

“The First Christmas Story Proclaimed”

Mark 1:1-8; Isaiah 40:1-8

Before any word was written down about Jesus, the Christ

Stories were told and proclaimed throughout the countryside.

The stories contained in the Gospel of Mark

were the first of those stories.

They were the first Christmas stories and yet...

There is no mention of a manger, shepherds,

Wisemen, or Bethlehem or a star.

Just... The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

In that simple phrase, God challenges the whole Roman Empire.

You see that was the way the herald would announce Caesar.

The Pax Romana was based on fear of the emperor

so when the herald would appear, the people would

brace themselves for bad news, from this one

who was anointed, and claimed as the son

of the previous Caesar to be divine.

So the language of Mark is the language of proclamation of a new king

And the inbreaking of a new kingdom,

The beginning of the Kingdom of God.

But what does it mean?

“The beginning of the gospel...”

The term “Gospel- euangelion” is found 9 times in Mark.

It means “proclamation” or “Good news”.

Jesus even uses the term in the first mention of his ministry in Mark

“Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying: ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent and believe in the good news.’”

So the good news, the gospel is that in Jesus Christ we are not

Mired helplessly and hopelessly in sin but rather we can change,

We can repent and be forgiven to live as kingdom people,

Brothers and sisters in Christ and children of God.

That is good news indeed!! Alleluia and Amen.

But it is good news only if we dare to proclaim it.

If we just quietly file it away in our own hearts then it

Is still good but it isn’t news, it isn’t proclaimed

And so the message of Christmas is to proclaim

That Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God!

Those words are so familiar to us as twentieth century Christians

That it is hard to imagine when Mark was proclaimed this was news!

Our resident reporter Bob Watson once told me that news is

Something that is different, surprising...it's new!

That's why they call it "news".

Well when Mark was being proclaimed, when the stories of Jesus

Were being told across the Judean countryside- it was news.

It was startling. It caught people's attention.

It was surprising someone would be called "the Christ" the anointed,

And even more surprising that someone would be called,

"The Son of God".

Today's scripture includes the story of John the Baptist and

The prelude to Jesus own baptism in which God says:

"You are my Son, the Beloved, with you I am well pleased".

Can you imagine being the first person to tell that story?

I imagine that you would have been laughed at or even

Ridiculed to repeating that story- it was blasphemy.

Maybe that's why the only ones to call Jesus, "the Son of God"

In the early part of Mark's gospel are the demons is 3:11 & 5:7

"What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the most high God."

It's not until Mark 8:27-29 when Jesus asks:

"Who do people say that I am?" and the disciples dance around

*Some say "John the Baptist and others Elijah and still others
One of the prophets" But who do you say that I am?*

Peter answered him,

"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God"

It took Peter 8 chapters to proclaim Jesus as the Christ.

It was radical news back then and it is still radical news today.

But it is good news and it is our challenge this Christmas.

How will we proclaim the Christmas story, the real story,

That Good news is here, we are not mired in sin,

Life is not hopeless but hope has been made real

In the person of Jesus Christ.

He is not only the anointed of God, the messenger of God,

But Jesus is the Son of God, the incarnation of God,

The reality of God coming into this world to save us

And to free us to live as kingdom people,

Sons and daughters of the living God.

We proclaimed it last Friday in our Living Windows display

With the live nativity and the spoken word over that nativity

And the sung word inside the church and the nativity

Scenes from around the world reminding us that

**This Good News is not just for our nation and our people
But for all nations and all peoples, as the nativity scenes
Displayed Jesus as African and South America and Asian
Because God sent his Son into the world that
The whole world might be saved.
And that the Good news might be proclaimed in every tongue.
That Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.**

“Comienzo del evangelio de Jesuschristo, el Hijo de Dios.”

«Commencement de l’Evangile de Jesus Christ de Dieu.»

« Arche tou euangleioui ‘Isou Xristou.»

**But you know we don’t have to learn other languages to proclaim
The Good news right here in our community.**

We just have to do it.

**We will be proclaiming the good news each week-
so just invite a friend to worship or to help at Salvation Army
or wrap presents for our Christmas Stars or to
go caroling with the youth to shut ins.**

**Whatever we do, let us not be silent, the frozen chosen who don’t
speak... because we have good news of great joy that Jesus is the
Christ the Son of God. Alleluia and Amen.**