

# Lent Day 1 ~ Ash Wednesday

Wednesday February 10, 2016

## Reading: Mark 1:14-15

After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!"

## Reflection

This sets the tone, doesn't it? "After John was put in prison..." Then, "...believe the good news!" Talk about your PR nightmares! Why would Jesus and why would this evangelist frame it this way? If we are looking for converts and disciples shouldn't we put the best face on it as possible? Shouldn't we spin it so only sane people would join up? Death, both John's and Jesus', seem to lurk in these opening phrases.

Maybe that's the key. While the story doesn't end in death (it ends in resurrection) it moves through it — Death is unavoidable. And, of course, that is why our coming to Jesus, our discipleship is described as a death (Romans 6:1-14). To become a disciple is to die to ourselves — Death is unavoidable.

And, that's why Lent begins with the ashes of Ash Wednesday. We become a people marked out by death — for dust we are and to dust we shall return. As we have those ashes placed on our heads we are reminded that it also signifies our repentance. This is the middle term for Jesus, sandwiched between John's imprisonment and Jesus' good news — repentance. We are being prepared for the great event of the cross, of this new life — we must prepare to, once again, begin that journey toward the cross.

## Prayer

Lord and God, prepare us this Lenten season to embrace your cross and your salvation once again. Help us to be a marked out people and to be open to the work of your Spirit as we divest ourselves of the various lies which keep us from repenting and believing the good news!

Amen.