

Text: Mark 1:1-8

Title: "Who Is God's Light?"

Introduction: As we continue through the season of Advent, we are reminded to be in a time of preparation. Jesus has come the first time in the form of a baby, born to the Virgin Mary in Bethlehem, where Joseph's family was from, because of a census. We are taught that Jesus is coming again and that we need to be prepared. This Advent season is a reminder to be prepared for Jesus to come again.

Question: If you have company coming to your home, what do you do to get ready? What if it's really important company? Right; clean the house, prepare the food, clean the children and clothe them nicely, etc.

What will we do to get ready for the King of Kings and Lord of Lords to come?

What a great message we have to share with the people in our lives ... better days are coming! In this world, where hopelessness abounds, we have an opportunity to offer the unexpected. Don't you just love surprises ... I mean good surprises?!? Isn't it great when you can take a family member or a friend off guard with a surprise ... a positive surprise? I would love to have some people from this part of the state surprised this Christmas season as they get an opportunity to meet Jesus.

In this 2nd week of Advent we traditionally talk about John the Baptist. Now, John was a cousin of Jesus and just a few months older than the Messiah. They lived apart, but we're pretty sure they spent some time together while growing up. John knew Jesus as a kid and as a young adult. As a matter of fact, John probably knew Jesus better than anyone else did that was around when Jesus started His ministry around the age of 30.

As we get back into the Book of Mark, I invite you to take the insert out of your program. On one side you will see our Scripture for today and on the other you will see a brief outline with fill-in-the-blanks and some room for notes. My hope is that you will hear something today that will help you in your faith journey. If not, maybe if you write some things down today you will remember them when someone else is asking you questions about faith.

Now, in the Gospel of Mark (meaning Good News according to Mark) we have to understand again who Mark is writing to and his purpose. Mark's target audience is the Romans. Mark is writing to encourage the Romans who have become followers of Jesus Christ and those who are not followers of Jesus yet. Because Mark is writing to the Romans he seems to sense that it is important to keep the story moving. The Gospel of Mark is all about *action*. Mark uses words like "straightaway" and "immediately" over 40 times in these 16 chapters ... he keeps things moving. There is very little in the way of Jesus just standing and teaching. Mark's portrayal of Jesus is as a servant. In Mark 10:45 Jesus says, "*For even I, the Son of Man, came here not to be served, but to serve others, and give my life as a ransom for many.*" That sums up what Mark is trying to get across to the Romans in Judea.

With that said, let's get to our Scripture. This is the beginning of Mark's writing:

READ MARK 1:1-8 NOW AND PRAY!

What Mark wants to make sure is clear as he begins his writing for the Romans is that Jesus is the Son of God. So, he begins his work by bringing in three (3) witnesses who can vouch for who Jesus is... the first one is:

- I. The Author (v. 1)
 - A. Mark himself had probably experienced Jesus ministry 1st hand. He was most likely one of Jesus followers during his ministry in Galilee and around Jerusalem.
 1. Peter called Mark “my son”, so we have the idea that Peter probably led Mark to a faith in Jesus and was his mentor in ministry.
 2. Many believe that the young man in the Garden of Gethsemane who had his clothes ripped off and ran out of the area naked was Mark (Mark 14:51-52).
 3. We find in the Book of Acts that Mark lived with his mother in Jerusalem and they had many meetings held there for the believers. Regular house meetings. (Acts 12)
 - B. So, again, Mark was a witness to Who Jesus was. In Mark’s educated / experienced opinion, Jesus was who he said he was ... the Son of God!
 - C. The Good News is this: Jesus is God’s Son and he came into the world and died for our sins.
 1. It is Good News that our sins can be forgiven.
 2. It is Good News that we can belong to the Family of God.
 3. It is Good News that we can one day go live with God in heaven.
 4. It is Good News that we, through Jesus Christ, have victory over sin, death, and hell.
 - D. Then Mark brings in a couple more witnesses.
- II. Malachi and Isaiah (vs. 2-3)
 - A. Although Mark only cites Isaiah as he writes, two prophets are quoted here ... Isaiah and Malachi.
 1. At separate times both Isaiah and Malachi spoke of a messenger coming before the Messiah ... someone to help prepare the people.
 2. Isaiah spoke of this messenger around 800 years before Jesus arrived and Malachi wrote about it over 400 years before.
 3. Mark is making sure his audience of readers knows that prophets of God predicted much of what happened around Jesus’ life.
 4. If the happenings of Jesus time matched with what was predicted about the Messiah, Mark has built his argument that Jesus is who He said He was!
 - B. The words here ... “messenger (v.2)” and “voice (v.3)” are referring to John the Baptist ... John is the ‘prophet’ that God sent to prepare the way for His Son!

- C. The Roman people that Mark is writing to would recognize the references here about messengers and kings.
 1. In those days, before a king would visit any part of his kingdom, a messenger would be sent before him to make preparations.
 2. This messenger would help the people of that geographic area get prepared for company!
 3. The messenger was not only charged with making sure the roads were prepared and as smooth as possible for a safe ride for the king, but also prepare the people.
 4. John, in this Scripture, was preparing the people for the arrival of the Messiah!
- D. Which, of course, brings us to Mark's final witness to the fact the Jesus was and is the Son of God...

III. John the Baptist (vs. 4-8)

- A. Do you remember the story of Moses ... Hebrew people brought out of slavery in Egypt, disobedient to God because of their fear, and they spent 40 years in the wilderness outside their Promised Land? Finally, Joshua took them in...
- B. Many believe that is what John the Baptist is symbolizing out in the wilderness north west of the Dead Sea. John is saying that the people of Israel are again in the wilderness (spiritually); they need to repent of their sins and enter the Promised Land (renewed relationship with God through Jesus Christ).
- C. John is very careful here to make sure that the crowds of people from Jerusalem and all over Judea, who were making their way out to see him, knew that it was all about Jesus ... not him.
 1. John the Baptist = "I'm not the one ... Here He is!"
 2. John = "It's not about me!"
 3. They grew up together as cousins. They would have known each other in childhood.
 4. The one man that really knew Jesus at the beginning of His ministry was John.
 5. Jesus = John the Baptist was Elijah returned!
 6. John was the last Old Testament prophet ... the last to announce the coming of Jesus Christ and the New Covenant.
- D. John says, "I will baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."
 1. Holy Spirit = Spirit and Power of God ... love and wisdom and power and strength.
 2. Do you know why so many people come and worship with us and say things like, "I felt so at home", "I felt so comfortable", "I sensed God's presence", and/or "There is something about this place"? Because of the Spirit of God

- here. It's not me ... it's not the band ... it's not Dorothy ...
It's God's Spirit of Love and Power in this place!
3. The Holy Spirit is a gift, so all we have to do is ask for it.
 4. The only catch is that Jesus' expectation that you will be willing to do anything for the sake of the Kingdom of God.
 5. We are to be **TOTALLY COMMITTED!**
- E. We will be able to love the way God loves us. Willing to do whatever it takes, including the ability to love people unconditionally.
1. If this place is filled with the Holy Spirit of God, the people who walk into this place or come near you wherever you are will feel **LOVED!**
 2. They will be offered **HOPE!**
- F. We follow in John's footsteps. We also are to prepare the way for the **King!**
1. Will we make the roads smooth that lead to Jesus Christ?
 2. Will we do whatever it takes for one more person to come face-to-face with the transforming power of Jesus Christ?
 3. People need hope ... are we the voice crying out in their wilderness?

The **HOPE** we have to offer is only possible because God sent His Only Son (in the form of a baby in Bethlehem) so that whoever believed in Jesus as the Son of God, would have a right relationship with God and live eternally in God's heaven!

That's where the **HOPE** we have comes from ... Next week we will talk about what **HOPE** looks like ... but, our **HOPE** comes from Jesus being Who He says He is. Like Mark was attempting to prove—Jesus is the Son of God and has the power to make a difference in our lives here and for eternity.

My Hope is in Jesus Christ ... and so we remember what Jesus did for us to make this all possible. On that night in the Upper Room in Jerusalem, Jesus took the bread, broke it, thanked God and then passed it to His disciples (body) ... (cup)...

Let's Pray!