

How Will You Remember? Mark 1: 4-11

As we spend some time together in Mark's Gospel in the coming months I pray that we will recognize one of the unique characteristics of Mark's Gospel- its underlying theme of action and urgency. Like the other Gospel writers, Mark tells a story, in fact the greatest story ever told. It is not some made up tale but a truthful and factual account of a man from Galilee; His name is Jesus, the Son of God, whom God sent into the world to save people from their sins. Though all four Gospels are in perfect harmony with each other the writers tell the story from a different perspective and with a different purpose in mind. Mark's Gospel emphasizes the action elements of the story and writes in such a way to have the reader recognize that when Jesus Christ is in the mix things can happen rather quickly.

That is an exciting thing, especially in light of the fact that when it comes to the life of the church things often move very slowly. For some of us slow is good, for it means that we do not have to embrace change right away. For example it can be better for us to have a loved one slowly die over a period of months rather than have them pass from our midst unexpectedly. If that happens we will have an opportunity to make things right with each other and prepare to say goodbye as we continue to hope for doctors to come up with a miracle cure.

And in some ways slow is bad, for it means that we do not have to embrace change right away. It reminds me of the old story about the frog who was put into a pot of cold water on a stove. A slow fire was lit on the burner and because the water heated so gradually the poor frog never realized it would soon be boiled to death.

Slow is good, especially when it comes to the grace and mercy of God. The Scripture reminds us that God is patient, desiring no one to perish. But slow is bad when we become so complacent and comfortable in our surroundings that we fail to recognize what is happening outside of our own little worlds and we make no effort to adapt and change and remain relevant.

When things are moving too slowly we tend to take them for granted yet moving too quickly can result in irrational and unwise decisions. It is not an easy thing for us to find the right balance. Thankfully it is not that way with the God we serve and love.

Our God is both a God of action and a God with impeccable timing. When God spoke the world into existence it was both immediate and at the perfect time. When God said let there be light there was light. When God separated the light from the darkness it was both immediate-you can't be in the light and the darkness at once- and with perfect timing. It is so perfect mathematicians can tell us exactly what time the sun will rise and set on any given date in the future. When God was done creating the world and everything in it and said it was time to rest it was both immediate and with perfect timing. When God fashioned man from the dust of the earth and breathed life into him it happened immediately and at the perfect time. When God chose the perfect moment to send His Son into the world to save sinners like us Mary was immediately found with child. Jesus didn't die on the cross until His Father's plan for the redemption of humanity was complete. It wasn't until his last words were uttered-"it is finished" that it was finished. Our God is a God of action with impeccable timing.

Did you notice the action and the perfect timing of God when Jesus was baptized in the river Jordan? The heavens parted at the perfect time-just as Jesus coming up out of the water- and immediately God told us who this man named Jesus is. **"You are my Son, whom I dearly love; in you I find happiness."**

It seems that God was not passively watching on the sidelines but actively involved as John the Baptist led Jesus into the water. As I said earlier our God, the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob, the God of the Bible, is a God of action. He didn't set the world in place and then turn His back on it and leave it to its final end. Though there are times it may not seem like it the truth is that God is intricately involved with His creation and with His created-in other words you and I. I suggest to you God was involved with our own baptism as well as that of His Son Jesus. God did His part immediately and with perfect timing. Whether we are a minute old or a century old when it comes to baptism God's action and timing are perfect.

Our Baptismal Covenant reminds us that through the sacrament of Baptism three actions take place. We are initiated into Christ's Holy church, we are incorporated into God's mighty acts of salvation and we are given new birth through water and the Spirit. Like a child in the womb we once had eyes but couldn't see. We once had ears but couldn't hear. But when we left the darkness of the womb the light of the world entered our eyes and all of a sudden life was something completely new and different. What we choose to do with this new beginning, this new lease on life, is up to us. The problem is not with God's timing but with our own. Though God's grace is imparted immediately it might take years for us to remember our baptism and recognize that Jesus is the only remedy for our sinful ways and truly confess to be born again. Sadly, in spite of God's grace and the efforts of the church to proclaim the truth of the Gospel some choose to forget.

So in the meantime we press on and continue to give God thanks for His mighty acts of salvation present in Baptism and Holy Communion and asking for the guidance and presence of the Holy Spirit as we do so.

Whether we are young or old it is never too late to remember or discover for the very first time why we all are in need of a Savior. I pray that we will all remember our baptisms, that moment when God separated us from the darkness. I pray that we will allow God to teach us how to live as children of Light, sanctify us and make us holy and prepare us for eternity. Amen.