

This Sunday is Youth Sunday, and as has become our tradition the young people act out a passage from the scripture during the sermon time. The script for that presentation is what follows. I am keenly aware that reading a script is usually a let down from experiencing a drama. But even through this imperfect medium, may you be blessed by this dramatic presentation of the opening verses of Mark's Gospel. Blessings – Pastor Jim

Youth Advent Service: ***The Mystery Begins!*** – Mark 1:1-8

December 6, 2020 at St. Luke's Church, Lititz

Cast & Props:

Lector: Reading only the Scripture passages from the lectern

Reader: Reading commentary from the pulpit

The Mystery Person: Carrying the ***cardboard question mark***

Isaiah: Dressed as old prophet (***robe***) and reading from a ***scroll***.

John the Baptist: Dressed in ***camels hair robe & leather belt***,
w/ a ***lunchbag*** and a ***clay pitcher***.

Jesus: No special costume.

A ***glass pitcher*** is on the altar which Jesus will be using.

[*Story begins with readers in place and the rest hiding out.*]

Reader: I love a mystery! I'll bet that you do too. As this season of Advent starts – the beginning of the Church year – we begin with a mystery.

Lector: From the Gospel of Mark, the first chapter, the first verse:

The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

{Mystery Person walks out, front and center with question mark. Scratches head as if confused.}

Reader: That's quite a mouthful! What can all this mean? The beginning of Good News? What's the Good News? (And we could use some Good News!) Jesus the Christ! Christ means the great Messiah, the hero who will rescue us from all our troubles. How is this going to happen?

And this is about someone who is God's Son?! Can God even have a Son, and what will this Son be like? This is all VERY mysterious!

Lector: **As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,**

Reader: This mystery goes back many years. Isaiah preached nearly 700 years before Mark's time. It might have taken some time, but what those prophets said did come true.

*{Mystery Man steps to the side with the **sign**. Isaiah the elderly prophet comes down the aisle in costume with a **scroll** in his hands and stands front and center. Isaiah unrolls the **scroll**.}*

Lector: "See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way;
the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:
'Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight,'"

Reader: The clues are now appearing in this mystery. God will send a messenger to get things started, and this messenger will be in the wilderness, and not in the big cities and towns where the great and powerful people live.

This messenger will tell us to get ready for God's coming! How are we to do that? We are to make a **straight path**. I don't think we are supposed to build an actual road, but what does that mean?

{Isaiah points straight ahead.}

You mean to live lives that are good and directed toward God!

{**Isaiah** nods in approval, and then walks off to the side of the stage.}

Who do you suppose that this messenger will be?

{**John** appears at the back of the sanctuary and walks slowly down the center aisle carrying a **clay pitcher**. **John** stands front center.}

Lector: **John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.**

Reader: Wait a minute. What did you say? That was a lot in one sentence. John came to the wilderness, baptizing. That's like washing or taking a bath. {**John** holds up **pitcher**.} But this was not an ordinary bath, and it was not about washing away dirt. This was a baptism of repentance!

That's an important word. It means to turn around – to turn away from doing bad things and being selfish, and turning toward God. We all need to do that!

Now I understand what the bath is all about. John wanted us to confess what we had done wrong so that we could have forgiveness of sins. This bath is to show us that God washes away our badness. {**John** nods his head.}

But would people really want to do that?

Lector: **And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.**

{**All available actors** line up and with hands together in prayer and heads bowed, are baptized by **John** who scoops up imaginary water and pours it over each one. The baptized walk away happy.}

Reader: It looked like *everybody* was getting baptized! I guess they knew their need, and their excitement about seeing the Christ come. The whole nation of Israel was excited and waiting for something really great to happen. They could also tell that there was something special about John.

Lector: Now John was clothed with camel's hair, {*pause as John scratches*} with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. {*John reaches into a brown paper bag as though grabbing a snack. The Reader cringes.*}

Reader: Do you remember another great person in the Bible who lived in the wilderness and wore camel's hair clothing and a leather belt? It was Elijah, the greatest of the prophets! The people sensed that John was great like Elijah. I suppose that some people thought that he *was* Elijah.

God *was* about to do something great and the people knew they needed to be ready, and they knew that to be ready they had better confess their sins and be baptized! God is about to do something great. Before long we will celebrate God coming to earth. Are you ready? John can help you get ready. If you want to confess your sin, and how excited you are about Christ coming, just raise your hand and John will come and baptize you.

{**John** travels the aisles of the sanctuary with his clay jug. For each person or group that asks to be baptized he bends over to scoop up water as if from the river, then lifts up the pitcher and acts as if he is pouring water on them. The organist will quietly play a hymn of repentance. **No hurry!** When all those requesting are baptized and the music stops, **John** returns to front and center.}

But John wasn't done. He had an even greater message and promise.

Lector: He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

Reader: The promised Christ was coming! John was obviously a great prophet of God, but the One who was coming was even greater! And this great One, the Christ, the Son of God, would pour out the Holy Spirit – the very presence and power of God – upon the people! An amazing moment had arrived!

*{John looks down the aisle and kneels with bowed head. Jesus enters, coming down the center aisle and steps up to the altar, takes the **glass pitcher** from the altar and faces the congregation.}*

Reader: Jesus came dressed in.... well, Jesus came dressed and looking like one of us, for Jesus truly was one of us. Jesus lived among us, told us of God and the Kingdom of God, and would die and rise for us. And Jesus gladly pours out the Holy Spirit upon all who will receive it. Won't you receive the Spirit?

*{Jesus goes out among the congregation, pouring out the Spirit from the glass pitcher. The **organist** may play a hymn about the Holy Spirit. Having covered all the congregation, Jesus returns to the front of the altar.}*

Reader: This ends our story for today, but the story goes on! I love a mystery, and this mystery has only begun! There are still so many questions, but in the year ahead we will learn about Jesus and about the Holy Spirit. Many more clues will be shared about this wonderful mystery, the Good News. Let us follow, let us learn, and let us be filled with the Holy Spirit!

*{The **cast** steps down and returns to their places in the sanctuary.}*

Mark 1:1-8

The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

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³the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,'"

⁴John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. ⁶Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. ⁸I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."