

**ST PAUL'S CHURCH (RONDEBOSCH)
SERMON (ADVENT 2—YEAR B)
SUNDAY 6 DECEMBER 2020**

**READINGS: ISAIAH 40:1-11// PSLAM 85:1-2,8-13//2 PETER 3:8-15a//
MARK 1;1-8**

Prayer

*Open the heavens Holy Spirit
For us to see Jesus interceding for us
May we be strengthened to share his cup
And ready to serve him forever. AMEN*

Who would you say was the greatest man ever born? (Nelson Mandela/ Ghandi/
Donald Trump// Jacob Zuma)

The Gospel of Mark has a very strange beginning. It doesn't begin with an actual sentence but rather with an announcement. In Mark 1v1 "The *beginning of the Gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God*".

There is no history about Jesus' ancestry, no angelic announcements, no record of His birth; there are no shepherds, no angels, and no wise men in Mark's gospel. He says nothing about Joseph or Mary, nothing about Jesus' childhood, nothing about Jesus' youth. Mark starts his story with Jesus' first public event, his first public appearance. He skips all the previous 30 years and begins with the public ministry of Jesus---- His Baptism

The initial public ministry of Jesus Christ was associated with the activity of John the Baptist.

Coming back to the question I asked in the beginning who would you say is the greatest man born.

If you are a Christian, you might say, "*Why, Jesus Christ, of course!*" Suppose Jesus himself were asked the question. What do you suppose he would say?

You might be surprised to know that Jesus did once attribute that distinction of greatness to a certain man. He told his disciples, "I tell you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John; yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he" (Luke 7:28).

Let us look at this great man John the Baptist

* *Firstly let us look at is character*

In Mark v 4 we read “*and so John came, baptizing in the desert region and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins*

V6 “*John wore clothing made of camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist and he ate locust and wild honey*”

Reading Mark’s description of John one can’t help thinking he is somewhat odd character-definitely not mainstream? He clearly was not the kind of man one might to get stuck in a lift with or have babysit your kids. He was direct bordering on offensive and he live very differently to others—dressed in woven camel hair and living off the land. He seemed unafraid of the establishment with the focus intently on the righteousness of God and the requirement of righteous living—this clearly shook the people. One might well wonder what our society would do with such a person today. Perhaps he’d be relegated to a psychiatric ward for observation.

However John was the fulfilment of the prophecy of the Hebrew Scriptures of the promised messenger who would prepare the way (Malachi 3:1) and the voice crying in the wilderness (Isaiah 40:3)

Furthermore: Perhaps you have heard the saying (song) “*It’s not about me.*” That was the root of John’s message. He preached about someone else, someone who would come after him whose sandal thongs John did not consider himself even worthy to tie.

John wasn’t interested in the limelight. He wasn’t interested in the praise or admiration of others. He was interested in preparing the way for someone else, and he didn’t let personal ambition get in the way of doing his job well.

What about us when we do something – do we want to praise and honour –yesterday clean up)

What was John’s message?

Mark tells us that his message was the beginning of the Gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God Something drew these people out of all these cities and brought them down into this desert area. It was to listen to this strange and rugged young preacher proclaim good news to them

John was a baptizer. Among the preparations he made for the coming of Christ was the task of *preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.*

What is sin?

Sin is when we don’t love God with all our heart, all our soul and with all our mind and our neighbour as ourselves

Well, basically and fundamentally, sin is self-centeredness. We commit sins because we are thinking of ourselves, loving ourselves, indulging ourselves, looking out for ourselves,

taking care that no one get ahead of us. That is the essence of sin -- self-centeredness. There is not one of us who does not struggle in this area. However we were made by God to be vessels to convey his outgoing love, to reach out with it to everyone around us. Somehow that has become twisted, so that now -- instead of reaching out -- we reach in, and we love only ourselves.

We sin when we cannot forgive our brother and sister. Yes sometimes they hurt us and yes many times it is their fault, but sometimes it is our fault but we are too proud to go and ask forgiveness --- but we can't move on in life, it eats us up inside – there is an inner torment. – There is no peace in us

We sin when we do not trust and believe that God cannot help us and we live in fear Fear is feeling unable to handle life anymore, being aware that there are forces and powers we are unable to control, and which eventually are going to confront us. We are not able to handle them, and so we run from them. Fear looms up, that uncertainty about the future, and we become fearful, timid people, afraid of what will happen next. (***Especially now during the COVID 19 pandemic***) We are walking on eggs all the time, afraid of being accepted or rejected, afraid of what people will do to us -- and especially, finally, afraid of what God is going to do to us.

The second candle that we lit this morning was the Candle of **PEACE**.

But maybe you are not at peace this morning and you are experiencing inner turmoil, restlessness and brokenness that empty barren, weary desert feeling. And you ask yourself how can I experience that PEACE?

Then John announced this great word: that repentance is the way man comes to God, and that the result is the forgiveness of sins. The greatest blessing a person can experience is to have his sins forgiven. And experience that **PEACE**. This is what these people were looking for, and this is what they found as they streamed out of Jerusalem to listen to John. They found forgiveness of sins, and it came by way of repentance.—they found that peace in their life

What does it mean to repent (repentance)?

In short, "to repent" would mean that you change your mind toward Jesus. You cease to be independent of Him; and you surrender to Him from the heart; and you become one of His totally devoted followers. You cease to make yourself the central, controlling authority of your life; and you yield your life to His lordship. Obviously, this will involve a change of action. You will, by necessity, have to turn away from sin. You will change in your behaviour. But it is, first and foremost, a change of mind - a change of attitude.

My dear friends this is possible we can experience this harmony, this peace because Jesus Christ is our Prince of Peace. In Luke 2:14 we read the angels sang at the birth of Jesus:

“Glory to God in the highest and peace to men on whom his favour rest. This is the Shalom this is the complete Peace,

It is peace with God first of all. But it is also peace among men.

Yes my dear friends Jesus is the Prince of Peace but we also have a role to play as Peace makers. Do you know the song that say? **Let there be peace and let it begin with me**

Let us reflect on our own lives the things that hinder us to have peace. The grudge and unforgiveness that I have against my brother and sister. The sins in my own life and let us as John the Baptist in the Gospel reading say **Repent for the kingdom of heaven is near This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah A voice of one calling in the desert Prepare the way for the Lord make straight paths for him.**

To experience that peace we must repent. We must turn to God and change our behaviour. We need some self-awareness to understand how to repent of our unjust ways and redirect our lives on God’s path.

Self-awareness asks us to look at our relationship with others-family, friends those whom we share ministry here at church. It ask us to recognize the places where it is broken-with whom do we need to reconcile before the feast of Christmas come before the Prince of Peace come

CONCLUSION

My challenge to you this morning if you have a grievance to anyone this morning or you are not on speaking terms with the person go to that person, phone that person send that person a message and extend a hand of peace then you will experience Peace and the true joy of Christmas