

Second Sunday of Advent, 6 December 2020

Scriptures: Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11; 2 Peter 3:8-14; Mark 1:1-8

Homily: Fr. Ken

From the very start of Mark's Gospel, we are left in no doubt about the mission of Jesus and his disciples.

Mark paints a vivid picture of an imperfect world into which a prophet, eating grasshoppers and honey, and dressed only in animal skins, suddenly emerges on the world's scene to announce a coming change.

The people flock to see John the Baptist because they know that the world needs to change. John clearly understands this struggle, but he acknowledges that it is not the dynamic change that he can accomplish himself.

John knows full well that his role is to be the messenger who announces to the world the coming of one much greater than himself, one who is strong enough to tackle the world and its power head-on. That person is Jesus, and it is he who will change the world forever.

Not only is Jesus stronger than John, but he also brings a more powerful baptism. Jesus will baptize his disciples with the Holy Spirit, so that they will be equipped to bring about the peace and justice for which humanity has waited so long.

It is noteworthy that none of the traditional elements of the Christmas story have their origins in Mark's Gospel. There are no angels, shepherds, or kings. There is no mention of a star in the sky, Mary and Joseph, or even the baby Jesus. For Mark, the real issue is the radical breakthrough to the new world of the Good News, which Jesus would later describe as the kingdom of God. Mark makes it clear that Jesus is the Messiah and the Son of God.

People are drawn to John the Baptist from far and wide to hear this momentous news.

John the Baptist, the cousin of Jesus, lived what he preached. By his lifestyle, his attire, and his eating preferences, he showed that the meaning of life is not to be found in the abundance of material possessions, but rather in relationship with God.

Simplicity of life and detachment from unnecessary cares and worries about social life free the heart for a personal relationship with God.

In this season of Advent, we are invited to reflect on our lives and to seek forgiveness of our sins, in preparation for the one who is to come.

It is an opportunity to rediscover our hope and trust in God, and to let go of false hopes and false securities. It is a time for each of us to re-visit our life: our plans, our relationships, and our priorities.

Everything that follows from the opening sentence of today's Gospel—the whole adventure of Jesus among us—marks a new beginning, the beginning of the Good News. Let us reflect upon some new beginnings for ourselves. Consider projects and opportunities that permit us to evaluate our priorities and renew our Christian commitment and what it means for us in the actions of our daily lives.

As today's Gospel shows us, the historical coming of Jesus enjoyed a time of preparation. We too are given this time of preparation in the lead-up to Christmas. Celebrating Advent fully can help us to use this time well for repentance and renewal.