

Homily. 2nd Sunday of Advent. Year.B. 5/6 December 2020.

St. Mark introduces his gospel by telling us that his story is a Good-News story for us and for our world. God has acted, he says, by giving Jesus the Christ, the Son of God to us. In doing so God honours all of God's promises and fulfils our hopes. St. Mark also says that Jesus came onto the scene and into public consciousness only after his relative John the Baptist had commenced his ministry as God's herald of forgiveness and hope. By going to John for Baptism at the River Jordan Jesus affirmed the importance of John's message even as He began to surpass it. Jesus never contradicted what John said, but better still He brought John's hopes and God's plan for a new and better world into being.

This new, better way and world is what Jesus, the gospel authors and we call 'the Kingdom of God'. God's Kingdom, the rule and reign of God in our hearts and lives, is the Good News. It's what Jesus practiced and preached; it's what He suffered, died and rose to bring to birth, and it's what you and I try, with God's help, to live and promote day after day.

However, in Mark's usual 'no bones about it' style, he tells us from the outset that we're up against some opposition and that this opposition is very real, as real as our own selfishness and human frailty. John offered a way of renewal based on forgiveness after the confession of sins and a water re-birth in the river. Moving forwards, John says that Jesus is the more powerful One because He gifts us with His own inner Spirit and the very life of God's self which we call grace.

Our daily living in the Lord's Spirit and grace is what makes us His followers. On the other hand our seduction by selfishness and the values of ease and comfort are our all too common falls into falsehood, for only the pattern of living and the way of Jesus can free us to be who we really are, God's sons and daughters today. If we want the sort of lasting comfort and deep healing heralded by Isaiah then we have to heed the Prophet's message. This boils down to flattening out those false values and attitudes and straightening out the sort of thinking that deforms our behaviour setting us on the course that leads us from grace to sin.

God's Word proclaims that the Good-News is here, it's now and it's free for our taking. It reminds us that the living of the Good-News means co-operating with the Lord's grace in our lives, listening to and trying to live in the light of His Holy Spirit. Waking up and rousing ourselves once again to this positive and happy message of truth and hope and the renewal it offers is what this Advent Season is all about.

But there's more! The gospel invites us to become God's heralds and prophets today, God's Good-News made flesh again in us. For the truth of the matter is, as it was for John and for Jesus in their time, that we are the only Good-News which most people will ever get to see, hear and encounter. By what we say and do and by how we live we prophesy and proclaim in the Spirit that God has come amongst us and that God is to be trusted. There is simply no message needed more than this right now and no higher calling than this for us to live and give to others.