

Reflection Sunday 24th January

Mark 1:14-20

¹⁴Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, ¹⁵and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news." ¹⁶As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. ¹⁷And Jesus said to them, "Follow me and I will make you fish for people." ¹⁸And immediately they left their nets and followed him. ¹⁹As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. ²⁰Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

First words are of importance. If not the exact words the tone of those words matter.

I remember when Margaret Thatcher entered No 10 she quoted St Francis of Assisi – perhaps the less said about that the better.

This is America's day.

This is democracy's day.

A day of history and hope.

Of renewal and resolve.

Through a crucible for the ages America has been tested anew and America has risen to the challenge. Today, we celebrate the triumph not of a candidate, but of a cause, the cause of democracy.

The will of the people has been heard and the will of the people has been heeded.

We have learned again that democracy is precious.

Democracy is fragile.

And at this hour, my friends, democracy has prevailed.

These words, of course, are from the start of Joe Biden's inauguration address, an address that set out a desire for a unification of the people and a declaration of being the President of all Americans. We know that however hard he seeks to do it there will be some who will refuse to be reconciled; their mind is made up and nothing will change their position.

I remember 34 years ago coming across a Peanuts Cartoon where Linus declares, "I am only dogmatic about things which are a matter of opinion." We have all come across such people.

The first words of Jesus we have recorded in Mark's Gospel are, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news." Jesus has a desire to be the Saviour of all people sadly some will not accept his offer and Lordship.

There, at the beginning of the ministry of Jesus, is the call to change ones mind and ones direction in life and believe Good News. Such Dogmatism as Linus spoke of has no place in God's Kingdom.

In God's Kingdom there is always a need to rethink our position as we discover more and more about God and experience God in life. If we still hold the same position on all issues in life as we had in our Sunday School days we are in problems as we would have learnt nothing from the experience of life or grown in our understanding of God.

Any follower of Jesus must be prepared to rethink regularly our position on many issues around and about us in the light of God's Kingdom being present. I did not say one must change ones position but to rethink it; that thought process may lead to a change of position.

Some people are described as "Pillars of the Church" – they do not move and they block the view. I prefer people who are the "backbone of the Church," for they are supportive, flexible and alive.

During these months of Covid Restrictions many have rethought that which is of importance for them and many are looking for a new focus in life. They are rethinking, repenting, may we be people who share with them Good News of God's Kingdom that their new direction will give them fulfilment and joy.