

The Beginning

King of Glory Lutheran Church

Year B: Advent 2: Mark 1:1-8

In this Advent season, what is beginning? Who is to come? It is the in-breaking of God's Kingdom through the Son, Jesus Christ. God calls us to begin now, today, sharing, spreading, pushing, telling this fabulous Good News beginning all around us. This is not the end; it is only God's beginning.

Mark 1:1-8

¹The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

²As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,

“See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way;

³the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

‘Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight.’ ”

⁴John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. ⁶Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷He 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.”

It's beginning! Can you hear it? See it? Feel it? Today! Now! The beginning of the Good News of Jesus Christ.

That's how Mark begins his Gospel. Right to the point. Just the facts, ma'am. It's the way he writes. But those first couple of words....so important. Mark doesn't begin his Gospel like the others. We don't hear John's ethereal poetry, or Matthew's genealogy.

In the Greek, the only word is 'beginning.' Not even 'the'. 'The' is not there. Beginning. It's the start, the origin of all that is to come. Mark reminds us with utmost importance that Jesus' arrival is the beginning of the in-breaking of God's new kingdom.

We all know about beginnings. The excitement on the first day of school. Wearing his new shirt, he tugs at his mother's arm. “I wonder who my new teacher will be. I sure hope Joey is in my class!”

Remember how you felt when he called to ask you on that first date? There were nerves and butterflies and ‘oh my gosh, he’s at the front door!’ The start of something new and the beginning of what might come.

John the Baptist really wanted people to wake up and not miss what was about to happen. He knew how important Jesus would be to their future. But *Mark* sets the stage first. “The beginning of the Good News....”

We could use a little good news, especially right now! A mental health professional said recently, that we’re all a little depressed, whether we recognize it or not. Covid fatigue is wearing down our usual defenses. Loneliness and depression are staring in the windows, like thieves waiting for us to fall asleep. Christmas without relatives doesn’t sound like good news.

“So forgive me, John. But your message of repentance rings a bit hollow this year. Not that repentance isn’t important. But if you don’t mind, please step aside, so we can focus on the real deal. The One and only. Jesus, God incarnate to whom you are pointing us towards.”

Yes. As we prepare our hearts for Christmas, what does “the beginning” hold? Or rather, who holds the beginning? It was Mary of course, cradling God’s Son in her arms. Yet the arrival, the birth of Jesus was only the beginning. His ministry, his life, his death and resurrection – all of that was out ahead. Perhaps Mark wants us to see into that future even from the very first chapter!

You carried her out of the hospital. She is the first grandchild and your namesake. In those first days, you allowed your mind to lean ever slightly towards the years to come. Kindergarten. High school proms.

St. Mark asks us to do the same. “The beginning of the good News of Jesus.” As if to say, all that comes after is less important. Or perhaps more important? Certainly the Good News who Jesus was and what Jesus did doesn’t end with the resurrection. For don’t we today, as we confess each weekend, retell the Good News of Jesus? Jesus, the bearer of the very image of God. God who sat and ate with women and children. God who healed the leper and cast out the demons. God who cried at the death of His best friend.

At the outset of every meal, every healing, every fallen tear, the in-breaking of God’s new kingdom was appearing. Jesus shared good news of an ever-present,

ever-loving God with people who were also lonely and anxious. They needed a new beginning. So do we. God is not done with us yet.

Thus each weekend, we are strengthened by the Gospel message which comes from a living God into our beating hearts. We do not worship a Savior who lived without stress Himself. Jesus too, knew the moment when all his disciples deserted Him. 'Can't you stay awake one hour?' He knew the feeling of being lost and overwhelmed. Remember? 'My God, my God why have you forsaken me?'

This is Good News for us in this moment. His ending contains our beginning. In death there is life! In loss there is gain. Our Savior rules from the grave and the open tomb. Our God is a God of new beginnings. God is not done with us yet!

Having been strengthened ourselves, God calls us to take God's good news into a world that needs this new life and love. Remember what we say? "Go in peace, share the good news!" The worship has ended; the service begins to share this love with God's children.

That is where you and I come in. After Jesus died and rose the apostles took over. Peter and Paul. James. John. It continued on down through the centuries to you and me: Jane, Carolyn, Ken, Tom, Claire, Neoma, Joe. Mark pulls us into this story of the Good News of Jesus Christ precisely so we can share it. Shout it! Push it out as we participate in God's work of loving people.

All we need to do is start. Just begin. Call a friend. Zoom with family. Hug your kids. Buy a Christmas gift. Write a card. Offer a smile. Donate to a charity. Any action, large or small can set off a chain reaction, a ripple effect through which Almighty God works. We never can know what a simple action might start. It doesn't take much. We may just find how much better we feel if we can only share God's love.

Christmas isn't the end of God's love come to earth but rather only the onset.

At least that's what Mark says. Beginning the good news of Jesus Christ. The origins of that baby's tears in a crowded city between the bleats of goats and lowing cattle, only God knew what was to come. When Jesus died and rose again, that wasn't the end either. It was only thebeginning.

This Advent season, if you need some hope, just start! Start with Jesus. He's truly all we need. Amen.

*Credit for idea to David Lose In The Meantime