

From the Rector's Study, the Rev. Bryce Sangster
Sunday, February 18th, 2024, Lent I
Genesis 9:8-17, Psalm 25:1-9, 1 Peter 3:18-22, Mark 1:9-15

The sequence of events may be significant and give us some insight into what is going on and for us to see the value.

It begins with Jesus being baptized. An uplifting event, a great day. Then forty days in a row in the wilderness, then the bad news about John the Baptist being arrested.

Because Jesus uses the same phrasing as John the Baptist, The Kingdom of God has come near, repent, and believe the good news, the explanation is that Jesus is continuing the ministry begun by John. That John's arrest sets the stage for Jesus to start his ministry.

But what does that mean for us today?

Perhaps it means bringing together the two ideas. Jesus' phrase the Kingdom of God has come near repent and believe the good news and the symbol of the rainbow.

Both the rainbow and the good news come at the end. There is the reality of the Kingdom of God always being near even if we cannot see or acknowledge the presence of the Kingdom. Then the act of repentance.

One image of repentance is the bow and arrow, and repentance is changing our aim. Another way of looking at this is to see the movement from challenge and struggle to the good news after. The idea which comes to mind is the psychological term delayed gratification. Calling us to trust in the good news and that we can get through the struggle to get to the good news.

At the baptism of the Lord, I mentioned the promises we make at the service of baptism. And we are all asked to make those promises in the renewing of our own baptismal vows.

And to refresh our memory they are:

Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers?

People I will, with God's help.

Will you persevere in resisting evil and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord? **People I will, with God's help.**

Will you proclaim by word and example the good news of God in Christ?

People I will, with God's help.

Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbour as yourself?
People I will, with God's help.

Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being? **People I will, with God's help.**

Will you strive to safeguard the integrity of God's creation, and respect, sustain and renew the life of the Earth? **People I will, with God's help.**

This suggests to me that one way to understand repentance is to live our lives in a way which moves toward living out these promises. That the good news and the rainbow is not just for us but to be of benefit to one and all.

Then part of what repentance is: asking ourselves if we are trying to fulfill the promises made at baptisms and if not, how do we make the change to make this possible?

That the Kingdom of God and the Good News comes to us and is expressed in two ways.

That there is a hidden and mysterious element to this and therefore can be passed off as something else. The other morning, waking up and looking out and seeing the brightness of the new day begin and seeing the crescent moon in the sky at the same time. Was that from God or just there for all to see as a natural phenomenon?

And that the presence of the Kingdom of God may be part of a process. God is with us through both the good and bad times and gets us through the tough times to come out to the other side to some sort of resolution or ending where we can feel a sense of relief.

Amen

The Lord bless *you* and watch over *you*,
the Lord make his face shine upon *you*
and be gracious to *you*,
the Lord look kindly on *you*
and give *you* peace;
and the blessing ...