

Matins, Feb. 18, 2018

John Peters

Gen. 9:8-17, Ps. 25: 1-10, 1Pet. 18-22, Mk. 1: 9-15.

Reflection: Jesus proclaimed the good news of God, "The kingdom of God is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent and believe in the good news." Hymn: Sing the Story, p. 39, Will you com and follow me.

Praise and thank you to you who have read the Scripture portions before you entered the sanctuary this morning. Praise and thank you for those who were here at 8:25 to sit in quietness for 5 minutes. This is our first Sunday of Lent.

This Sunday our focus is the Mark text: teachings of John's baptism of Jesus, some contrasts of ministry of these two men: in many ways similar, yet distinctly different,

John and Jesus were similar in age. Their parents knew one another. Undoubtedly all four parents really wondered about their sons through the teen years. They possibly had discussions. John was a strange man. He dressed and ate food in a peculiar way. Today we would likely say, he's a hippie. He was in the desert but not far from the habitat of people. A lot of people came out during the day to hear him. In hearing John, they associated him to Jewish prophets of the past. His message was clear and was strongly judgmental. With this message he would likely NOT have an audience today. He said, "You have sinned. You must REPENT. Show this by baptism." Interestingly, Scribes and Pharisees also left their synagogues, their villages, and wanted to hear him. More they wanted to be baptized. John drew a line and said "No". His message underscored justice. He could not be a nice guy to everyone. With a loud voice he hurled condemning statements, very close to an explication, on the scribes and Pharisees. This is our introduction to scribes and Pharisees in the NT. Later, these scholarly Torah leaders saw Jesus as crazy, as mentally deranged. They wanted him killed.

A man by the name of Jesus left his home, and joined the crowds and went out into this wilderness to hear John speak. At this point this Jew, Jesus, was not really known, was not a popular man. John appears to be the one who initiated Jesus, as an adult, to public ministry. When John and Jesus meet here as adults, John's energetic message of judgement takes a different tone. There is no judgement, but gentle humble words. "I am not worthy to stoop and untie his sandals. My baptism is water, his baptism will be the Holy Spirit!" A distinct contrast!

The man Jesus was baptized by John. But why? John baptized in recognition of one's sin. However Jesus had not sinned. Why was he baptized? Was it to show that Jesus identified FULLY as human! He was human and could sin. Here, the Spirit came upon him. An accurate translation from the Greek states the Spirit came **INTO** him. One commentary said, "It is scary. God is now lose in the world." At this very moment of baptism by immersion, the heavens are **TORN** open, were **ripped open**. Similarly, at the time of his resurrection the curtain in the Holy of Holies in the temple was **ripped** from top to bottom. It was as if the heavens now became open for humans. It is God who has torn all this open, and is speaking. This experience was like

a dove coming down, much like the dove bringing a leaf to Noah's folk in the ark, signaling that life and growth would again take place. There was a voice which Jesus heard, "You are my Son, the Beloved, with you I am well pleased." From Mark it appears only Jesus heard this voice. This is a call for the transformation of society, for the reign of God.

How do the messages, the lives of these two persons differ? Both had quite remarkable births. Both were male. Both were **true** prophets. Both were ministering at a time marked distinctly by God. John seems to have remained in the desert. Jesus spoke in villages, fields and synagogues. Both spoke of sin! Both insisted that Repentance was crucial. Jesus said **more**. It was, "believe the good news. The kingdom of God, the reign of God has come." This will be the age where justice is sought, where justice is found, and where we will at some future day see full and complete justice. We are called to be participants in this powerful movement. This is the call and challenge of the church. Jesus continually repeated this message of God's reign, of forever justice, and it led to his death, and then, we say with joy, his resurrection.

Months later, John voiced his doubts whether this Jesus was the Christ. Was this man, who John baptized in immense humility, truly the Christ, the Messiah? Jesus response was, "Look at what I do." God is so willing, so desirous to call us back again and again to God's magnificence and loving Self.

Mark has a mere three lines, telling us that Jesus was driven **by God** into the wilderness. Jesus was alone. Luke states that Jesus did not eat anything for 40 days. His first temptation of Satan was food- "let stones become food." Had Jesus not been tempted, it would not fully address his humanity. Had he fallen with these temptations, it would have denied his divinity. One is often led to believe that the weak Christian, the one who gives little attention to prayer, to Bible reading, to charity, or to church attendance, is the most susceptible to Satanic temptation. This is not confirmed in this text. The close proximity to God, God's warmth and joy, are but a breath away from severe temptation.

Jesus, the Christ shows us continuous mercy, and bids us as the church to speak and live the message of the reign of God. We close our service with words used frequently by a K W minister to his congregation at the close of the service, "You may be the only Good News someone will encounter this week." Are to speak and live the reign of God. This is our call.