

Advent 2
December 6, 2020

“The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and it’s great beginning in you!” (Mark 1:1)

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LSB 332

“Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Today’s text for this first Sunday of Advent, is from today’s Gospel reading from Mark 1:1.

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

Here ends our text.

Life is full of beginnings. We begin a new job, begin in a new school, begin a new hobby, a new year’s resolution. Friends begin new relationships, husband and wife begin a new life united together as one. There are new beginnings as children are born. New sports seasons begin, with new hopes of championships. What new beginnings do you have planned for 2021? There are many types of new beginnings in all our lives and each of our lives experiences these beginnings differently.

But there is only one beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. This beginning is unique to Jesus Christ. He alone experienced this beginning of which Mark and all Scripture affirm. Gospel – is the Good News.

In fact, the Gospel is all about the Good News of Jesus Christ from beginning, to the middle and into eternity. There is no end. Mark never says, “The end of the Gospel of Jesus Christ”. For it doesn’t end. “Beginning” means that there is a continuation. Mark begins with Jesus public entrance into the ministry at His baptism by John the Baptist. The time finally came for the world to see what had remained hidden.

The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus continued with His miracles that attested to who He was...the Son of God. The beginning of the Gospel continued to His

death, His resurrection, His ascension and His sitting at the right hand of the Father in glory. Jesus' Gospel work of redeeming the world from their sins was accomplished and fulfilled. Salvation for all mankind has been won. That is the Gospel message in nutshell. And yet, this Gospel that has been created and established, must also be given to be of benefit. The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus must create new beginnings in the hearts of sinful men!!

Let's take a quick look at the very end of the book of Mark. For the Gospel work continues! The Lord's work continues, Mark says in the last verses of chapter 16...

“And He (Jesus) said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. 16 He who believes and is baptized will be saved;”

The Gospel itself gives salvation through the preached word and baptism!

“19 So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. 20 And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen.”

“the Lord working with them”.

The apostles witnessed the Gospel first-hand. They saw Jesus die, but they also saw Him rise again in victory. They saw Him ascend to heaven because He had finished the work of the Gospel. But, the beginning of the Gospel of Jesus not only includes it's creation of the gift of life, but the giving of the gift of life. The apostles preached the Good News and Pentecost was the continuation of the explosion of the Gospel to all people.

About 3000 people were baptized for the forgiveness of sins on Pentecost. And this same Gospel creates new life through baptism that three children, Ariyah, Alezea, and Julien will receive in about an hour. The Gospel of Jesus will create a new beginning in their lives.

But, lets first understand why there needed to be the Gospel. And then, why all people need the new beginning which the Gospel offers.

I. The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God

Well, let's go back to the beginning of time. God created the world perfect in every way in 6 days. It was good. Our world had a very good beginning. There was no sin or evil. There was no sickness or dying. There was no need of the Gospel.

But, Adam and Eve's disobedience changed everything. The intimate relationship with God ended. The perfect world that God had created was no longer. But most of all, sin and death became part of all our existence. Hell was created for the evil angel, the devil all men who he had caused to sin.

But God in His great mercy wants no one to perish eternally. He brought forth the Gospel message to Adam and Eve. This verse became the first mention that there was still hope. It is Genesis 3:15 and it is the first mention of the Gospel.

**“And I will put enmity between you and the woman,
And between your seed and her Seed;
He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.”**

This marked the announcement of the beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who is called “her Seed”. He will bruise the devil's head by His death on the cross and remove the sting of death! **“Since the foundation of the world”**, Revelation 13:8 tells us, **“the Lamb was slain”**. Jesus' heel would be bruised. There was no other way to save mankind. The perfect Son of God had to become a man, a perfect man that is, and be our substitute on the cross.

Mark jumps right into Jesus' public work of the Gospel. Jesus was baptized to publicly enter His role as our perfect substitute. He was immediately led into the desert to be tempted by the devil and did not fail.

The sinless Son of God then humbled Himself as we heard last week with His entrance into Jerusalem, by allowing Himself to be crucified and killed.

John the Baptist pointed to Jesus as **“Lamb who takes away the sin of the world.” (John 1:29)**

And that is what is the magnitude of the Gospel. It is the removal of sin of the whole world. The Gospel says that everyone's sin is forgiven...once and for all by Jesus' death on the cross. There is only one Savior and one Gospel. It is the only

Gospel that can save man from eternal death. Which leads us to the continuation of the beginning of the Gospel in sinful man.

II. The great beginning of the Gospel in sinful man through faith in Jesus

We heard earlier in Mark 16, Jesus command to give the Gospel and it's saving benefits.

“And He (Jesus) said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. 16 He who believes and is baptized will be saved;”

But there is a second part to this verse that must not ever be overlooked. **“but he who does not believe will be condemned.”**

The new beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ must have a new beginning in every man! Where there is no faith, but only unbelief in Jesus, there is only condemnation.

This is the one beginning that all mankind needs before the Jesus, the King, who sits at the right hand of the Father, returns again to judge all men. Where there is faith in Jesus, there is life, eternal life and the greatest of all beginnings, an eternity in heaven!

The message of John the Baptist was simple and to the point.

**““The voice of one crying in the wilderness:
‘Prepare the way of the Lord; Make His paths straight.’ ”**

4 John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.”

God prepares us by coming to our wilderness of sin and offers to us the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.

God's law, which cannot save, drives us to repent of our sins and receive what alone can save ...Jesus' Gospel!

The Law shows us our sin and the Gospel shows us our Savior. And our Savior unites us to His death and resurrection through our baptism.

Our lives are lives of daily repentance. Daily we experience the new beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ through our baptisms. For as we daily repent, our baptisms daily wash our sin. We are continually connected to the death and resurrection of Jesus.

What a great joy it is for every Christian to daily make the sign of the cross on one's forehead! For that sign was made on our forehead and breast at our baptisms, that you have been redeemed by Christ the crucified. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit claim you as a member of the family of God in your baptism. It's all God's work that He does. It's the work of the Gospel, giving to you personally, what Jesus won on the cross for all people, the forgiveness of sins.

Yes, this beginning of new life in the Gospel of Jesus Christ comes to people at all different times. For Ariyah, Alezea, and Julien, three small children, today is the day that God will start a new beginning in their lives! Thanks be to God.

I saw a post on Facebook from Pastor Wendorf last night. Their Nativity Nights was cancelled because of bad weather. But, a baptism of twin babies wasn't that happened yesterday morning. The new beginning of the Gospel of Jesus in the lives of His people!

With Jesus coming to the world, with His appearing, the time had come for the fulfilling of the Gospel. Jesus Himself said in Mark chapter 1, right after His temptation:

“Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, 15 and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.”

When it is believed, at whatever time of life, in the heart of an adult, or a baptized infant, the Holy Spirit creates a new beginning, a new life. And this new beginning doesn't have an end. For though our earthly bodies rest at death, our redeemed souls continue to live eternally with our Triune God by the power of the Gospel, awaiting the final resurrection and the new beginning of eternal life as God has designed it – perfectly... without sin, death, sadness, suffering or evil.

Yes, Mark's very first sentence encapsulates the good news of the coming of the Jesus to die and rise again for the world's salvation.

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

Paul reminds Timothy in chapter 1 of his 2nd epistle, that before time began, this was God's purpose to abolish death and bring life and immortality through the Gospel of Jesus.

8 Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, 9 who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, 10 but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel,

And the apostle Paul made sure that in the first chapter to the Romans, he told them that the Gospel is salvation for all people, Jews and Gentiles.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."

The Gospel is God's power to salvation for everyone who believes!

The new beginning in faith, your new beginning through your baptism is what the Gospel is about and what it gives you. The Gospel calls you "just" by faith. That's the best beginning you can ever experience in this world. It is a beginning that continues into eternity as Jesus' just sheep on His right hand. Amen.

"The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Amen. (Philippians 4:7)