized.

Jesus also healed the sick as we read in the gospel today. People “ran throughout that whole region and carried the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was.”⁵⁶ And wherever he went—into villages, towns or countryside—they placed the sick in the marketplaces” (Mark 6:55-56). Marketplaces were not only used for making business, but also a place for religious and political or philosophical discussion. As scholar Elizabeth Webb explains

By healing the sick, the weakest and most vulnerable members of a community, in this space, Jesus is subverting the economy of this world through the very inauguration of God's kingdom economy. While the marketplaces of the world belong to the rich and powerful, in the kingdom of God this most political and commercial of spaces are occupied by those with the least.^{iv}

Jesus sent his disciples to proclaim the Kingdom of God. They come back to report him their ministry. Jesus is inviting you, too, to proclaim the presence of the Kingdom of God on earth.

Jesus and his disciples lived in the Kingdom of God, and he is inviting us to live in his Kingdom by living our life as Jesus, and his disciples lived. Jesus healing is communal because from his perspective if one member suffers, all suffer together. Jesus invites us to heal the sick by making sure they have access to affordable health care, or by visiting them. Calling the sick or sending a get well card to them you proclaim the presence of the Kingdom of God on earth

Jesus also invites us to feed the hungry and to eat with them. By participating in community dinner and in bringing boxes of cereal to build the Tower of Love, you proclaim the presence of the Kingdom of God at ILC and to our community. Go to the narthex and gathering hall and look around you, and you will see that you are part of the kingdom of God. I would like to share with you a hymn that my eight-year-old niece Jezel shared with me. The hymn describes the Kingdom of God:

**A new world shines from your heart.
A new world is built by your love
A new world takes away our pain.
That is the Kingdom of Jesus, where there is no hatred, no whining, no pain
and no child lacks food.
Every soul breathes the melody of peace.**

**That is the abundant love where no wheat ends after the harvest.
Where no sun disappears behind the mountains
Where there is no silence, no borders, no country.**

ⁱ Crossan, John Dominic. *God and Empire: Jesus Against Rome, Then and Now* (p. 115). HarperCollins. Kindle Edition.

ⁱⁱ *Ibid.*, 116.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Ibid.*

^{iv} Elizabeth Webb, "Commentary on Mark 6: 30-34, 53-56," *Workingpreacher* (7/19/2015), accessed on July 20, 2018 https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=2540