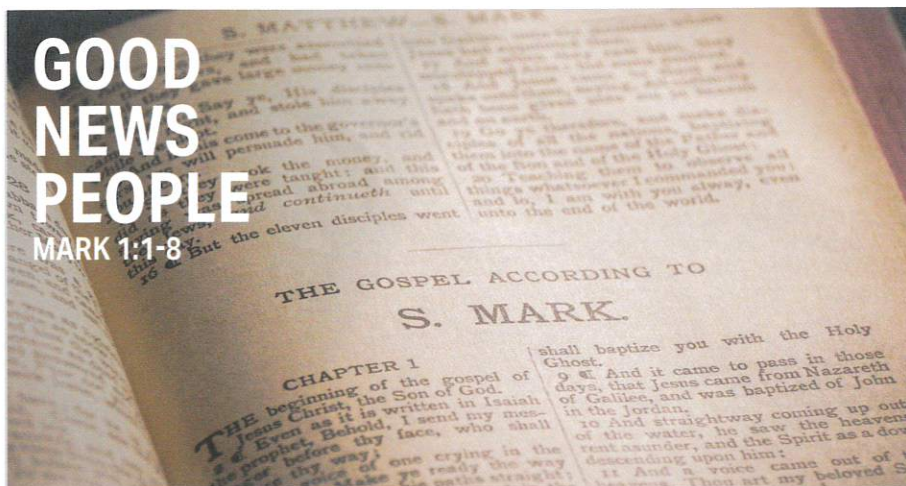


Sunday Message

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

THE WORD

Year B • 10 December 2023 • Psalter Week 2



GOOD NEWS PEOPLE

MARK 1:1-8

From the very beginning of his Gospel, Mark states clearly what it is about – “the good news about Jesus Christ, the Son of God” (Mark 1:1).

The opening verse of the Gospel served originally as a title for the entire book. We normally put a book’s title on its spine or cover. At the time Mark wrote his Gospel, books had two forms – the scroll and the codex. The codex was similar to our modern books in that the leaves or pages were sewn together and bound within a cover. Several short books might be gathered into a single codex. In such cases, it would be important to distinguish the various books by putting the title at the head of each one. The opening verse would probably have served as the title. This is a common technique found in the Old Testament and Mark uses it also.

The reason we gather today is because we believe the first verse of Mark’s Gospel to be true. We believe the Good News of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. That is why we gather to praise him, to receive him in the Eucharist, to anticipate his coming at Christmas and at the end of time, and to pledge to live like him. ■

DO

Think about the stories you tell, the gossip or items of news you share with loved ones and colleagues. Do they build up or knock down? Are they constructive or destructive? Try to be a good news practitioner.

SAY

“Lord, help me always to listen to your word and accept it as good news. Help me to draw closer to you. Amen.”

PRAY

Pray for those who do not hear the Gospel as good news or have rejected its message. Ask the Lord to touch their hearts this Advent season.

LEARN

Advent offers a welcome counterpoint to the bad news stories we encounter every day.

Christians know that all our hope has been fulfilled in Jesus.

The Christian is a prophetic voice in our world.

REFLECT

It’s fair to say there is no shortage of bad news stories around. The spike in inflation over the past two years has left many people in financial distress, struggling to pay energy bills and make ends meet. Brexit continues to have implications for the Good Friday Agreement and for the broader economy. War in Ukraine has created more refugees than at any time since the 1940s, not to mention the incalculable suffering it has visited on so many innocent people. Often it seems impossible to open a newspaper or listen to a news bulletin or access a news blog without feeling overwhelmed by the scale and volume of bad news stories. The advent of social media and of instant notifications on our smart devices makes it even harder to escape the constant deluge of breaking bad news.

So many advances have been made in technology and medicine and in human rights in recent decades, yet the human capacity for evil seems as strong as ever. Torture, terrorism, abuse, persecution, human trafficking, poverty, violence and

injustice remain endemic, part of the DNA of our broken human condition.

Aware of the impact of bad news stories on readers, *The New York Times* newspaper some years ago introduced a feature called ‘The Week in Good News.’ The weekly newsletter, it said, was intended to send the reader into the weekend with a smile, or at least a lighter heart. The news magazine *The Week* now also has a section called ‘Good News: Happy news stories today from around the world.’ It includes little items of good news that readers otherwise might have missed, little stories that act as a welcome counterpoint to the surfeit of bad news that fills the rest of its pages.

We Christians are called to take our lead from *The Week in Good News*, except that our good news is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Look at the very first words of today’s Gospel, which are the very first words of the Gospel of St Mark, which was the first of the four Gospels to be written. Mark announces that this is the beginning of the good news about Jesus Christ, the

Son of God. He wants to make it clear that the Gospel is good news for all who hear it, good news available to everyone.

Like the early Christians for whom Mark wrote, we are also Good News people. The reason we gather in church every week is because we believe the message of the Gospel to be true. We believe the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. We believe that no matter what bad news is out there, no matter how painful the human condition, no matter what difficulties or setbacks we have to deal with, God is with us, as God promised. All our hope has been fulfilled in Jesus. This is extraordinary good news when you think about it; the good news we celebrate every Advent season, the good news we are called to announce every day. God loves us; God is one with us, God will never abandon us; God cares for God’s people.

No better gift could we share in these troubled times than the joy and comfort we find in the good news of Christ Jesus our Lord. ■

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

O people of Zion, behold,
the Lord will come to save the nations,
and the Lord will make the glory of his voice
heard
in the joy of your heart.

COLLECT

Almighty and merciful God,
may no earthly undertaking hinder those
who set out in haste to meet your Son,
but may our learning of heavenly wisdom
gain us admittance to his company.
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the
Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

FIRST READING

Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11

A reading from the prophet Isaiah.
'Console my people, console them'
says your God.
'Speak to the heart of Jerusalem
and call to her
that her time of service is ended,
that her sin is atoned for,
that she has received from the hand of the Lord
double punishment for all her crimes.'
A voice cries, 'Prepare in the wilderness
a way for the Lord.
Make a straight highway for our God
across the desert.
Let every valley be filled in,
every mountain and hill be laid low.
Let every cliff become a plain,
and the ridges a valley;
then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed
and all mankind shall see it;
for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.'
Go up on a high mountain,
joyful messenger to Zion.
Shout with a loud voice,
joyful messenger to Jerusalem.
Shout without fear,
say to the towns of Judah,
'Here is your God.'
Here is the Lord coming with power,
his arm subduing all things to him.
The prize of his victory is with him,
his trophies all go before him.
He is like a shepherd feeding his flock,
gathering lambs in his arms,
holding them against his breast
and leading to their rest the mother ewes.
The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Palm 84:9-14

Response:
Let us see, O Lord, your mercy, and give us
your saving help.

1. I will hear what the Lord God has to say,
a voice that speaks of peace,
peace for his people.
His help is near for those who fear him
and his glory will dwell in our land. (R.)
2. Mercy and faithfulness have met;
justice and peace have embraced.
Faithfulness shall spring from the earth
and justice look down from heaven. (R.)
3. The Lord will make us prosper
and our earth shall yield its fruit.
Justice shall march before him
and peace shall follow his steps. (R.)

SECOND READING

2 Peter 3:8-14

A reading from the second letter of St. Peter.
There is one thing, my friends, that you must
never forget: that with the Lord, 'a day' can
mean a thousand years, and a thousand years
is like a day. The Lord is not being slow to carry
out his promises, as anybody else might be
called slow; but he is being patient with you all,
wanting nobody to be lost and everybody to
be brought to change his ways. The Day of the
Lord will come like a thief, and then with a roar
the sky will vanish, the elements will catch fire
and fall apart, the earth and all that it contains
will be burnt up.
Since everything is coming to an end like this,
you should be living holy and saintly lives while
you wait and long for the Day of God to come,
when the sky will dissolve in flames and the
elements melt in the heat. What we are waiting
for is what he promised: the new heavens and
new earth, the place where righteousness will
be at home. So then, my friends, while you are
waiting, do your best to live lives without spot or
stain so that he will find you at peace.
The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!
Prepare a way for the Lord,
make his paths straight,
and all mankind shall see the salvation of
God.
Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Mark 1:1-8

A reading from the holy Gospel according to
Mark.
The beginning of the Good News about Jesus
Christ, the Son of God. It is written in the book
of the prophet Isaiah:
Look, I am going to send my messenger
before you;
he will prepare your way.
A voice cries in the wilderness:
Prepare a way for the Lord, make his paths
straight.
and so it was that John the Baptist appeared
in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of
repentance for the forgiveness of sins. All
Judaea and all the people of Jerusalem made
their way to him, and as they were baptised by
him in the river Jordan they confessed their
sins. John wore a garment of camel-skin, and
he lived on locusts and wild honey. In the course
of his preaching he said, 'Someone is following
me, someone who is more powerful than I am,
and I am not fit to kneel down and undo the
strap of his sandals. I have baptised you with
water, but he will baptise you with the Holy
Spirit.'
The Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.
I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,

begotten, not made, consubstantial with
the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
(all bow during the next three lines)
and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the
Virgin Mary,
and became man.
For our sake he was crucified under
Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,
the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored
and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.
I believe in one, holy, catholic and
apostolic Church.
I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness
of sins
and I look forward to the resurrection of the
dead
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Be pleased, O Lord, with our humble prayers and
offerings,
and, since we have no merits to plead our cause,
come, we pray, to our rescue
with the protection of your mercy.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

Jerusalem, arise and stand upon the heights,
and behold the joy which comes to you from
God.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Replenished by the food of spiritual
nourishment,
we humbly beseech you, O Lord,
that, through our partaking in this mystery,
you may teach us to judge wisely the things of
earth
and hold firm to the things of heaven.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

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This is the time of year when we remember
that God sent his only son 'to serve, not to be
served'. He restored love and service to the
centre of our lives in the person of Jesus Christ.

Queen Elizabeth II