



ADVENT 2B - ONLINE LITURGY

What happens in the wilderness ...

Abstract

- 1 The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God, 2 as it is written in Isaiah the prophet:
"I will send my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way" —
3 "a voice of one calling in the wilderness,
'Prepare the way for the Lord,
make straight paths for him.'"
Mark 1:1-3

Jim de Jong
jim@dejongs.id.au

Advent 2B - Online liturgy

What happens in the wilderness ...

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2020 | ADVENT | SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT | YEAR B

Old Testament Isaiah 40:1–11
 Psalm Psalm 85:1–2, 8–13
 New Testament 2 Peter 3:8–15a
 Gospel Mark 1:1–8ⁱ

Mark 1.1-8

Mark introduces his story of the life of Jesus as ‘good news’. But before getting to the content of that good news, he presents John, a messenger sent to prepare the way, who baptizes people in the wilderness.

This week's resources explore: how Mark introduces the good news of Jesus.ⁱⁱ

	<p>Pre-Service https://youtu.be/8iDuZv_5MQk</p>
	<p>Greeting</p> <p>May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ The Love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all</p>
	<p>We Gather</p> <p>God, you called and prepared your people through John, a strange man in a strange place. May we, sometimes strange, sometimes not, all gather to worship you, O God, who calls all kinds of people to gather together, turning towards the eternal Word that does not fade, that welcomes all, making strangers friends for ever</p> <p><i>Let us Pray</i> People went to deserted places to hear what was most important. Gathered here today, we light a second candle as a symbol of our pilgrimage towards the things that will last for ever: righteousness, loving-kindness, peace and an eternal home in you, O God, who calls all things towards the fullness of life.</p>

	Amen
	Hymn/song SIS 587/SCE 349/SOF/P&W 449 Make way Kendrick
	Welcome <i>Let us Pray</i> We have heard your call, coming from strange places. We have received your gift, calling us into unexpected connections. We have been nurtured by your invitation, making friendships along the way. We approach you now with humble hearts and expectation, knowing you welcome all – stranger and friend. Amen.
	Readings <i>Mark 1:1–8</i> 1 The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God, ² as it is written in Isaiah the prophet: “I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way” — ³ “a voice of one calling in the wilderness, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.’ ” ⁴ And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵ The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. ⁶ John wore clothing made of camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷ And this was his message: “After me comes the one more powerful than I, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. ⁸ I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.” ⁱⁱⁱ <i>respond</i> For the word of the Lord Thanks be to God
	Hymn/song/video Vineyard/SCE 436/P&W 657/SOF 475 Refiner's fire [Purify my heart] Doerksen
	We say Sorry We have looked at the rough,

	<p>and judged it for not being smooth. We have looked at the valley, and thought it could not be raised. We have observed the mountain, believing it would be unscalable, and in so doing, we have become complacent.</p> <p>Forgive us, God, for our complacency and our judgements. Make us see with the eyes of a pilgrim, knowing that you who have called us on this way, will make a pathway before us. Amen.</p>
	<p>Hymn/Song</p> <p>TIS 690/SCE 37CH 259/various Beauty for brokenness (God of the poor) Kendrick</p>
	<p>Response</p> <p>Most of us are familiar with Mahatma Gandhi (the great spiritual leader of India). As you know, he walked barefoot most of the time, which, I am told, produced an impressive set of calluses on his feet. He also ate very little, which made him rather frail and with his odd diet, he suffered from bad breath. You realize what this made him?</p> <p>A super callused fragile mystic plagued with halitosis.</p> <p>Sorry about that. I guess it is hard being a person of faith. When you take your faith seriously, people look at you funny. They treat you differently. You're not always part of the gang. His name was John.</p> <p>People knew him locally as the Baptist. Some would say of him that he was a religious eccentric. Others less kind would dismiss him as being simply a flake. He didn't seem to be the kind of "How to win friends and influence people" type of bloke to usher in the news of the Messiah's coming. He just somehow doesn't seem to fit in with shepherds and wise men and the other characters that we traditionally associate with the Christmas story.</p> <p>Yet, this was God's unlikely servant chosen to herald the spectacular events that would soon follow. A most unlikely PR man to be sure, but God's man, nevertheless.</p>

John was unique.

His mother Elizabeth was related to Mary, the mother of Jesus.
Elizabeth conceived six months before Mary.
Mary was a young girl, indeed almost a child.

Elizabeth, on the other hand,
was a woman who was in the golden years of her life.
She had never given birth to a child.
Yet, she and her aging priest of a husband were the unlikely candidates.

And then there was John himself.
Being the same age as Jesus they grow up together,
played together,
yet as they reached adulthood, they were different in so many ways.

When John began his ministry, he lived in the desert solitude of Judea,
a rugged desert wilderness.
He fed on honey and wild locust and dressed in garments of camel hair.
He constantly brooded over the scriptures,
especially the prophetic ministry of Elijah,
after whom he modeled his own ministry.

Nor was John a respecter of persons or rank.
He had an intimidating personality.
For that reason, the upper-class folk rejected both he and his message.
You can read about that in Luke 7:29.

What drew people to John and his message?
Well, John was far-fetched.
But there was more to John than simply a bizarre, strange life.

John understood that God was about to do something
that would shake the foundations of the earth
and he needed to prepare the way for that event.

He did this in basically three ways.

1. John lived a godly life.
2. John challenged the people's sins.
3. John pointed the way to Christ.

Frivolous things such as his dress, his diet
and his fierce declamatory oratory
fascinated the people that came to see him.
They wanted to interview him
and then tell all their friends about their remarkable experience.
"Who are you?" they asked.
His answer was curt: "I am not the Christ."
"Are you Elijah?" "No!"
"Then who are you?" they persisted.

John's answer ought to be the ultimate goal of every Christian:
"I am a voice."

There comes a moment when we long for those to see us
to lose sight of everything except the Christ that is in us.
Don't listen to my accent.
Don't look at my clothes.
Don't comment on my looks.
Don't search my University degree.
Just listen to what I am saying.
Just look at what I do.

And it was John's crowning glory that he saw something,
which no other had recognized.
Others had anticipated that God would intervene in human affairs.
They had predicted that the Messiah would come
as the head of a conquering army, the Lion of Judah to the fight!
But this wild man from the wilderness
saw into the heart of his nation and into the mind of His God.
This insight he has been left for us and our children forever.

"Behold", he cries as he sees Jesus approaching the river,
"Behold... not the Lion who will conquer and destroy
,...but behold the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

There is no greater privilege given to any man this side of heaven
than to point to the Lamb of God
who takes away the sin of the world.

This Advent we can prepare the way of the Lord by pointing to the Christ.
Amen

Hymn/song

ATN 25/TIS 647/AOV[2] 12/various Comfort comfort Mann
<https://youtu.be/qJEDa6-0ISU>

Prayers for all people

God, you bring all together.
In you, love and perseverance meet.
Goodness and peace kiss.
May we find ways to be brought together,
so that we can walk alongside each other
on your pathway of delight.

For those lost in valleys.
May they be lifted up.
For those stuck in the heights.
May they be helped down.
For those in barren places.

	<p>May they find shelter. For those in rough places.</p> <p>May they hear eternal words. For those seeking forgiveness.</p> <p>May they find it. For those seeking apology.</p> <p>May they hear it. For those waiting for a long time.</p> <p>May they find patience in your patience. For those waiting for renewal.</p> <p>May there be springs of growth. Amen.</p>
	<p>Lord's Prayer</p> <p>Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. AMEN^{iv}</p>
	<p>Hymn/song</p>
	<p>We are sent out</p> <p>We have gathered around stories of strange people in wild places. For you, O Lord, no desert is a desert only. It is a place where wild things grow and nurture us, in all the places of our lives. Nurture us, as we go, so that we can find more nurture, and be more nurture, in all abandoned places. Because you see life and light where we do not. And so we follow your light into all places.</p> <p>May the Lord bless us and keep us May His face shine upon us and be gracious to us May he lift up His countenance upon us and give us peace</p>
	<p>Benediction See Your Saviour Comes</p>
	<p>Thank you</p>

ⁱ Revised Common Lectionary. (2009). Bellingham, WA: Faithlife.

ⁱⁱ Some resources used are copyright © ROOTS for Churches Ltd. Reproduced with permission.

ⁱⁱⁱ [Revised Common Lectionary](#). (2009). Bellingham, WA: Faithlife.

^{iv} English Language Liturgical Consultation, 1988