

Another Word February 23, 2021

To our friends and family of First Christian Church

Well, you can stop “blaming” me for all the inclement weather we have had over the last week or two. It’s now over 32 degrees, the snow is melting, and I haven’t uttered a single word about the weather, so I’m not responsible for anything else that comes our way, I hope!

There are still a few “Baby Bottles” available that need filled with loose change for the Pregnancy and Care Center. Please let us know who still needs one and we will bring one to you.

Our first Lenten service was well attended. If you can’t make the live services, we are recording each service a few days in advance so they will be available to you on line during our regularly scheduled time.

During Lent, we are adding an additional scripture reading each Sunday, highlighting an important moment of Jesus’ journey to the cross. As the scripture is read, one candle will be extinguished until only the Christ Candle is left burning on Palm Sunday. Last Sunday Mona Campbell read Mark 10:32-34, Jesus, as they were on their way to Jerusalem, told the disciples what He was about to endure. Our scriptures for this Sunday are; Psalm 22: 23- 31, Mark 8: 31-38 (Message: “You want me to take up a cross?”), and Lana Bell will read Mark 11: 12- 19, Jesus clears the temple.

Our hearts are saddened at the passing of Joyce Bradley, a loyal and lifetime member of our church family. Please remember Joyce and her

family in this time of loss. Her service will take place at the church this Thursday at 1 p.m. Calling hours begin at 11 a.m.

May we pray;

O Holy and Gracious God. We praise you and exclaim that no one is greater than you. As we enter this season of Lent, show us the way to follow Jesus, even to the cross. To more clearly understand the pain and suffering Jesus took upon himself, on our behalf. This is a payment we cannot repay except in following and believing in the one you sent for our redemption. Though we are not worthy, we open our hearts to you and say thank you for your great gift of grace and love. Guide us so we may pass on your love and compassion to others that they too may know of your great love for the world. In Jesus' precious name we pray, Amen.

I think you might have figured out by now that this time of the year means a lot to me. Oh, I love Christmas, the birth of our savior, and all the other holiday seasons, but Lent, Holy Week, and Easter are the very "foundation" of our lives, as well as the very "foundation" of our beliefs. Without Jesus and the cross, there would be nothing for us. Our lives would be a void; one long continuous time without hope, with nothing to look forward to, and a time filled with despair.

Our hope comes from the Bible, and especially from the words of Jesus as recorded in the 4 Gospels. This year, being inspired by one of my favorite authors, Walter Wangerin Jr., I've chosen to use a number of

verses from the book of Mark to express the story of God's gift of salvation to us.

Mark is an interesting book. First, it is believed to be the oldest of the four Gospels. Mark also writes and reads differently than the other three. For one, Mark does not add a lot of wording to tell a story or incident. In fact, I've heard him called the "Jack Webb" of the Bible. (Remember Dragnet? "Just the facts.") In fact, the first thirteen chapters are written in a way that do not show any dates or times of the year, except in vague and brief phrases. He uses statements like "in those days." Which days? He says "during harvest," but doesn't say which harvest. If the story moves quickly, Mark just says "immediately." If the story moves slowly, he says "after some days," or "later that day," or "after six days."

In fact, if all we had were the first thirteen chapters of Mark, all we would possibly know was, a charismatic rabbi was around, did some miracles, taught ethical lessons to people, and was a thorn in the side of some priests. This rabbi may have been remarkable, but not a whole lot different than other rabbi throughout the ages. Despite Jesus' attempts to reveal to the disciples who He is, there are few revelations of God, and little talk of a savior of mankind.

But we also need to look at what these first chapters seem to be doing and saying behind the words. As you progress through the chapters, the healings and miracles of Jesus start to decrease. As we get closer to chapter fourteen, Jesus speaks more and more about forgiveness. I get a sense of Mark saying, "There is more to come," and "You ain't seen

nothing yet.” But still, Mark gives us no definite time frame that we can tell when, where, or even what time of year it is.

Enter chapter fourteen. (Where I suggested you begin reading last week) Suddenly everything changes! It’s as if the whole story that he is telling, begins right here. Mark writes, “It is two days before the Passover.” Suddenly, we know the exact time of the year. We know what the people are doing, and even see the world as it was at that time. We see Jesus in a moment of that time, a time we know because of the stories we have been taught. It is a moment that we know is dangerous. A time where we grow tense because we know what is about to happen. It is Wednesday, the thirteenth day of the month of Nisan, when Jesus begins to bring us “all things new.”

We now enter the very story that Mark has intended to bring to us all along. The story he relates is the true identity of Jesus, our Savior, “who came for to die.” He reveals to us now, through actual time, the core event of The Gospel (The good news). For without this story, there would be no Gospel at all.

I pray your daily readings, especially chapters fourteen and fifteen of Mark, wake your hearts and souls, and bless you as you enter this journey to the cross.

In His Peace,

*Rich*