



THE SABBATH CIRCLES HOME SUNDAY SCHOOL CURRICULUM

Unit Theme: Illumination of mind and heart

Lesson connected to Sunday, January 12, 2020

Today's Scripture: Mark 1:1-11

Key Verse: "The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." Mark 1:1

Contexts of the Scripture:

- Mark is the oldest of the Gospels having been written sometime during or just after the Jewish war with Rome which lasted from 66CE to 70CE. This means it would have been written within 40 years of Jesus' death and resurrection.
- Mark is also the shortest of the Gospels and does not have an infancy narrative. It begins with the baptism of Christ, preceded by a description of John the Baptist, who was seen as a prophet preparing the people for the coming of the Messiah.
- John had followers and Jesus soon did as well and there is some evidence of on-going tension between the two groups up until the point of John's death at the hands of Herod.
- This story about the Baptism of Christ appears in one form or another in all four Gospels. Check out the story in the other Gospels – Matthew 3:13-17; Luke 3:21-22 and John 1:29-34. Notice how they are the same and how they are different. Why might that be?

Questions to go deeper:

- Usually when looking at this story, the emphasis tends to be on the dove and the words which "come down from heaven" about Jesus being God's beloved son. But, the focus we are choosing are the very first words of the text: "The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ..." Why might that be? In what ways is this story the beginning of everything that followed?
- Verses 2 and 3 then present a quote from Isaiah about the "voice crying out in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord..." This is immediately followed by the description of John the Baptist. How is John described? Why do you think he chose to live as he did?
- What was John's message that people found so compelling that they were willing to come to him in the wilderness to be baptized? What were they hoping for?
- John makes a distinction between the baptism he offers and the baptism the one who follows him will offer. What is that distinction? Why does it matter?
- As you read the description of Jesus as he rises up out of the water from his baptism, what is most striking to you about that scene? If you could ask Jesus a question about that moment, what would your question be?

Activity possibilities: SEE NEXT PAGE

- **Family activities:**
 - Where would this fall on the bible timeline? Hint: Check out the context info above!
 - Pull out the photos of the day each person in the family was baptized and go through them carefully. Who was present at each one? Who was missing? Who was with you on that day but is now in God's nearer presence? What other details are available about those baptisms?. Baptismal certificates? Orders of worship? What else?
 - If not everyone, or maybe even no one, in your family has been baptized, think about what it might feel like to take that step. Talk to friends and family members who have been baptized about what their baptism means to them. Talk to Pastor Ruth with any questions you have. Remember, it's never too late to be baptized.

- **Younger children activities:**
 - This story offers two compelling images for the little ones to engage with. Invite the little ones to create what they think John and Jesus looked like in this story through finger-painting while you read the story.

- **Older children and youth activities:**
 - Check out this old movie clip of the baptism of Jesus by John: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wyQmO-LFF4M>
What do you think about it? How is it like the story in Mark? Is anything missing? What? Does it matter?
 - John the Baptist is a fun person for kids and adults to think about. He dressed weird. He ate strange things. He lived in the woods. In a way, he lived much like folks today who are homeless. How might it change our thoughts about the homeless if we imagine any of them could be the one announcing the coming of Christ?
 - Consider participating in this year's Homeless Awareness Vigil to learn more about homelessness and how Jesus, and John too, would have us respond. Attend the entire Vigil or sign up on the Vigil sheet to participate at a time that works for you and your family.

Remember, Rev. Ruth is always happy to answer your questions and help you find more information on anything in the Bible that interests you! Catch up with her through the church or come to the Savoy Bookstore and Café any Thursday afternoon between 2-4pm.