

1/11/09

Mark 1: (1-3) 4-11 The Baptism of Jesus

1 **The beginning** of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

2 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 desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'"

4 And so John came, baptizing in the desert region and 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 will come one more powerful than I, the thongs 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 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.**"

INTRO - Today is January 11, 2009. We are about a week and a half into a new year. Did you make any New Year's resolutions? I actually didn't make resolutions, but I did write down goals. I wrote down some personal goals, some family goals, and some goals for me as pastor. So, if you made resolutions for 2009, how are you doing a week and a half into the New Year?

I. God has resolutions for us. They are called commandments. While there are consequences, in this life and eternally for not keeping these commands of the Almighty Creator of all things, many misunderstand these commandments to be a way that God orders us around. Actually, these commandments are guidance from God that, if we follow them, our life in this sinful world will be better and healthier than if we don't follow them.

A. You know the 10 commandments, perhaps, but God's commands can actually be summarized in two one sentence Bible Verses.

1. First God calls us to love Him. God says, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind."
2. Secondly, God calls us to love others. We are told, "Love your neighbor as you love yourself."
3. These two short commands, summarize God's will for our lives. They are a call to righteousness, and these commands also lead to a life that would be healthy in body and spirit, in this world and eternally.
4. So, never mind your new year's resolutions. How are you doing on God's goals for your life?

B. Before you think God has an impossible set of directives for our lives, please consider Jesus in our Gospel lesson for today.

1. The assigned reading begins in verse 4. But, take out your Bibles and look at verse 1. This is the beginning of Jesus ministry.
2. And, boy did God have plans and directions for His Son.
  - A. Jesus was called to leave heaven and become, leave life as God and become a man
  - B. Jesus was called to live a perfect life, even though by becoming a man He was taking on pain, tiredness, hunger, loss, frustration, rejection, and temptation. We know Jesus would lose His father at an early age. We know His own brothers would reject His ministry initially. His job was to make it through life, as a man, in love and holiness.
  - C. Then, God called Jesus to save those who would reject him. He was called to live a perfect life of love and faith to save people who would reject His mission, beat and spit on Him, nail Him to a cross.
3. You think that God's call to you is difficult, imagine if you were Jesus.

II. One of my personal goals is to watch my diet more carefully again. I had lost quite a bit of weight. But my trip to Israel last year, and Christmas this year have cut into that loss. But, Thursday night the football team from my home town in Florida was in the national championship game. I went to Josh's house, and brought some food. I had some chicken, and some pizza, and some chips. In other words, I may have made a goal, but I was not keeping it Thursday, 8 days after making it.

A. I am sure that you know failure in keeping your resolutions for your life.

1. We have good intentions, but keeping those intentions is not always easy.
2. I am also sure that you know failure in keeping God's goals for our lives. We are selfish, and sinful and weak.

B. Let me share with you a group of people who have some more goals placed before them

today. Today we install and re-commission our officers and board members at St. John. We have a congregational mission statement of sharing Jesus in our words and actions. They have agreed to lead St. John in faithfully and effectively doing the work of the Lord.

1. Let me share with you what I have told the Elders.
  - A. This work of God the church is called to do is a work of righteousness. However, God calls sinners to do this work. That is, in reality, a recipe for disaster.
  - B. Throughout it's history the church has had problems. We have had failed leaders. Sometimes God's people cannot get along, like the disciples in Matthew 20, or Paul and Barnabas at the end of Acts 15, or Euodia and Syntyche in Philippians 4.
  - C. It would be easy for church members to say, "The church is supposed to be a place of faith and love and righteousness, I don't need these troubles."
  - D. It takes a mature Christian not only to persevere, but especially to help lead others through troubles, saying, "Jesus died for me, I want to serve Him."
2. We are installing and re-commissioning Officers and Board members but, I have a fear.
  - A. Many times our well intentioned Christians can take on leadership and face problems they did not expect.
  - B. Sometimes, people can get involved in leadership, become disillusioned, and leave church.

III. So, as our leaders look at 2009, how did Jesus not only face His even more difficult task? How did Jesus succeed?

- A. Look again at our Gospel lesson for today.
  1. This is the beginning of Jesus' ministry, service, sacrifice, the beginning of His job of saving us.
  2. As Jesus was beginning He received love, assurance and affirmation from His Father.
  3. As He was being baptized He was told, "**You are my son, whom I love, with you I am well pleased.**"
  4. Actually, when Jesus was turning to Jerusalem to go and be crucified He heard these Words again. As he faced His crucifixion, the Father told Him and the disciples, "**This is my son, whom I love.**"
  5. The presence, love, and help of the Father gave Jesus the strength to face His job of saving the world, to persevere, and to accomplish what God laid out for Him.
- B. Members of St. John, Friends, children of God, as you have the call to love God and love others, God says to you, "**You are my son, my daughter, my child, whom I love.**"
  1. Jesus died for you and rose for you because He loves you.
  2. God is with you in His Word and Spirit. He is with you in the Lord Supper and through your baptism.
  3. As you face life's challenges, unfair difficulties, God is with you to strengthen, to forgive, and to go with you.
  4. God is there to help you face the challenges of a call to a Christian life, and to help forgive you if you fail so you can start again.
- C. Officers and Board members, as you face leading, remember the Word's of God. "**You are my child whom I love.**"
  1. The task can be difficult. But, God does not want your volunteer work to be drudgery, but to be a labor of love, a task of Joy.
  2. He wants you to know His love and to find that it is a privilege to do God's work, even if it is also a difficult task.
  3. He wants you to see Him acting as you face the challenges and to grow as you see Him work.

CONCLUSION - Yesterday I received an E-mail. Today, we will be recognizing and thanking people who served full terms on boards. One member wrote and said, The only way I was able to do my work was through

the words of Philippians 4:13, **“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”** In reality, that is the only way we can really do anything worthwhile. But, God does strengthen in Jesus. He says to us, **“You are my child, whom I love.”** May that love of God strengthen you for all you face in 2009.