

Never Forget!
Mark 1: 4-11

As we spend some time together in Mark's Gospel in the coming months, we will quickly recognize an underlying theme of action and urgency. Indeed, Mark uses the word immediately at least 35 times as he faithfully and accurately records the story of Jesus. Much like Matthew, Luke and John, Mark's gospel is Biblical truth, good news, a true to life biography of a divine man from Galilee whose name is Jesus. He is the only begotten Son of God, the One whom God sent into the world to save people from their sins. All four Gospels are in perfect harmony with each other, yet each of the writers tells 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 our **God is a God of action with impeccable timing.**

That is an exciting thing, especially because when it comes to life and the life of the church, things often move very slowly. As we saw a few weeks ago, the need to hurry up and wait is a big part of God's eternal purposes. For some of us that is a good and necessary thing, for it gives us time to embrace and adapt to change. However, in some ways slow is also bad, for it means that we do not have to embrace change right away. The manana attitude can prevail, the idea that whatever it is it can just wait until tomorrow. The fact is that some things won't wait. An unexpected death of a loved one is often cause for crisis and regret as change comes immediately rather than over time.

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. 2 Peter 3:9 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 or change. When things are moving too slowly, we tend to take things 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 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 was born at exactly the right time, and ultimately He died at exactly the right time. He 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.

We find that to be true in Mark's account of the baptism of Jesus. Look at verse 10. The very second Jesus came up from the waters of the river Jordan, the heavens were torn open. **Baptism is no small event!** The moment the prophet Isaiah yearned for had finally come. Isaiah 64:1 The heavens parted at the perfect time-just as Jesus coming up out of the water- and immediately God revealed to the world who this Jesus is. **"You are my beloved Son, with you I am well pleased."** Psalm 2:7

God was not sitting passively on the sidelines waiting for the next baptism to begin. He was intricately and actively involved, even as John the Baptist led Jesus into the water. Our God, the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob, the God of the Bible, the God of the Old Testament and the New, is a God of action and a God of order. That means He didn't set the world in place and then turn His back on it

and leave it spin out of control to its final end. Though there are times when it may not seem like it, the truth is that **God is always intricately involved with His creation and with His created.** As we saw last week, God continues to make Himself known to us.

On this first Sunday of the new year in which we pause to remember Jesus' baptism, I suggest to you that the baptism of Jesus was not the only baptism God was involved in. He was there when we were baptized as well. God is a God of action and impeccable timing, and in baptism we become united in Christ's death in repentance of our sins; we are raised to new life in Him through the power of the resurrection; we are incorporated into the Body of Christ, the church; and we become empowered through the work of the Holy Spirit to go on to perfection. The heavens may not have been torn open, but our baptism was no insignificant event. It was no accident. Our God is a God of action with impeccable timing, particularly when it comes to matters of life and death.

When it comes to baptism, the problem is not with God's timing but with our own. Though God's grace came immediately it can 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. What we choose to do with this new beginning, this new lease on life, is up to us. 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 immediately life became something completely new and different.

Through our baptism, we press on and continue to give God thanks for His mighty acts of salvation and ask for the guidance and power of His Holy Spirit as we do so. 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 remember our baptism, that moment when God acted to separate us from the darkness. I pray that we will allow God to teach us how to live as children of Light, sanctify us and prepare us for eternity. Amen.