

Sermon February 21 2018

### **Mark 1:9-15**

**9** About that time, Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and John baptized him in the Jordan River. **10** While he was coming up out of the water, Jesus saw heaven splitting open and the Spirit, like a dove, coming down on him. **11** And there was a voice from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I dearly love; in you I find happiness.”

**12** At once the Spirit forced Jesus out into the wilderness. **13** He was in the wilderness for forty days, tempted by Satan. He was among the wild animals, and the angels took care of him.

**14** After John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee announcing God’s good news, **15** saying, “Now is the time! Here comes God’s kingdom! Change your hearts and lives, and trust this good news!”

### **Sermon**

Lord, open my lips and my mouth will proclaim your praise. Lord open our hearts and our lives will sing out your name: Amen.

Who saw Black Panther?

- Enthralled with Wakanda, a utopian kingdom hidden among the strife of the world
- A nation of technological advancement far beyond anything we’ve known that’s simultaneously controlled by those typically marginalized in the post-industrial world, people and especially women of color.
- Wakanda is something like the Kingdom of God.
- Let’s let that sit in the back of our minds for a while and see what else arises.

Re+Forming Faith

- Reforming, Evolving Faith

### **Rediscover**

- Jesus proclaims, “The Kingdom of God has come near!”
- Reintroduction to the reign of Eden.
- Proclamation of God’s goodness amidst the world’s

Do we really need to rediscover God? God's kingdom?

Yesterday, in chapel at Trinity, our own Dr. Bryant said something to this effect: *Looking for God can sometimes feel like looking for footprints in the ocean.*

- sometimes, even when we trust God's with us, we can't see the evidence. We need to rediscover God.
- Like Wakanda, the kingdom remains hidden, often behind the suffering, the injustice, the confusion of the world.
- In traditional Lutheran language, and for you lovers of Latin out there, we call that *deus absconditus*, God hidden. Or in a phrase that I love even more, you might hear that God exists *sub contrario*, under the opposite of Godself.
- Is that bad news? Or good news?

When in college, I visited Greece as a part of an "In the Footsteps of Paul" course. We followed Elizabeth, our tour guide, a native of Greece who loved her country's history, her country's potential, and wanted us all to see and know of its present excellence. We saw it, from the ruins of Athens and Phillipi to the tomb of Phillip II (father of Alexander the great) to the most wondrous of all: a gyro with French fries in it, but get this, the potatoes were fried in olive oil. She showed us the best of her home country.

Jesus comes as a **tour guide**, native of that land introducing us to the kingdom we were born for but have never fully seen.

Jesus comes as a tour guide, but more than a tour guide.

The summer after we got engaged, my wife Michelle (then my fiancé) had reconstructive back surgery to correct a nearly 90 degree curve to her spine.

- physical and occupational therapists reintroduced her to her body, something she'd known before but now had to learn all over again, but this time infused with chromium, cobalt, and titanium.

Jesus is something of an **occupational therapist**, reintroducing us to the way of life our creator intended.

Lent is the season in which Jesus reintroduces us to God's kingdom, and through God's kingdom, to ourselves.

Jesus rehabs the image of God within us by reminding us what that image looks like: self sacrificial. Merciful. Graceful. Inclusive of those at the margins.

The problem is, for us, the waves of the world wash away the evidence of God's presence in the sands of our lives. We need someone who doesn't just know the story, hasn't just seen the landscape, but has the power to even command the wind and the waves, stilling the storms in our lives that we might see the evidence of God's activity in the world.

That's the thing, you see. Jesus is more than a tour guide, more than an occupational therapist. Jesus's presence is the Kingdom of God, a foretaste of that eternal realm where our outcasts are God's insiders. In a way, Jesus is Wakanda, coming to the rest of the earth. Our reintroduction to the otherworldly reality of the Kingdom of God begins with the personal presence of God in a human body in this world. In Jesus, the hidden God is now, instead, *deus revelatus*, God revealed. The Kingdom of God, once hidden because of sin's influence, now comes to us with a face, reintroducing us to the fullness of our identity as God's creatures, as God's children, as God's images in the world.

We see that we're not made for eternal suffering and also that, when we suffer, God promises to be with us. We see that we're not made for injustice, and also that, when injustices occur, God laments its presence and acts alongside us to bring justice. We see that we're meant to know God, and that even when we don't know God, Jesus will show up, face to face, and say, "I've got some good news for you: Here comes God's kingdom." Jesus is always at work revealing what was once hidden about God.