

“The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.”
Saint Mark 1.1

Dear Friends,

December is upon us. Advent is upon us. And it is time to “Mark” your calendars for a new year – for this year (which we call year “B”) we will be hearing the story of Jesus of Nazareth from the Gospel of Mark.

Mark’s gospel is universally thought to be the earliest of the four gospels. His is the shortest. His style is also the rawest and most unrefined. Mark’s sentences are brief. They are filled with action. They go so quickly that there is hardly a moment to stop and reflect on the “why” of what is going on – it is simply going! In fact, you will find sentence after sentence starting with the word “And” (which my English teachers would have immediately marked with a big fat red pen). The verses begin that way for a reason: it gives the reader the feeling that he or she has come upon the life and ministry of Jesus *just as it is happening, in the very moment*. The gospel of Mark leaves the reader without time to take a breath; one simply must charge forward with Jesus and his disciples, whatever might come. As famed newscaster Walter Cronkite would have said, “You are there!”.

I like that. I think it speaks to us in this present moment. Because sometimes we also feel like we are caught in the middle of an “*and*” moment. Because the speed of which our days go by seems to speed up, moment by moment. Thanksgiving is gone, the Bazaar is upon us, and then – Watch out! Christmas will be here before you know it! I like the pace of Mark’s gospel because sometimes there just isn’t time to stop and reflect on what is going on around us; it simply *is*. And as Christians, it is the reminder that we are called to Action. We are called to Engage. We are called to *be* the light of Christ – and often we don’t have the luxury of sitting down and making a plan – we simply must go forward, too.

You might wonder what there is about any of this that is remotely comforting. What about it makes one feel safe or secure. Here is the thing: Mark lays it out for us from the very beginning: we can act, we can move forward, because the truth about Jesus Christ is that he brings good news. It is all good. “*The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God*” is how Mark begins the story, and as we follow all the ups and downs – and may wonder just where this Jesus is going – we can rest assured that it is all good news.

The same is true for you. And for me. And for your family. And mine. And for Christ Church. And for the Diocese. And for our nation. And even for the world. How can I possibly say that? I am no prophet. I am not even particularly good at predicting what will happen tomorrow. But I do know Jesus. I do know something of the promises of God. I do believe it when Mark tells us it will be good (even if there is a crucifixion along the way). It will be good.

And that gives me the assurance, the grace, and the faith to get up each day expecting the very best. I hope it gives you that assurance, grace, and faith as well. We are entering the Season of Advent – the time when we affirm that foundational truth of Christianity – that Christ is coming. He makes himself present to us. In other words? “*This is still the beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God*” and this time? We are part of it too.

May this Season of Advent be a time for you to connect with the Christ who was and is and is to come. May you experience the same sense of urgency that so overcame the disciples that Mark could hardly keep up with them. And may the promise of the gospel of the Christ who came to be with us and live with us, propel you into full throttle, proclaiming the good news to all you meet.

Peace,
Mother Lisa+