

How did we manage in a few short generations to leave Jesus' Good News behind and come out with statements like these—that, honestly, I've heard people say even today:

*“Eve was the embodiment of evil, and the prototype of all women: therefore women fell outside the redemptive power of Christ. “*

*“Women can only be redeemed through childbearing and their very existence is only for the sake of procreation.”*

Is anyone out there gasping? I was taught by an ethics professor in Seminary that if a couple didn't have children, they didn't have a “valid” marriage.

I burned all my notes from that class.

Negativity. Why are some people so intent on – in the name of Jesus—invalidating another person's life, their very existence? Negativity.

I can't stand it. I need some good news.

And I get it.

*“Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God and saying, “The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God has come near! Repent, and believe in the good news.”*

Proclaiming the good news! Believe in the good news!

What is this ‘good news’?

Remember—Jesus is saying this at the beginning of his ministry. SO—the good news he is preaching is not that he died for our sins. So what is this good news of God that Jesus is bringing the world?

Now there is a tiny footnote in the bible that says that that phrase “the good news of God” can also be translated: *“the good news of the kingdom..”*

So then, the whole passage might read: “

*“Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and saying, “The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God has come near! Repent, and believe in the kingdom!”*

I would say it seems clear that the good news is about the kingdom. It’s important, and it’s close-- nearby—later he will say it’s among us, within us. Because of this, Jesus says, we should repent: we should begin to see life—not in the way we’ve always seen it, and lived within it-- but from a new perspective.

That is not just good news—its amazing news! The kingdom is all around us – and we can be part of it.

Jesus then spends 3 years demonstrating for the disciples what this kingdom looks like.

I makes me wonder—what would have happened if that had been the focus in the followers of Christ for the last two millennia?

We could have dropped everything and followed Jesus by looking for, and building the kingdom. He told us what to do: there is no one we can’t love or pray for, there is nothing that God has made that is unclean, rules are helpful but being love in the world is our goal.

But what have we done since Jesus died? We’ve focused on gender stereotypes that kept the women out of power. We decided who is out and who was in—who is worthy of love, who is not. We let a ruling elite of patriarchs tell everyone what THEY thought we should do. They demeaned women made in the image of God, and forced everyone to pass litmus tests about how Christian they were.

You do know that I’m talking about the first century here—but how many people are hearing an echo of this even today?

It’s crazy. How did this happen?

Jesus' message was one of freedom.

Yet we spent the next 2 millennia winding ourselves up in nets of tiny rules and issues of theology that distract us from the good news of the kingdom.

Sometimes we don't even see the nets—because we've taught ourselves to look through them.

And what snags me may not snag you. And what snags you may not snag me. And these nets are nearly invisible to us until someone points them out, and helps us get unsnagged.

So we spent too much time discussing these nets.

We waste time arguing about things that probably matter less to God than to us--and we lose the opportunity to unravel the greatest mystery of all—discovering the kingdom of God without and within.

But Jesus is not deterred: his message of freedom is still calling to us. It's not too late to hear some good news.

*“The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God has come near! See the world from this different perspective, and believe in the kingdom!”*

Drop your nets, and follow me! Amen.