



Blessed Sacrament Parish
Homily by Father Chris Comerford
December 10, 2017 Second Sunday of Advent

Reading I Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11

Psalm 85:9-14

Reading II 2 Peter 3: 8-14

Gospel Mark 1:1-8

Homily

Last week we heard a chapter from the end of the Gospel of Mark, and today, the second Sunday of Advent, we hear the beginning chapter. Mark begins at a different spot than the other evangelists who talk about the infancy of Jesus. Mark starts with John the Baptist and his mission to bring the good news. We hear this: the beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ the Son of God. Gospel means good news. And so, that is what we are hearing and it is going to be good news that we hear tonight. We see that. Isaiah said that a prophet would come to prepare the way of the Lord and make straight the path in the desert. And we know as we heard the words of Isaiah in our first reading, "Comfort. Give comfort to my people. Speak tenderly. Cry out the good news. Make a highway for our God, a straight path."

Thus, John the Baptist would be the one to give this good news. What is John doing? He comes to the desert and proclaims a baptism for repentance of sins, different from our baptism. Our baptism invites us, welcomes us into that life with Christ. Yes, we are washed of our sins but it is more than that. But for John it was almost like confession, it was like a bath of cleansing.

It is interesting to look at the location of where John was doing these baptisms. It was at the Jordan River. When you are in the Holy Land there are several large hills and at the top of one of them is Jerusalem. If you go down one side of the hill you come to Jericho and right there, on the other side of Jericho is the Jordan River. So it is pretty close. John could have baptized in the city where there were more people but he chose to baptize at the Jordan River. Why? Crossing the Jordan River was the way the people of Israel entered the Promised Land when they traveled the exodus from Egypt to their freedom. And thus we see by John going to the other side of the Jordan River that the people could go in and come out again in a new exodus, a new beginning, a new movement to the Promised Land that will be brought about by Jesus, the Savior, the Messiah. And so people were coming in great numbers. It wasn't a short trip. it would be a short today driving in a car. But walking the distance is a long trip. But they came anyway to hear John the Baptist.

Now John was different from a lot of people. Can you imagine seeing someone clothed in camel's hair wearing a leather belt and eating locust and wild honey? Today we would probably lock up John the Baptist. That is probably what would happen. But he was that messenger of God, he was proclaiming this good news. He was saying, "There is coming someone mightier than me. I am not even worthy to loosen his sandals." That would be the job of the slave who would wash feet. That was the lowest of the low, the dirtiest job and it was for a slave to do. And John says, "I am not even worthy to be Jesus's slave. I baptize with water. He will baptize with the Holy Spirit. And we receive the Holy Spirit in our own baptism. John was making in clear that he was not the one. He was just leading the path to Jesus.

So it is good for us to look back and to hear this good news of the mission that Jesus was going to have. John wants us to hear that. John the Baptist was fulfilling what Isaiah said centuries before. "We are going to prepare for the Messiah." That is still good news for us today. We need to be prepared. We need to open our hearts. We need a time to make the path straight. If you are like me sometimes you get off the path, and that is usually not a good thing when you are off the path. I do like to play golf and if you get off the fairway it is not a good thing. You need to hit the ball and make it straight. It is that way we talk about the images of getting our lives straight the way that God is calling us to live. It is good to reflect upon them.

Am I listening to the words of John the Baptist? Am I preparing my heart once again to receive Jesus? Advent goes quickly, doesn't it. It is flying by when we have that time and opportunity to make straight the way of the Lord. Let's open our hearts, let's be thankful. Let's prepare for the coming of Jesus once again in a way he is calling us.

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