

ADVENT 2
ISAIAH 40:1-11
2 PETER
MARK 1:1-8
DECEMBER 9, 10, 2017

YEAR B

Most times, as we gather for a worship service, we begin with confessing our sins and hearing words of forgiveness. We begin by making our confession to God so that we will remove any obstacle that would get in the way of hearing God's word and growing closer to God. Confession and forgiveness are important parts of our lives as God's people. We come from our daily grind to the warmth of this sanctuary. We make our confession realizing that we have sinned against God and against our neighbor. Maybe we sinned against our spouse, our children, our friends and coworkers. We repent of our past behaviors and thoughts and we come clean before God. We repent and seek to change our hearts and our ways. We also seek to mend our relationships.

Mark's gospel begins by telling us that this is the beginning of the Good News of Jesus Christ the Son of God. Mark tells of the beginning of good news. At the end of Mark's gospel, we discover that there is no ending to this good news. We, that have come to church today, heard words of good news as we heard about the forgiveness of our sins. We heard the words last week and the week before that. We will also hear the words next week and the week after that. The Good News of Jesus Christ, Son of God are words of life and peace. The good news is forgiveness of sins and it is restoring of relationships. This good news is repeated often and is real in our lives.

Mark 1:4 John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

In a couple of weeks, we will hear the familiar words spoken by the angels to shepherds. They will proclaim the message of good news that is for all people. Mark tells us about good news in another way. John the Baptist came out of the wilderness with a message of baptism for repentance and the forgiveness of sins.

In John, Mark tells us about what God has been doing through the history of God's people. We read in Isaiah 40 that God brought good news through the prophet. John comes out of the wilderness wearing interesting clothes with a diet most of us would not desire. John would remind the people of the prophet Elijah who was to precede the Messiah. Elijah was also dressed in funny clothes with a diet many of us would not enjoy. John came out of the wilderness with good news. John comes with a promise that was made through the prophets. It was a message of hope and of forgiveness.

The good news of God brings hope to those who find themselves on the edges of our world and on the outside of society. God's good news of grace announces God's presence and God's love that goes beyond the boundaries of where we thought God was supposed to be. Through John, God promises there is no place on earth God will not go or be for us.

Mark 1:7, 8 He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. ⁸I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

John proclaims that Jesus is more powerful than John. John is nothing when compared to Jesus. John is the baptizer and he is the one to announce the coming of the Lord yet he is one that needs to get out of the way for Jesus. Mark proclaims the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ who is the Son of God. Jesus is that good news that provides all that John talked about. He is the good news that brings the forgiveness of sins and new life.

You and I have many responsibilities in the church and we share our various gifts and talents so the body of Christ is enriched. There is no way we can outshine Jesus. We do what our Lord called us to and we do the best we can. As I said last week there are many in our congregation preparing services for this season of Advent. The bells have been working hard rehearsing as they are featured in our service. The choir has been working to present the cantata next

weekend. The name of our cantata is “Go Sing it on the Mountain” and shares the wonderful message of the birth of our Savior. The Sunday School has also been preparing for its service. I study each week so that I have a sermon and Bible studies each week. All of this is done to the glory of God. Each is done so that the church is lifted and God is served. We each do the work required so that the good news of Jesus Christ is proclaimed.

We practice and rehearse so that we give our best to the Lord. We get out of the way so that the Lord is seen and heard even as we do the ministry we are assigned to. We might be concerned that we will be embarrassed if we do not prepare ourselves for the programs we are presenting but it is more important that we give our best for the Lord. Each ministry has the task of preparing the way of the Lord and making his path straight. We prepare ourselves so that our mistakes and shortcomings do not distract from the message of the gospel.

During this season of preparation and anticipation we wait for the one that baptizes with the Holy Spirit. John’s message helps us remain grounded in the word of the prophets. He also assures us that there is one coming with more power and more authority. Jesus is the one we worship. He is the one we celebrate. Jesus is the one we look forward to as we anticipate Christmas and the second coming. John is not worthy to even be a slave but this does not matter. God calls us to be part of this anticipation and part of this hope. You and I are called to proclaim the message of the Good News. We are called to share the Good News in our lives and with the words we use. The Good News is that Jesus is coming and has come. Because he has come we have the assurance of life. Because Jesus has come and is coming we know that we have life throughout eternity. Because we are baptized with the Holy Spirit we can do the work the Lord sends us to do. We are also invited to hope in the Lord and to anticipate his coming. Jesus is Lord and we are God’s people. AMEN