

Written Copy: Mark 1:14-15 “The Advent of His Reign and Rule

Midweek Advent #1

Wednesday, December 4th, 2024

Text: Mark 1:14-15

¹⁴ Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, ¹⁵ and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

Exegetical Statement

Before Jesus even appears on the scene, we have Him announced and His mission described by John the Baptist in fulfillment of the prophecy from Isaiah. John points to the One who is coming who will be God Himself, the King of Kings who comes not to destroy His people but to save them from their enemies, to proclaim the Gospel of comfort. John is at work preparing hearts and minds to receive the gifts He will bring by the baptism of repentance: confessing the dire need for a Savior and therefore ready to hold fast to Him in faith. John's mission is successful as all of Judea and the people of Jerusalem respond. When Jesus does show up He doesn't look like the promised Messiah the people were looking for. Yet in His baptism the Father and the Spirit give witness as to who He is, with the heavens torn open, the descent of the anointing Spirit, and voice of the Father declaring this man is actually the beloved Son of God. He is anointed to be the King who saves all those welcomed into His reign and rule by being intimately connected with them by receiving their baptism. Following His baptism the Spirit drives Jesus out to confront and defeat the devil on behalf of God's people who lost the battle during their 40 years of wandering in the wilderness. Having proved Himself to be victorious Jesus begins His public ministry in Galilee proclaiming that the time of waiting is over, the reign and rule of God is now present in Him. To receive it, repent now and believe in Him as the promised Savior from God of God's people.

Focus Statement:

Jesus reveals Himself to be God who has come to be intimately united with humankind in order to establish His reign and rule into broken sinful people now in preparation of the coming of His uncontested reign and rule on the Last Day. He unites Himself to us through His anointing baptism to be our champion taking on our worst enemies: sin, death, and the devil, and through His Words and actions as the Lamb of God-atoning sacrifice, save all people who have fallen victim to these enemies and cannot save themselves. He brings that victory to us in our baptism and takes our sinful defeat to the cross and the tomb. And in His resurrection proves His right and power to reign and rule over us in love and mercy.

Function Statement:

Why it's important to know:

At first blush Jesus doesn't look like the Savior that He truly is. We like the baby Jesus in a manger because He isn't threatening. People like to fashion Jesus in their own minds and hearts as the Savior who fits their needs as opposed to repenting and believing in Him as who He declares Himself to be

What the hearer should do as a result:

See Jesus coming to bring His reign and rule not as the Savior we want Him to be, but as the One we need Him to be to a part of His kingdom now and for eternity.

Subject Sentence: The King who brings to you His eternal reign and rule

Introduction: Appearances Can Be Deceiving

One of my favorite books when I was in elementary school was “Charlie and the Chocolate Factory”. In fact, it wasn’t just me. As I remember, even though there were multiple copies in the school library, you had to sign a waiting list to check it out. That’s why I was pleasantly surprised that my kids grew up loving the movie that was based on the book, “Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory”.

How many of you are familiar with the book or the movie? It revolves around a chocolate maker named Willy Wonka who is described by others as the most innovative and successful candy maker in the world. He is so successful that all the other candy makers try to steal his secret recipes. So, he closes up his factory, dismissing all of the workers, some of whom were spies working for other candy makers. Yet, after a brief hiatus, the factory once again begins producing chocolates and candies that are even better than before. Yet no one goes in, and no one goes out. How Willy Wonka is able to keep the business going is a great mystery that no one can figure out.

But in what shows itself to be a marketing promotion, it is announced that hidden in Wonka Chocolate bars are 5 Golden Tickets. The lucky finder of one of these tickets will be welcomed to join a tour of the factory by Mr. Willy Wonka himself and will receive a lifetime supply of chocolate.

The special day arrives for the 5 lucky Golden Ticket holders to enter the factory. They and a large crowd gather excitedly and anxiously around the main gate. When the clock strikes the hour there is a dramatic pause, the door to the factory opens, another dramatic pause, and then a frail looking man appears. He walks slowly toward the gate leaning on a cane for balance. He appears to be worn down by the pressures of life and business. Whatever creative energy and drive he once had that enabled him to become such a successful candy maker appears to have vanished long ago. The crowd that had initially cheered his appearance falls silent except for gasps of astonished shock and dismay at the figure before them.

When he has almost reached the gate, he removes his top hat in a gesture of welcome. But at the same time his cane appears to stick in a crack in the pavement. He shuffles forward a few extra steps, but without the help of his cane he appears to lose his balance, and his body begins to fall forward. There is a loud gasp from the crowd as they expect to see this man way past his prime fall forward and onto his face. But that’s not what happens!

His fall forward turns into a summersault in which he lands back on his feet! This is no lifeless man past his prime. This indeed is Willy Wonka, the consummate showman, full of life and energy. The crowd roars with approval. Appearances can be deceiving, especially when it comes to Willy Wonka reintroducing Himself to the world.

Who Is This Messiah Who is Coming?

With that in mind let's think about who it is we gather on Advent to celebrate and welcome His coming. We think about the baby in the manger on Christmas morning, don't we? Our Advent preparation many times consists of a focus on the story and events surrounding the baby in the manger, as well as the prophetic word that birth fulfills. How might this perception cause people inside and outside the Church to misjudge exactly who this baby is?

The concept of the innocent little child can consciously and subconsciously lead people to see Him in a non-threatening manner. When I say non-threatening, I'm not talking about Jesus coming to threaten anyone with immediate extermination. But some see Him and His Kingdom-His reign and rule- as non-threatening to their way of life. He is the little child who grew up to be the friend of all who tries to do good. He loves all people and accepts all people and all lifestyles. He is the loving Savior who is actually fashioned after what our sinful heart desires Him to be, a Savior who comes to make our life on earth better, wants us to be happy, healthy, and wealthy. He is the Savior who has adapted to conformity with the ideas and cultures of modern-day society. But if that is your impression of who Jesus comes to be you're as off base as the crowd was with Willy Wonka.

In the movie, even though Willy Wonka is one of the main characters, he doesn't actually appear on screen until almost a quarter of the way through the movie. Even so we hear a lot about him. The same is true with how the Gospel of Mark introduces Jesus. Before He even appears on the scene, we hear and learn a lot about Him, especially with the connection John the Baptist makes with Isaiah's prophetic words concerning the coming of the Messiah.

The original audience for Isaiah's prophecy were the exiles in Babylon. Isaiah had previously prophesied a message of suffering and captivity upon them because of their sins. Now Isaiah tells them that the LORD Himself is coming to them. In light of all that has happened they might conclude that the LORD is coming in judgment to punish them. That is why the LORD has Isaiah lead with **Isaiah 40:1-2** ¹ **Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.** ² **Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the LORD'S hand double for all her sins.** The LORD is coming not in anger but in comfort and consolation for His wayward people. He is coming in grace and mercy to forgive them.

He is also coming to end their warfare, meaning that He is going to conquer their enemies and win the battle for them. Who was this figure who would come? The Messiah, the anointed one who was prophesied to come from the line of David. And looking back to David, what did he do after Samuel anointed him as king? He went to war against the enemies of God and His people, beginning with Goliath. Goliath challenged not only the Israelite army but God Himself, saying that Israel's God was as weak and helpless as they were. Even though David appeared to be no match for this giant, all it took was one stone from a slingshot, because David fought by the power of the LORD. And in Jesus day who were the 'Goliaths' that threatened them? The Romans. That made them misjudge who this coming Messiah would be

Mark 1:2-4 ² As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, "Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way, ³ the voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight," ⁴ John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

Isaiah prophesied that there would be a voice in the wilderness who would point to the Messiah when He came. And clearly John the Baptist fulfilled Isaiah's prophetic description. He looked the part and acted the part by proclaiming in the wilderness His message of repentance. That call to repentance was the spiritual application of Isaiah's command to make ready the way of the LORD.

But who exactly did John end up pointing to? Certainly not the Military Hero they were expecting. The One He pointed to seemed to be a far cry from a king in the line of David. He looked like just another Galilean, an unassuming man from the hick town of Nazareth. It would be easy to assume that John got it wrong. And when Jesus came on the scene many misjudged Him, just as the crowd misjudged Willy Wonka.

But when John baptized Jesus, it was shown that John was right on the money pointing to Jesus of Nazareth. **Mark 1:10-11** ¹⁰ And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. ¹¹ And a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased." The Father testifies that this seemingly ordinary man is actually the Son of God and is well pleasing-perfect in every way. And the descending of the Spirit is like the anointing that king David received, the abiding presence of God Himself marking Him as the "Anointed One of God", the "Christ", the "Messiah" This human being who stepped into the Jordan River is more than a human being, He is God incarnate. That is who that baby lying in the manger on Christmas morning truly is. That is how we should see Him and confess Him, just as John did.

What is This Reign and Rule He brings?

And what exactly did this child who is the God incarnate come to bring? **Mark 1:14-15** **Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, ¹⁵ and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”** He came to bring the Kingdom of God, to establish the reign and rule of God once again in a world that had fallen away from Him.

And how does Jesus bring this reign and rule? Through His Word that is the Gospel Message: The Good News that He is God the Savior who has come to **(Isaiah 40:2) Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the LORD’S hand double for all her sins.**

He has come to end your warfare against God the Father Himself. We declare ourselves to be at war, enemies of the Creator God when we stand in sinful disobedience. We set ourselves up as opposed to God whenever we make Jesus to be the Savior in our own image and likeness. He came to make peace between God and us by taking from us all our iniquity, lifting it up on the cross with Him, suffering the punishment you and I deserve. And in place of that He gives to us His perfect obedience as God the Son incarnate who always pleases the Father. With all our sins and iniquities pardoned, and with all the credit for His perfect obedience, He changes you from enemy into child of God.

How Should We See Ourselves as Part of His Reign and Rule?

All this is your gracious gift from the Father that comes to you through the Gospel Message and is held in your heart by faith. With it comes the presence of the Holy Spirit Himself who brings the reign and rule of Christ to bear upon your heart through the miracle of conversion that happens in baptism. He changes you from someone who is ruled by your own sinful passions to please yourself and Satan, into someone who desires to live for and please your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

How should you see this reign and rule of Christ as an active part of your life each day? By daily acknowledging the ways the indwelling Spirit shows you that you continue to do what serves yourself instead of obeying God. By daily turning to Him as the Spirit points to His mercy and grace and hold fast to His promise that we receive forgiveness in a double portion, an amount that is more than enough to cover all your sins. When this is happening in your life you can know for certain that the Kingdom of God, the Reign and Rule of Jesus Christ is present and active in your life.

Conclusion

When Willy Wonka arrived on the scene the crowd misjudged his appearance, thinking him to be past his prime. They also misjudged his intention to bless 5 children with a lifetime supply of Chocolate. Because 4 of the 5 children succumbed to the temptation to disobey his rules they lost out on this gift. These were rules listed in the smallest of fine print on the contract each child had to sign. And the tour seemed to be aimed at temptations that would purposely trip up the children so Willy Wonka wouldn't have to honor his promise.

People misjudge this child who came on Christmas Day. They can see Him as the permissive Lord who sets aside the rules so everyone can get a prize. Or some see Him as being like Willy Wonka who makes all these rules that He knows we can't keep in order to disqualify those He doesn't like. So, who is this child whose coming we celebrate? He is God incarnate who came to bring His reign and rule into your life not to disqualify you, but to open the door to a life lived with Him now and eternal life to come. He is the Lord of justice whose very nature decrees that disobedience must be punished. But He is at the same time the gracious Savior who kept the rules for you and took the punishment in your place and gives you a place in His kingdom as His gracious gift when His reign and rule comes into your heart.

He is your Savior who came to defeat those enemies that are too strong for you: sin, Satan, and death. As we continue these Mid-Week services in the coming weeks, we will look at how He came to defeat each one of these in your life. Amen.