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JESUS TEMPTED BY SATAN,...AND THE ANGELS MINISTERED TO HIM.

Biblical Commentary by Father Alberto Maggi

Mark 1, 12-15

The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. And he was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered to him.

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel."

The first chapter of Mark's gospel, verse 14 presents the beginning of Jesus' works. We see there are two verses, but very rich and effective. The evangelist writes "*..after John was arrested,*" why was John the Baptist arrested? In chapter 6, Mark will tell why John the Baptist who denounced the king who had taken the legitimate wife of his brother as his wife, but there is another version that does not contrast it, but completes it. And we find it in the *Antichità Giudaiche* by Giuseppe Flavio, and it is very, very interesting. It helps us understand the motive, the reason for the killing of John the Baptist.

Giuseppe Flavio wrote that "When others crowded around him because with his sermons they had reached the highest degree....", Therefore the announcement of John the Baptist had reached all the ranks of society "...Herod became alarmed". John had announced a message of change and those that held power did not wish to change, it is the people that want change, the powerful no, why? "An eloquence that had such great effects on men could lead to some form of uprising because it seemed that they wanted to be guided by John in whatever they did." Here is the reason Giuseppe Flavio tells us "Herod therefore decided that it would have been much better to strike in advance and get rid of him before his activity led to an uprising, than to expect an uprising and find himself in such a difficult situation to regret it."

So, according to Giuseppe Flavio John the Baptist was assassinated by Herod, which does not exclude Mark's motivation, because John's popularity could change the society and this Herod did not want. But the evangelist tells us of the stupidity of power: every time in history the powerful suffocate or eliminate the voice of complaint, well God comes back even more powerful. And therefore Herod silenced the voice of John the Baptist but here comes the voice of Jesus much more powerful.

So, "*..after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee.*" Jesus was in Judea for the baptism, but this very holy region where Jerusalem was, the capital with the house of God in the temple, as holy as it was dangerous and murderous, it is a risky place for Jesus. So Jesus went north to this region of peasants and simple people, to Galilee and there begins his activity. He will then go to Judea only at the end to face the priestly and religious institution in Jerusalem and be killed there.

So, "*Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God,...*" The word *gospel*, a Greek word which means good news, seems to have been used in this case by the evangelist to indicate the message of Jesus. The evangelist had begun his book, by writing "*The beginning of the gospel*", meaning the beginning of the good news. "*...of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.*" (Mark 1,1) Here the evangelist writes "*... preaching the gospel of God,...*" First he wrote the gospel of Jesus Christ, now the gospel of God, in this way the evangelist wants to indicate Jesus and God. One cannot be separated from the other: God expresses himself, manifesting himself in his son, in Jesus. And what is this good news? We will discover it throughout the gospel. He is a God who is not good, but is exclusively good and above all, a universal love, a love that is not limited to a privileged people, a love that does not recognize those boundaries that nations, religions and morals bring: this will be the reason for contrasting the disciples, the family, the population and the authority.

So, Jesus begins proclaiming this good news "*...saying, "The time is fulfilled..."*" the time of the covenant between God and his people that unfortunately had not been fruitful because Israel had become a nation like any other, like the nation of gentiles with the aggravating circumstance that injustice perpetrated in the name of God. Jesus says "*..the kingdom of God is at hand;*" what is this "*..the kingdom of God*"? God did not want the monarchy for his people. After the dramatic experience of the monarchy with a king worse than the others, the monarchy had practically dissolved and in the people had arrived the expectation of a kingdom where God was the one who governed. Well this is Jesus' announcement: "*..the kingdom of God is at hand;*"

But how will God govern? God does not govern issuing laws that his subjects must obey, he governs communicating his Spirit, his own capacity of love, the welcoming of this love. The kingdom of God in the gospel is an alternative society, where rather than accumulating for oneself you divide with others, where rather than commanding one puts oneself to the service of others. "*..is at hand;*" why has it not arrived? Because it does not come from heaven, there is need of a change, and a collaboration on the behalf of mankind.

Here is why he says "*..repent,*" and the evangelist uses the verb that does not indicate a religious conversion or a return to God. With God there is no return, because God is here, but there is need to welcome him and with him and like him go towards others. So, he uses a verb that indicates a change of mentality that influences behaviour, therefore a change of life, repent "*.. and believe in the gospel.*" Here is the image of hope, the image of certainty, believe that you can make an alternative society, believe it to the end because this is the good news and the good news is God's answer to the desire for fullness of life that every person carries inside.