

The Forerunner

The gospel for this coming Sunday (Second Sunday in Advent) is Mark 1:1-8. This text is the account of the emergence of John the Baptist's ministry in the wilderness around the Jordan River.

This text describes one of the messengers who prepared the way for the mission, ministry, and message of Jesus Christ, John the Baptist. Indirect references also point back to Isaiah and Malachi. Mark prepares us for the coming of Jesus Christ so that we in turn might prepare the way for others through the proclamation of the gospel.

Prophets and their activity are frequently set in the wilderness (e.g., Elijah; 1 Kings 19:4-8). Here, it probably refers to where the Jordan River empties into the Dead Sea. (TLSB)

The evangelist Mark offers the comic-book version of the Good News of Jesus, not in the sense of a humorous or silly fantasy, but in moving quickly from one frame to the next. Action and expectancy characterize Mark. Narrative and teaching are left to a minimum.

Everything about John causes his hearers to be attracted to him. His message, his attitude, clothing, and diet all cause the crowds (and us, for that matter) to wonder what he is all about. But just as the chartreuse and hot pink billboard ad gets your attention for the product it promotes, John is a man designed to bring attention, not to himself, but to the Christ.

The penitential character of Advent is evident in this text, as John preaches "a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins" (1:4).

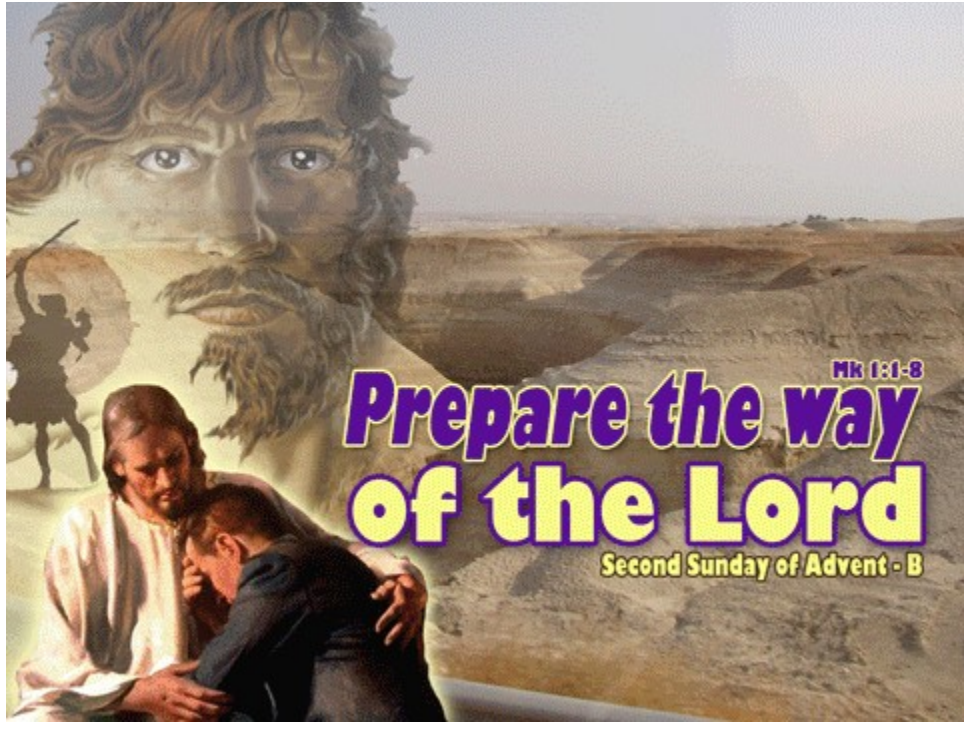
The good news which Mark and the other Gospel writers report centers in Jesus of Nazareth. Mark calls him Jesus Christ the Son of God.

Before a king made a journey to a distant country, the roads he would travel were improved. Similarly, preparation for the Messiah was made in a moral and spiritual way by way the ministry of John, which focused on repentance and forgiveness of sin and the need for a Savior.

John's message was not simply the hammering blows of the Law, calling sinners to confess their sins. He was a preacher of the Gospel of the forgiveness of sins, offered by his Baptism, which pointed forward to the "one more powerful than I."

John warns us not to adopt worldly values and expectations. Happily, all of us who are baptized have received the promised Holy Spirit, who continually forgives us, restores us, and focuses us on the splendor of Jesus' second coming.

Prayer: Lord, remind us of the washing we received in Baptism, for through it Your Holy Spirit was poured into our hearts. Keep us steadfast in the hope of Your glory. Amen. (TLSB)



Mk 1:1-8
**Prepare the way
of the Lord**

Second Sunday of Advent - B