

Mark 1:1-11 (NIV)

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.”

⁹ At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰ Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. ¹¹ And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.”

Sermon for January 7, 2024: www.collegechurch.org/college-church-online

KNOW ... *God and his Word.*

During Advent, we spent time reading and reflecting on this passage from Mark. We reflected on John the Baptist and his part in preparing the way for the Lord to come and be present in the world ... with us (vv. 2-4). This week we will revisit this passage with our eyes focused on Jesus’s baptism, which marks the beginning of what he came to earth to do — the inauguration of his ministry.

- Describe Jesus’s baptism. What happens when Jesus comes out of the baptismal waters? Why did God the Father and God the Spirit appear at Jesus’s (God the Son’s) baptism?
- What is said about Jesus and by whom at his baptism? Did anyone other than Jesus hear what was said? Why are these words important for us to hear/know?

- Jump back up to verse 8. Part of John's preparing the way for the Lord — to come and be present in the world — was also providing the first description of what Jesus was coming to do, "baptize you with the Holy Spirit" (v. 8). What would this Holy Spirit baptism mean for those who receive it?
- What stood out to you in this passage or from Pastor Mark's sermon? Discuss any additional insights, thoughts or questions you may have.

ACT ... *responding to & applying what we know.*

- Baptism is a big deal. It is the sign of the covenant between God and us and a tangible testimony of a new reality, reorientation of our lives.

What does God's part of the baptismal covenant say to and about us? What does our act of entering this covenant say to God? As a tangible testimony, what does baptism say to others about the new reality of our lives? How are our lives reoriented?

- Baptism is such a big deal that Jesus included it in his instructions to his disciple in the Great Commission found in Matthew 28:19-20. Read those verses together.

Jesus essentially commands his disciples to imitate him — share the good news, make disciples, and then baptize and teach them to do the same. As Pastor Mark stated, the first Christians "thought they ought to actually do the things Jesus did. They imitated him."

Discuss what imitating Jesus would entail. Are you a good imitator (in prayer, worship obedience, self-denial, welcoming strangers, tending the sick ... for example)? Consider what areas need improvement. If you're willing, confess those things to someone else. Pray together and ask the Holy Spirit to help you grow in your weakness(es) or neglect in imitating Jesus.

- At Jesus's baptism, we see that he was not alone — God the Father and the Holy Spirit were involved. As Pastor Mark stated, "Jesus did not do anything apart from direction from the Father and empowerment by the Holy Spirit."

Identify some of the ways we are tempted to chart our own course instead of seeking the Father's direction as Jesus did. Why do we choose to live and serve God in our way and our own strength?

BE ... *living in light of what we've heard, becoming more like Christ.*

Are you an imitator or admirer of Jesus? Are you seeking to call the shots and serve God on your terms and without the power of the Holy Spirit?

Make time this week to reflect on these questions. LISTEN to what the Spirit may be saying to you.

BE INTENTIONAL! Seek to be directed by the Father and empowered by the Holy Spirit in all things.

KEEP becoming more like Jesus ... imitating him every day!

Grace and peace,
Pastor Angela

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