

St. Luke's Episcopal Church  
Lindale, Texas  
The Second Sunday of Advent  
December 10, 2017  
Mark 1:1-8  
The Reverend John P. Carr

## Good News!

God loves us and that is Good News, in fact it is great news! Mark began immediately after the martyrdom of his mentor Peter to commit to paper the eye witness account of the life, ministry and Good News of Jesus witnessed by Peter.

Try for a moment to put yourself in the place of God. Not in the sense of you being all powerful but from His perspective as the one over all creation, time and place. In the last round of creation that we in this century have become aware of, various lines of evidence point to a universe about 13.8 billion years old, and the age of the Earth about 4.54 billion years. To you though, as you view the universe from the perspective of God, that is a very short time because for God, time is relative.

The amazing thing is that God in His perspective has taken the time to love us as a part of His creation, as His people. We did nothing to earn this position in the universe but here we are by the grace of God. The absolute time does not matter, ***the love does.***

As God watches over us, we fail over and over, and yet what has happened? God is patient with us and sees us fail. He does not want us to fall out of love with Him. He gives us time and a way out of our predicament.

If we choose not to accept the love of God, all will be revealed at the end of time and there will be judgement and a sorting of those who believe from those who choose not to believe.

God is patient because He loves us. He has provided a way for us to get back up after we have fallen. When we have fallen short of our best and what God intended for us, all we have to do is get up, apologize, and return to the Lord. This is called repentance. It is admitting that you are headed the wrong way and turning around. God has lots of time and patience and wants everyone to find the way back to Him.

This solution of repentance is not a new one. God in His perfect wisdom provided a way of repentance with skin on. That is, He sent a messenger who was forecast to lead the way. John the Baptist was this person who fulfilled the prophecies of one who would come and preach repentance and to prepare the way for the One who was to come, the Messiah.

Mark begins his gospel with the proclamation of the Good News of Jesus Christ. This word “**Jesus**” is Greek for the Hebrew “**Joshua**” or the Aramaic “**Jeshua**” meaning “*Jehovah is salvation.*” Mark is telling us right up front that Jesus is to come to bring salvation to his people.

John has come to prepare the way, preaching repentance in preparation for the coming of the Messiah. He provides this means of preparation by repentance for the forgiveness of sins through baptism. His immersion of the people in the waters of the Jordan washes away their sins. As they go beneath the water their old self dies, and as they burst forth gasping in a new breath, they are a new creation like a new born baby. They are born again in the waters of baptism by confession and repentance.

When one is baptized something changes. In western Nigeria the Christians are called by a word that means, *“one who has received faith.”* But this faith comes with a price. They would say, *“We do not receive faith without it taking something away from us.”*<sup>1</sup>

What they left behind was their old life, their old self, their old sins when they were baptized as Christians.

But why be baptized? Why admit our mistakes and apologize? It is because we want to be ready. We don't want to be “dirty” and unprepared when we see Jesus. We want to be found “without spot or blemish” when we are found by Jesus.

This leads to a very important phrase in the reading from 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter today. He asks *“what sort of person ought **you** to be?”* Think about that for a moment. *“What sort of person ought you to be in leading a life of holiness and godliness?”*

John came to baptize with water but Jesus has come to baptize with the Holy Spirit. The kind of person you ought to be is one that is filled with the Holy Spirit.

We ought to be preparing through our lives for our meeting with Jesus. This expectation of our meeting with Jesus can be a great moral detergent.<sup>2</sup> We will want to cleanse ourselves and be as pure as we can be when we in one great moment will meet our Savior who will pick us up like a lost sheep and welcome us home.

God loves us. He has prepared a place for us. He is patient and wants us to join Him in eternity. It is up to us to return that love in our little human way

- by following Him,
- by living by His way,
- by following His rules that are meant to save us.

This is truly the Good News of Jesus Christ that He came to save us. Your moment to meet Jesus is billions of years in the making and then only a moment in time. It is up to you to be prepared for that meeting, and meet Him *“at peace, without spot or blemish”* and be enveloped in the love of God for all time.

Amen

1. Africa Bible Commentary Page 1554
2. Africa Bible Commentary Page 1554