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**Peace, Sun Prairie**  
**December 10, 2017**  
**Advent 2**

**Mark 1:1-8**

***“Find the Mighty Savior in the Lowly”.***

*Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come and has redeemed his people... (just) as he said through his holy prophets of long ago. Amen.*

Dear friends in Christ,

The dark nights are broken up with the colorful lights. Christmas music fills the air. Special plans, traveling and parties fill the calendar. And in it all, Americans will spend around 460 billion dollars! Yet despite all the effort and expense in the name of Christmas, sadly, so many will miss the point. Much of the world will miss what Christmas is all about: **the Savior.**

Could part of the problem be that so many are looking for the meaning of Christmas in the bright and glorious, the lights and presents, celebrations

and “holiday spirit?” But rather than coming to us in the frenzy and activity, our Lord still comes to human hearts in the same quiet, even **lowly** way He did when John the Baptizer announced the Savior was near.

Our Gospel lesson today helps us keep Christ in Christmas as it teaches us to **Find the Mighty Savior in the Lowly.**

Centuries ahead of time, God had promised a special **messenger** who would announce the coming of the Savior Lord. **John** the Bapitzer was that special **messenger** who **came to prepare the way for the Lord** right before Jesus began His public ministry.

So it might be surprising to hear this: **John wore clothing made of camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey.** John didn't wear the rich clothes you would expect for a king's **messenger**. Instead, he wore cheap camel skin garments worn by those who couldn't afford any better. And he didn't eat rich food or live in a palace, but ate roasted grasshoppers and gathered the free wild honey, the food eaten by

the poorest in the land. Truly John was a **lowly messenger**.

But this **lowly messenger** fit God's plan perfectly. After all, John was not preparing the way for an earthly king who forcefully builds an empire to serve himself. Instead, John was preparing the way for the mighty **Lord** who came from heaven, but chose to make himself weak and lowly to associate with sinners and rescue them.

Jesus wins us over not with power, but with His love that led him to that humble birth in Bethlehem and then all the way from the manger to the cross: all *for us* and our good. Jesus wants us to know his **kingdom is not of this world**, but that by suffering and dying He gives us place in His heavenly kingdom. So it only fits that God would announce this humble Savior through John, a **lowly messenger**.

God still chooses today to teach us about our mighty Savior through lowly messengers—whether its weak and lowly pastors like myself, who are sinners like everyone else—or Christian teachers in the classroom or Christian parents who tell their

children about the Savior or friends who invite others to hear about Jesus.

But why should God use such **lowly messengers** when He is so great and His promises are so glorious? This is why (cross before face): so that people would realize it's all about Jesus and not us. So that people don't focus their attention on the messenger, but on the message of the Savior and His cross. Since Mark tells us the Gospel is all about **Jesus Christ, the Son of God** it is fitting God uses **lowly messengers** to stress it's not the teachers, but only the power of Jesus' love that brings the results!

For much the same reason, Jesus our Mighty King also comes to us in what looks to human eyes like a **lowly message!**

**So John came, baptizing in the desert region and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.** The long foretold messenger of the Savior God arrives and what does he do? He preaches, he baptizes.

Many jokes have been made about preaching and preachers. What could be more lowly, more unimpressive to human eyes than God giving His

powerful message in simple written words that are then spoken out loud? Think how simple baptism looks on the outside—just some words and water, and so it is often misunderstood, even by some Christian churches. So why would Jesus choose to come to us in such a lowly way, in such a **lowly message** that can be ignored?

1 Corinthians tells us: **God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; the weak things... to shame the strong... the lowly things of this world... so that no one may boast before him.** When God uses a **lowly message** like word, water, bread and wine to bring His saving gifts to human hearts, it becomes clear it is *not* human effort and strength that gets the job done, but the power of God working through such “**lowly**” looking Word and Sacrament.

For through this humble, but powerful gospel message in Bible, Baptism and Communion, our **mighty Savior** quietly comes to forgive sin, create or strengthen faith and give lifelong comfort, peace and power for Christian living.

The mighty Lord chooses to come in a **lowly** looking **message**, delivered by **lowly messengers**. And He comes to a **lowly people**. "**The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to John. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.**

The people who came to John were **lowly**, in the sense that they admitted they were poor and helpless **sinners**. They confessed they had imperfect hearts and lives that were unworthy of the Lord. They acknowledged they desperately needed a Savior.

To such spiritually **lowly** people, John announced the good news that the coming Savior takes all their sins away. He baptized them **for the forgiveness of sins**. Only God's full and free forgiveness, only God's washing their sins away in the Savior's name could make them a people prepared for the Lord. Jesus comes to such **lowly people**.

Yes, Jesus came to rescue all people, but it is only humble and **lowly people** who actually receive and

enjoy God's gift. Only those who see themselves as sinful through and through and as totally lost and condemned will see any real need for Jesus and what he really brings.

If we love our sin and don't want to turn away from it or if we don't see our sin as a problem, then we will see no need for the Savior, born in Bethlehem. Or if we think we can do something to make ourselves right with God, even just a little bit, then we are not the **lowly people** Jesus wants.

So what will keep us as **lowly people** prepared for Jesus? The same message John preached: **repentance for the forgiveness of sins.** **Repentance** makes us people ready to welcome Jesus.

**Repentance** is a change of mind and heart that believes what God says about our sin. It is believing that we deserve God's eternal judgment not just for those really bad things we've done, but that even our best attempts at serving God fall short from His perfection. We fall short of what God wants as far as a canyon falls short of a level highway. We need a Savior!

But notice John preached **repentance for the forgiveness of sins**. Such **Repentance** includes a change of mind about how we are saved. It is believing God sent His only begotten Son to do everything to rescue us. It's a turning away from ourselves to cling to Jesus, who takes away all our sins by His death on our cross. It is looking to Jesus who fills in the canyon of our sin with the holy life He lived in our place.

Where do we get such **repentance**? It's not bought in a store. We don't work it up by our own efforts. God the Holy Spirit works **repentance** in hearts through His Word.

Through the message of the law, God changes our hearts to see the seriousness of our sin and leaves us trembling like the shepherds when they saw the angel and realize there is no way we can stand before the holy God.

It is God who works **faith** in our hearts through his gospel message of **Do not be afraid, a Savior has been born to you**. The mighty God once entered this world as a new born baby to be your



Savior, to forgive my sin, to prepare us a place in heaven.

Since we could never work our way to God, He came down from heaven to earth, from majesty to manger, and all the way to the cross and empty tomb to lift us up to life eternal. And still today, Jesus, our Mighty Savior still comes through the **lowly**, but eternally powerful message of His birth, life, death and resurrection to comfort our hearts and keep us relying on Him.

We can certainly enjoy the lights, the activities, the time with family and other good blessings of the Christmas season, but remember first and foremost focus your hearts on Jesus where He quietly comes to your heart through His Word. In His promises you will always **find the mighty Savior** who brings you His gifts of peace and joy that last for all eternity. Amen.

*You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for (y)our sake(s) he became poor, so that (you) we through his poverty might become rich! Amen.*

We confess our Christian faith in the great things our God has done for us using the Apostles' Creed on page 6 of the worship folder.