



November 2020

Greetings to you all,

God has begun a great work in each one of us and Advent is a good time for us to concentrate on nurturing that great work. We wonder how God is working in our lives here and now. In this time of waiting and anticipation, we consider again inviting Jesus to think within us and act through us.

Part of our Advent preparation is to read and ponder scripture to help us see this creative work of God in ourselves. Beginning in Advent and through 2021, we will concentrate on the Gospel according to Mark in our worship. I suggest that we all read one page per day of this Gospel account. (If you do not have a Bible, or can't find yours, I can find one for you.) It is so interesting to hear Mark's interpretation of the life and ministry of Jesus in the order of its writing, instead of in disjointed portions as we do in our worship. So, I suggest relaxing and reading each page slowly. If you lose concentration, don't worry. Just pick up where you think you stopped.

To whet your appetite, Mark's Gospel is likely the first to have been written, in approximately A.D.70. Its author relied on both oral and written sources. The book was probably written in Rome by a man we know as John Mark. Christians often gathered in his mother's house. Persecution and destruction were imminent for Christians. While Matthew's Gospel was intended for Jewish Christians, Mark's seems to have been for Gentile Christians,

unfamiliar with Jewish customs. The Gospel aimed to equip these gentile Christians to remain faithful even through persecution.

Although this is the shortest of all the Gospels, it often tells of Jesus' ministry in more detail than either Matthew or Luke. It recounts Jesus' ministry with urgency, each incident runs directly to the next. Mark's greatest concern is discipleship. He stresses Jesus' message about the Kingdom of God being Good News for humanity. Jesus is portrayed as the Son whom God has sent to rescue us by sacrificing His own life.

According to Mark, Jesus was hugely popular with the people in Galilee during His ministry; however, many of His relatives thought He was "out of his mind". Most frequently, though, Jesus is depicted as moving obediently along the way to His cross in Jerusalem.

The Gospel begins with the appearance of John the Baptist, a messenger from God. John points to Jesus, at whose baptism God spoke. The Spirit rested on Jesus, who "will baptize with the holy Spirit." This presentation of Jesus' true identity continues through the Gospel and ends with Jesus' victory even over death.

In our Christmas/Epiphany letter, I will write more about the Gospel according to Mark. I hope you will enjoy it. May God bless us in our reading of Scripture.

I must admit that this year, the thought of Advent and preparation for Christmas is causing me some anxiety. So, for me at least, the gift of Advent is an opportunity to temper my anxiety with holy longing and anticipation.

As we gather to worship and celebrate through Advent, still virtually, please remember that we are united by the love of God, expressed through Jesus. Though loneliness may well be mixed with our joy, none of us is alone. I hope you will find delight in each day, and restorative peace in every night. May God bless us all with peace, hope, love, and joy.

With my love,

Joan

Please watch for the beautiful lighting display outside St. James Church. There will be a drive by event. The date is to be announced.

Thanks to TAD Higginson and his elves, we will be hosting a virtual pageant this year. All children (and adults) are invited to participate by contacting TAD at [tad@tad.ca](mailto:tad@tad.ca). Parish children, grandchildren, all relatives, friends far and wide, and neighbours are invited. This will be a wonderful event for everybody, so watch for details. The grand event will happen during our on-line worship, December 20, 2020 at 10:30 a.m.

Carols and Lessons: Sunday, December 27, 2020 (on-line service at 10:30 a.m.)

Christmas Eve Virtual worship is Thursday, December 24 at 7 p.m.