

Jesus is ready; Are you?

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Psalm 91: 1-12

Lay Minister

Mark 1:1-20

First Lutheran Church

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Lord, let the words of my lips and the meditation of my heart be pleasing to you, My Creator, Our Redeemer, The Sustainer. Amen

We just celebrated the birth of Christ a few days ago and now Jesus is already ready for action. The bible is really silent about Jesus's growing up years, with the exception of being accidentally left at the temple when he was a teenager.

In the text for today, we join Jesus in the book of Mark, when Jesus is about 30 years old. Mark was not a disciple. It is thought that his book was written from the viewpoint of the disciple Peter. Mark's gospel focused on Jesus as a servant leader. Mark does not mess around. He gets right to the point and hits the key moments of Jesus's life kind of like "cliff notes".



As is prophesized in Isaiah 40:3 "A voice cries out in the wilderness, prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God." Much of what the Jewish people knew about the Messiah comes from the book of Isaiah. For hundreds of years people read about the promised coming Lord. After Christ as born, few people knew the Messiah was

actually on the earth. But John, Jesus's cousin certainly knew Jesus was present. John also knew that Jesus was the Messiah and it was his job to prepare people for Christ's coming.

Some people thought John the Baptism was reminiscent of the prophet Elisha. But John had his own style. He dressed very differently and ate nothing like the prophet Elisha. John chose to live in poverty in the wilderness, maybe so others would not think he was the chosen one. There, John shared the good news of Christ's coming and was one of the lead characters in the New Testament. His job was not to tell of what had already been told in scripture, but to tell of the new promise of life that was in Christ, the word incarnate, God's son who was on earth.

Several years ago I presented a speech on the word "Kairos" to a group of graduating seniors.

kairos καιρός

(n.) the perfect, delicate, crucial moment;
the fleeting rightness of time and place
that creates the opportune atmosphere for
action, words, or movement; also, weather

I learned the Greek word at a JO volleyball tournament that I attended with my college roommate. Her daughter's team club name was called Kairos. Sitting there in the loud gym, I looked up the word printed on the back of the kids jerseys on my phone and from the meaning "the right or opportune time", I wrote my speech. I shared with the seniors that there is a time for everything and when opportunity presents itself one must act. I told them in order, to take advantage of the "Kairos" (right time to act), one must be aware, act courageously, use creativity, and have patience. This is the same Greek word that Jesus used in Mark 1:15 when he says "The **time** is fulfilled, the kingdom of God has come near; repent and believe in the good news." This verse is the key verse upon which many theologians believe the whole book of Mark can be hinged. Jesus knows it is time for him to get to work.

In order to start this work, Jesus goes to John to get baptized. In other gospels we learn that John was hesitant to baptize Jesus because he did not feel he was worthy enough, but Jesus teaches that baptism is not about the receiver or the sacrament giver's worthiness. It is about

what God is doing, not what we are doing. God is the one that makes us worthy.



As Lutherans we believe in infant baptism and we believe that only one baptismal ceremony is necessary for each person. This is because baptism is God's gift, drawing us into Christ's church and bestowing upon us the forgiveness of sins. Some churches and families choose to wait to baptize until a child is old enough to recognize what they are doing. This is not wrong, as there is no wrong time to be baptized. The gift is not one that we choose, because God is the one doing the choosing. Baptism is the start of our relationship with God. Peter Lombard said in the 12th century that this sacrament is a "visible form of an invisible grace."

Like the Weight Watchers theme used to say "it is a lifestyle not a diet plan." Baptism is a commission to turn our lives towards others and not just live for ourselves. As John the Baptist taught, baptism is not just cleaning oneself for service, but it also requires one to repent and turn away from past behavior or negative mindsets. The call to repentance is a call to baptism and the call to baptism is a call to repentance. One cannot have one without the other. The key is trust, because if we had to wait until we had enough faith to be baptized, one would likely never get there. Martin Luther said, "The Word makes the water valid." Baptism overcomes sin and each time that we confess our sins or witness a new baptism we are reaffirming our own baptism, as a "child of God, sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever."

After Jesus is publicly anointed "the heavens tore apart and the Spirit descended like a dove upon him." (Mark 1:10) This line is very similar to when Jesus died and the veil that separated

the people from God in the temple was torn apart.



The symbol of the dove is known to be the Holy Spirit. Like Jesus, it is alive and loose in the world. Justin Martyr is an early Christian apologist. He is one of the most renowned philosophers on the word of scripture. Justin states that the Holy Spirit that is also symbolized by a flame, started when Jesus was baptized and it is still burning today.

The Spirit is said to have drove Jesus into the desert/wilderness for 40 days. We know he is tempted there and we also know that he proved that he is God's true son, by not giving into temptation. Jesus is then ready to start his ministry and he immediately goes to work calling fisherman to follow him. These men leave their friends and family without hesitation. They either knew it was the "Kairos" time or they were filled with the Holy Spirit that drew them into Christ's church, calling them to forgive sins, and share the promise of eternal life.

Jesus's baptism is a sign for us that everyone needs this. It is not a promise for an easy life, or a rubber stamp for heaven, but it does promise that we will never walk alone. I had no idea four years ago when I spoke to those graduates that I would be learning to translate Greek and studying to be a pastor today. Life is all about living into the path that God has in store for us. "Prepare a pathway for the Lord" does not mean that we are the ones doing all the work. The Kairos "opportune time" is not so much our actions but God's acts in our lives.

Our work is God's work. That might mean we have to put down our plans, to live into the plans laid before us. But by making the Lord our refuge, we are laying our care into the Father's hands. And as Psalm 91 says the angels will "bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone."