

Mark 1:1-8

The 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."

Mark 1:1-8, 2014

Some would say that the first verse of this passage is actually the title of this book;
 “The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.”

Makes sense to me first off because of the sentence structure,
 and because what Mark says here applies, not just to the passage we hear
 today,
 but the entirety of his gospel, the story of the beginning of the good
 news.

But, you may wonder, if this one verse applies to the entire book, how can it be the
beginning?

Mark tells the whole story of Jesus’ ministry, death and resurrection and
 isn’t that the end?

So this beginning holds some mystery for us to discover. If this book is only the
 beginning it may even hold a promise for some future we can anticipate.

Mark begins this whole thing with a reference back to the prophet Isaiah and the
 promise he shares with the people of Israel
 when all they had was hope for a better future, and that hope often was not
 enough to sustain them.

God says to Isaiah, Comfort, my people...speak tenderly to them...Israel’s prison
 term has been served.

Isaiah then becomes the voice crying out in the wilderness;
 “...prepare the way of the Lord who will...feed his flock like a
 shepherd...gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom,
 and gently lead the mother sheep”

In the words of Isaiah is God’s promise for a brighter future for the Lord is
 coming.

Isaiah’s job is to prepare the way, to prepare the people for the coming of
 God.

And so is the job of John the Baptist, and God will come like never before;
 in the flesh and blood of His Son Jesus of Nazareth.

So for us these eight verses from Mark's gospel hold the promise of God, and the call to prepare for His coming.

Just as Isaiah came to the people of Israel,

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

"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."

He isn't here yet, but He is coming, get ready, repent, be baptized, the good news is beginning.

But Mark doesn't leave us with just the promise and the call to preparation.

You remember I said that Mark's gospel is just the beginning?

Jesus life, death and resurrection are just the beginning.

That means that everything Mark tells us about Jesus—all the healing, preaching, teaching, exorcising,

and even His death and resurrection are the **beginning** of the good news.

There is still more to come.

You may remember at the end of Mark's gospel the angel comes and tells the women who come to the tomb to prepare Jesus' body that Jesus is raised from the dead, He is no longer there,

and commands them to go and share the good news with the disciples and Peter, Jesus will meet them in Galilee.

But the women run off, terrified and they tell no one.

This ending to Mark's gospel leaves a very open conclusion to the story and it seems unfinished.

How did we get from terrified women running from the empty tomb to where we are today?

This open ending of Mark's story of the beginning of the good news invites the women, the disciples, the Christian church throughout history,

us, the people of All Saints,

into the ongoing story of the good news of Jesus Christ in the world.

This good news is timeless, it has no bounds.

It isn't over, there is still more to come. God continues to write the story of the good news and you are a part of it;
 All Saints is a part of it.

The good news is about the presence of Jesus in the world and you are, we are a part of that.

The promise of a future lives on in your personal story and the stories of this congregation.

The good news lives on because it is still coming to God's people. It is still coming to those who don't know Jesus,
 and those who do, but have been so overwhelmed by life that their own faith is not enough.

Consider for just a moment the stressed out single mom or dad who experiences a Christian community gathering around them to help out with the kids,
 the household chores, the finances.

Consider the homeless, the hungry, the depressed, the sick, the dying, the survivors who experience the presence of Christ when a Christian community gathers around to love and embrace them with the love and grace of God.

The good news keeps on coming, God's good news story keeps on being written. You are characters in the story.

Less than 20 days now until the celebration of Jesus' birth on Christmas Day. We aren't there yet, but it is coming.

The message of Advent is waiting, but what kind of waiting do you want to do; are you called to do?

I believe that in your waiting you want to be a part of the story of the good news that is being written.

You have shown me that by the commitments you have made to our future here together, the future of our ministry.

You have committed yourselves to your role in the ongoing story of the good news

by committing yourselves to the ministry of God's church carried out from right here at 751 Dunlawton Ave.

Because of you the good news goes on. Because of you children and families of all ages will get to know Jesus.

Because of your commitment we will all grow in faith, lead others to faith, change the lives of people in our community and impact the world.

There is God's vision for mission to be carried out in our ministry.

This is the gospel alive and breathing in our community through your lives and the life of this community of faith.

This is the repentance John proclaims for the forgiveness of sins.

This is changing your life to focus on something besides yourself;
to love God and neighbor, and to continue to tell the story of Jesus in
your life.

This is still the beginning of the good news,
and will be for us all until the day when Jesus comes again.