

THE SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT Year B December 7, 2014

Theme: The Gospel According to Us

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When something is said to have a beginning, assuming a middle and an end is a pretty safe bet.

The Evangelist named “Mark” launched his account of the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth by stating simply:

“The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God.”

We can gloss over these opening words as merely Mark’s way of getting his account started or we can pay attention to them as his preface, his statement of what everything that follows is to be about.

Perhaps he is telling us we are to hear the beginning an amazing story of Good News about this person Jesus who came as the Christ – the anointed one and messiah, the very son of God.

What is especially intriguing to me is the idea that Mark’s whole account is the beginning – not just this little introduction:

Rather, the whole story he is about to tell us of Jesus - his ministry with his disciples, his passion and crucifixion, his resurrection from death, all of it – is **“the beginning of the Gospel.”**

In other words, everything told about the life of Jesus is **“the beginning of the Gospel”**, everything that comes after him is **“the middle of the Gospel”** and when Jesus returns again in glory and the Kingdom fully comes, there will be **“the end of the Gospel.”**

This of course would mean that we are living somewhere in the middle of the Gospel – not the early middle time of Peter and Paul

and Mary Magdalen – but somewhere in the unknown middle, because we do not know when Jesus plans to return.

Before we pursue this idea, let's take just a moment to recall the sense in which Mark used the term "Gospel" when he wrote **"The beginning of the Gospel."**

For Mark and indeed for all the evangelists and Paul and the whole early church, the Gospel was literally the "Good News," or in the Old English derivation of the word – "good spel."

"The beginning of the Good News of Jesus the Christ, the Son of God," Mark announced.

We are more accustomed to thinking of the Gospel as a text, a written message from one of the four books of scripture, Matthew, Mark, Luke or John.

But Mark wants us to think of the Gospel as living message, as Good News spoken to and in our own lives.

Which perhaps can bring us back to consideration of where we fit into this text today, namely into the middle of the Gospel, the Good News, of Jesus Christ the Son of God.

You and I are living out the Good News of Jesus Christ the Son of God somewhere between his death and resurrection (which was the end of the beginning) and his second coming – which will be the end of it all, including the end of the Gospel.

Just as Jesus lived, and proclaimed, and died for and rose in the power of the Gospel, so, too, Christians through the centuries and now you and I are living and proclaiming -- and will one day die and rise -- in the power of that Gospel.

And when I look at my own life and at the lives of people around me, I see the same sorts of successes and failures Mark laid out in the beginning of the Gospel.

Sometimes I am as bold and confident as Peter proclaiming Jesus as the Christ and living the Christian life;

...and other times I'm like the guy in Mark's Gospel who's so scared when the authorities came to arrest Jesus, he ran away into the night stark naked.

I drop everything, at times, and rush off in selfless service, like James and John did when Jesus called them to follow him, leaving their father and boat behind;

...then other times I can't stay awake even an hour with him as they could not in the Garden of his terrible agony.

"Forgive seventy times seventy-times," he taught, "Turn the other cheek...don't be attached to material things....forget about position and status."

In the beginning his first disciples struggled to understand and practice what he preached; so do I; so do we.

Here we are **"in the middle of the Gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God."**

Mark gave us an account of the beginning of the Gospel and for twenty centuries now it has served as a benchmark and rule of the Church's life.

As we await "the end of the Gospel" and the coming of Christ in glory, we make the Gospel our own by living it in our daily lives and at this particular moment in history.

Thus, here on the Second Sunday of Advent in the Year of our Lord 2014, we might be able to say **"the middle of the Gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God according to Larry!"**

....according to _____

...according to us!