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Mark 1: 9-15

February 21, 2021

Lent 1 Year B

Prepared for: Lutheran Church of our Saviour, Greenville, SC

- Today's gospel lesson is only six verses long, but has three different scenes.
 - 1: Jesus' baptism.
 - "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."
 - In Mark, there is no indication that anyone other than Jesus hears God's proclamation. In fact, it appears to be a private experience between Jesus and God.
 - 2: Jesus is thrown out into the wilderness, where he spends forty days facing temptation from Satan while "angels waited on him."
 - Note that the verb translated as "drove" in the NRSV is the much more powerful "thrown out."
 - This is the word we might use when a bouncer tosses an unruly patron out of a bar. The Spirit was not gentle with the Lord. This was not a gentle nudge. Instead, Jesus was picked up by the coat collar and tossed into the wilderness.
 - Note also that Mark does not give any description of Jesus' experience. We know only that he was tempted by Satan.
 - 3: Jesus comes to Galilee "proclaiming the Good News of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God has come near; repent and have faith in the good news.'"
- Since my husband talked about mountaintop experiences last week, let's talk first about wilderness experiences this week! Here are a few that I've witnessed:
 - A teenage girl standing, alone, staring at pregnancy tests in the store
 - What if it's positive? Am I ready to be a mom? Will my boyfriend support me? How do I tell my parents?
 - What if it's negative? Will I be relieved? Or?
 - No one should ever have to stand beside their own child's grave!
 - The pre-teen child who has been told that their parents are getting divorced.
 - Who will I live with? Will I have a place in the other parent's home? Will the other parent still love me?
 - Will they still fight?
 - The high school senior who just received a letter of rejection from their first college choice
 - Will any of the other colleges accept me? Will I have to stay closer to home? (OR: Will I have to go further from home?) What do I do now?
 - A parent who has just been given the news that cancer will soon take their son's life.
 - This hurts.

- How do we support our daughter-in-law and grandchildren when we're hurting ourselves?
 - The newly widowed. The individual injured in a car accident. The young men and women who lost their jobs because their employer moved the company elsewhere.
 - The list could be endless, couldn't it?
- It could be argued that some (maybe even most) of the wilderness experiences we have in our lifetimes are due to our own personal choices.
 - God might have planted Jesus in Mary's womb, but that teenage girl's possible pregnancy may very well have been a consequence of her own actions.
 - The couple whose divorce has brought their child (and themselves) to a place of wilderness may be responsible for the fracture in their relationship.
 - And the teenager who has been rejected by their favorite college might have only themselves to blame if they received poor grades and/or failed to be engaged with the community around them.
- At least as often, though, humanity finds ourselves in the wilderness through no fault of our own.
 - Who can blame parents for the disease that took their child's life? Or the one left behind when a spouse dies? Or the victim of an accident? Or the employees of the business whose owners chose to abandon their workers?
- Hear these words: "You are my child, the beloved; with you, I am well-pleased."
 - God made a promise to Jesus at his baptism. God makes the same promise to us. God makes the same promise to you!
- And then, when Jesus was in the wilderness, "angels waited on Jesus."
 - Angels are servants of God who share God's love.
 - Not always some strange being from another place.
 - You are the angels serving one another—and the stranger—when they are thrown into the wilderness.
 - This is true no matter what brought us to the wilderness!
 - God's love is embodied in the love we embody for others.
- Hear these words, from the Savior himself, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent and believe in the good news!"
 - The time is fulfilled. Is. Not will be. Is. It's here.
 - The kingdom of God has come near. Has come. Not "will come." Has come. It's already happened.
 - And "believe" is "have faith."
 - This is the promise of our faith: It's a done deal. You are God's child. You are God's beloved. You are God's servant. You are God's love.