

Good News!

By: Meagan McLaughlin

December 6, 2020. What does the good news of Jesus mean for our world? Today's sermon is on the first chapter of Mark, and is an invitation to see God's creative, redemptive work in the world.

Readings: [Isaiah 40:1-11](#), [2 Peter 3:8-15a](#), [Mark 1: 1-8](#)

*** Transcript ***

We read today from the first chapter of Mark, and he tells us right off what his purpose is in writing. He is sharing the good news with everyone, the good news of Jesus Christ. And of course, as we worship today on this second Sunday in Advent in 2020, we're eager for good news — eager for Jesus to be with us, for the kingdom of God to be revealed in all of its fullness, for all that is broken in this world to be healed and redeemed.

So just imagine for a moment that you turn on the TV, or check in on your Facebook page or your Twitter feed, and instead of the latest news on election recounts and transitions, or COVID statistics, or crime reports, you see this first line from the Gospel of Mark: “The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God!” With all that's happening these days, we could all use a little good news, right? So amazed, you quickly do some fact checking, and you find this news — the good news of Jesus Christ — is being shared all over the place, on all the major networks. And although some of the details are still fuzzy, there is wide agreement on the important part: God has come to earth, in Jesus, and our whole world is about to change!

So still wondering what this is all about, you read some more of Mark's account, and you notice that he doesn't go straight to Jesus, but he takes a bit of a detour, giving us some backstory, telling us first of John the Baptist — the one preparing the way, crying out in the wilderness, calling for people to get ready for the coming of God.

It refers back to older stories, like Isaiah, that tell us about the need to make straight the highway, lift up the valley, lower the mountain, so the way of God will be made clear. So you show these reports to your family, and talk it over, and together you wonder why this would be necessary. After all, God made the mountains and the valleys, right? So isn't God capable of coming without us re-shaping God's creation?

So a bit further in, Mark's story says that John the Baptist was calling the *people* to change, and they were coming, from all over, to acknowledge how they as a people had lost their way. They left behind the distractions of their daily lives and their work, and they went to the wilderness so they could hear the good news better. They were called to leave, at least for a while, their alliances to the powers of this world, to acknowledge the ways they had contributed to systems that left people poor, and hungry, and pushed to the margins. John called them to come together, from everywhere, crossing all the lines that usually divided them into groups, or teams, or tribes.

So you talk this over some more, and you come to the conclusion that maybe this preparation, this time of getting ready, is not so much about making it easier for God to “get through,” as it is about helping *us* be more ready to notice and welcome and receive and share that good news that the prophets bring us today.

And as you read the article again, or listen to the reporter on TV reviewing what we know so far, you notice that John says all of this starts by naming and letting go of all the stuff that has gotten in the way, repenting and confessing our sin and brokenness, all those things that come between you and God, and you and God's people. It starts by remembering your humanity, and your baptism. It starts by remembering again the truth of who you are as God's kids.

So you set down your smart phone — or turn off the TV — and sit quietly for a bit trying to get your heads around what you've just heard. And then one of you asks the question you've all been trying to answer since you first heard the headline, the beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God: what now?

What distractions from your daily lives do you need to leave behind, so you can notice, and welcome, and receive, and share the good news of God's love in this world in Jesus Christ? Who are the voices you are hearing, who are crying out in the wilderness today, telling us that God is at work in this world here and now? What does that good news of Jesus mean for our world? How are you called to share this good news with the people around you?

Because Mark's message wasn't just for the people of his time, but for us too, in this broken world that we live in. The letter from Peter tells us that with God a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day — no matter how long we feel we've been waiting, no matter how late God seems to be, God's promises are sure, and we can trust that God is at work even when we can't see it.

John's call to the wilderness is an invitation to see God's creative, redemptive work in what might seem chaotic, confusing, wounded, and even desolate. That headline is echoing, 2000 years later: the Good News of Jesus Christ, Son of God. And it is only the beginning.

Thanks be to God.

*** Keywords ***

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