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| Isaiah 40:1-11Mark 1:1-8 | Advent 2 - Messengers | Pinelands – 9am – 08/12/2024Thornton – 10:30am – 08/12/2024 |

**Remember the Story of Paul Revere?**

**Henry Longfellow** writes in his Poem entitled **Paul Revere’s Ride…**

*Listen, my children, and you shall hear*

*Of the midnight ride of Paul Revere,*

*On the eighteenth of April, in Seventy-Five:*

*Hardly a man is now alive*

*Who remembers that famous day and year.*

*He said to his friend, “If the British march*

*By land or sea from the town to-night,*

*Hang a lantern aloft in the belfry-arch*

*Of the North-Church-tower, as a signal-light,—*

*One if by land, and two if by sea;*

*And I on the opposite shore will be,*

*Ready to ride and spread the alarm*

*Through every Middlesex village and farm,*

*For the country-folk to be up and to arm.”*

*So through the night rode Paul Revere;*

*And so through the night went his cry of alarm*

*To every Middlesex village and farm,—*

*A cry of defiance, and not of fear,*

*A voice in the darkness, a knock at the door,*

*And a word that shall echo forevermore!*

*The people will waken and listen to hear*

*The hurrying hoof-beats of that steed,*

*And the midnight message of Paul Revere.*

The Story is that…

**Paul Revere** rode on horse back through the villages and farms

to warn the people of the approaching British soldiers.

**Therefore…** they were able to ***RESIST AN INVASION.***

**ONLY made Possible** because…

**THE MESSENGER…** warned them and… they **LISTENED…**

 and they… **RESPONDED**

We are in the second week of **Advent** and an important truth

stands out in Scriptures for today…

 God’s Coming is always announced

 There is a **MESSENGER…**

 A time of **Preparation** ***(Listening)*** and….

**A RESPONSE**.

There are a few **MESSENGERS** in our Scriptures today…

**Firstly ISAIAH…** Speaking to a people who…

have been carried off into Exile

 are grieving their lost home and lost Faith

 are tempted to believe that their God…

 had abandoned them.

**Secondly** there is **MARK *(the Gospel Writer)***

 Writing at a time of great political and Social upheaval…

 The aftermath of the Jewish uprising of 66AD

 War had followed.

 Roman oppression and persecution were still…

a very real thing.

**Thirdly** there was **JOHN THE BAPTISER**

 Dressed like an Old Testament Prophet

 Breaking the Silence of **300 years of…**

***NO*** Prophets and  ***NO*** Prophesies

 Becoming…

the Link between the OT and the NT

the Bridge between…

the Old Covenant and the New Covenant

the way of the External Law and the Internal Spirit

**Each MESSENGER** has a **MESSAGE / WARNING**

**ISAIAH…**

 Telling God’s People…

GOD is Coming… Prepare the way

 There is a NEW World Coming…

 God will COMFORT his People

 The Sovereign Lord is Coming

 *(Hope and PEACE)*

***ARE YOU LISTENING ?***

**MARK…**

 Referencing the Prophets **ISAIAH** and **MALACHI…**

 The ***“Day of the Lord”*** is Coming…

 Judgement and Protection.

 Mark’s readers would have been well aware of the…

 Old Testament… Torah, Prophets and Promises.

 **Mark validates** **John the Baptist** as…

 the Forerunner to the ***MESSAIH.***

***ARE YOU LISTENING ?***

**JOHN the BAPTISER…**

Significant on 2 levels…

 Firstly - Validates the ministry of Jesus… as ***Messiah***

 John is Preparing the way.

 Secondly - He ***Prepares People*** for the work that JESUS

 Is going to do… to fulfil the prophecy of Jeremiah

 The Law must move from an external checklist,

 To being written on the Heart *(Jer 31)*

 **JOHN is CLEAR…** GOD is COMING / JESUS is COMING

 Do not miss out on this opportunity.

***ARE YOU LISTENING ?***

**HERE WE SIT TODAY…** **The year is 2024**

The context might be a little different with…

 *Internet, Social Media, Computors,*

 *Technology, Sophistication, etc.*

***BUT…***  **The MESSAGE IS THE SAME**

**GOD is COMING,** *Prepare the Way*

**GOD is HERE,** *Watch and See*

***EMMANUEL,*  GOD is WITH US** – ***Jesus is Coming***

**Each…** MESSENGER **has a…**  ***MESSAGE***

**Each…**  MESSAGE **requires a…** ***RESPONSE***

***ARE YOU… LISTENING ?*** *WATCHING? TALKING?*

***BUT…***  It goes… ***DEEPER*** than That.

 It requires… ***MORE***  than That.

**We are all… *MESSENGERS***

We are the… ISAIAHs of Today

 MARKs of Today

 JOHNs of Today

***YOU… and YOU… and YOU… and YOU…***

 Are the… ***MESSENGERs***  **of TODAY.**

There is… Poverty and Need

 Unfair Trade Restrictions and upside down Economy

 Third World Debt and disparity between Rich and Poor

 War and Conflict on every front

 Climate Change and Global Issues

 Personal Struggles and Hurdles to overcome

 Broken Relationships and very low Moral Standards

 Greed and Power are always at play

**We might feel** **OPPRESSSED** and **ABANDONED…**

 Just like we read in the pages of Scripture.

**We** **DESPERATELY** and **DEFINITELY**

**NEED**  ***MESSENGERS*** who will **remind us…**

 THAT… **God is Coming,**

 **God is Here**

 **God is EMMANUEL**

***YOU…*** are **GOD’s *MESSENGER***

***WE…*** are **GOD’s *MESSENGERS***

It may be a **Daunting Call…**

 ***BUT…*** If we want to experience

GOD’s Coming,

And the **HOPE and PEACE** it brings…

**WE MUST ANSWER the CALL…**

 **And…**  **IF NOT US, THEN WHO?**

**Isaiah 40:1-11 Words of Hope**

“Comfort my people,” says our God. “Comfort them!

Encourage the people of Jerusalem.

Tell them they have suffered long enough

 and their sins are now forgiven.

I have punished them in full for all their sins.”

A voice cries out,

“Prepare in the wilderness a road for the Lord!

 Clear the way in the desert for our God!

Fill every valley;

 level every mountain.

The hills will become a plain,

 and the rough country will be made smooth.

Then the glory of the Lord will be revealed,

 and all people will see it.

The Lord himself has promised this.”

A voice cries out, “Proclaim a message!”

“What message shall I proclaim?” I ask.

“Proclaim that all human beings are like grass;

 they last no longer than wild flowers.

Grass withers and flowers fade

 when the Lord sends the wind blowing over them.

 People are no more enduring than grass.

Yes, grass withers and flowers fade,

 but the word of our God endures forever.”

Jerusalem, go up on a high mountain

 and proclaim the good news!

Call out with a loud voice, Zion;

 announce the good news!

Speak out and do not be afraid.

Tell the towns of Judah

 that their God is coming!

The Sovereign Lord is coming to rule with power,

 bringing with him the people he has rescued.

He will take care of his flock like a shepherd;

 he will gather the lambs together

 and carry them in his arms;

 he will gently lead their mothers.

**Mark 1:1-8 The Preaching of John the Baptist**

This is the Good News about Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It began as the prophet Isaiah had written:

“God said, ‘I will send my messenger ahead of you

 to open the way for you.’

Someone is shouting in the desert,

 ‘Get the road ready for the Lord;

 make a straight path for him to travel!’”

So John appeared in the desert, baptizing and preaching. “Turn away from your sins and be baptized,” he told the people, “and God will forgive your sins.” Many people from the province of Judea and the city of Jerusalem went out to hear John. They confessed their sins, and he baptized them in the Jordan River.

John wore clothes made of camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. He announced to the people, “The man who will come after me is much greater than I am. I am not good enough even to bend down and untie his sandals. I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”