

Rev. Thomas Emery
“Appearance and Reality” Mark 1:4-11
Salem Presbyterian Church
Sunday, January 11, 2015

In the Book of Mark, you get the impression that Jesus has come to take charge of the world to release you from whatever holds you back. He comes to set you free from whatever enslaves you, to heal you of whatever ails you, and to fill your life with meaning and joy. So, John the Baptist calls us to get ready for the coming Christ by making the trek out into the desert to unclench our fingers holding onto this world and to set us free from worldly attachments. The Promised Land is on the horizon, but cannot be experienced until we journey into the personal brokenness of the wilderness. If there has ever been a generation that needs to hear and respond to John the Baptist's call to the wilderness it is ours, isn't it? Thus, Mark presents Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah, the Son of God, the Savior of all the people, and the Lord of all life. He wanted his readers to grasp the fact that in Jesus Christ, the limitless power of God has been incarnated and made available to each one of us.

TEACHING POINTS

Teaching Point One: *The Gospel good news is that God knows we are here, and God cares about us.* He loves so much that He comes Himself not to bring the good news, but to be the Good News.

Teaching Point Two: *God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance to turn our lives in a fulfilling direction.* You may give up on God, but God is not going to give up on you.

Teaching Point Three: *We experience that the Kingdom is at hand, because we have repented and believed the Gospel.* To believe is to move with full speed and reckless abandon in the new direction.

THIS WEEK'S MEMORY VERSE

This messenger was John the Baptist. He was in the wilderness and preached that people should be baptized to show that they had repented of their sins and turned to God to be forgiven (Mark 1:4 NLT).

ACTION POINT

We must repent by turning away from envy, jealousy, selfishness, unforgiveness, disobedience, promiscuity, and every other act that violates the Creator's intent, that we love Him and love others with all we are. We will never receive all the wondrous things the Scriptures promise to us until we have made this "about face." There is a dam cutting off the flow of the Spirit of God. The Lord desires to come to us, but there is no means, until we repent. So John the Baptist calls us to repentance. Jesus is coming. Are we ready? Let us turn from our own directions and turn toward our loving God by asking God's forgiveness of our sins and from here on making Jesus Lord of our lives.