

Second Sunday in Advent, Year B

READY OR NOT, HERE I COME

Mark 1:1-8

Second Sunday in Advent

Analysis by Timothy Hoyer

1The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. 2As it is written in the prophet Isaiah, "See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way; 3the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,'" 4John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 5And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. 6Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. 7He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. 8I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."



Queen's Walk, preparing the way for the trams – by John Sutton [From Wikimedia Commons](#)

“The one more powerful arrives as a helpless baby... There is the power of God.”

Note: In each of these steps below, “Grounding” refers to the scriptural text, “Tracking” comments on our own lives under “diagnosis” – where God sees through us in all the truth of our sinfulness, and “Crossing” refers to how Christ’s cross is the “prognosis” that “sees us through” in the promise of his good news – crossing out God’s just judgment of our lives, giving us instead Christ’s mercy and grace.

Diagnosis: Life Is Crooked

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem): We Are Prepared For Crookedness

Grounding: The messenger had to get things ready. God was doing something good and new (thus good news) that nobody knew about. You can't get ready for something you don't even know exists.

Tracking: We know what exists in our lives. We are well prepared to get a job. We are prepared to value winning, to pay attention to our needs, and we are prepared to work hard so others profit. And we learn well to blame, to point out the faults of others, to demean those who are different, to be mean, to not care, to condemn, and that we have to prove our worth by what we do. Those are the things we trust to make life feel good for us, but they are what God calls the crookedness of life. The world has nothing and does nothing to tell us to prepare for someone who will baptize us with the Holy Spirit and give us love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, and more (Galatians 5).

Step 2: Advance Diagnosis (Internal Problem): We Put Our Trust In The Wrong Basket

Grounding: The news is a promise. The news is promised to be good. Mark promises the news is about Jesus Christ, he promises that Jesus is chosen by God who anointed him (the Christ), and he promises that Jesus is the Son of God. The messenger named John promises that he is to prepare people for the coming of Jesus by getting them to turn around and get ready to be forgiven by the Son of God.

Tracking: People get to tell John the baptizer how they were facing the wrong way. They were trusting other things to make their lives work (the crookedness of life). So their relationship with God was faulty and in disrepair. They trusted the wrong promises. John got them to look at what they were trusting to give them good things in their lives. And they saw

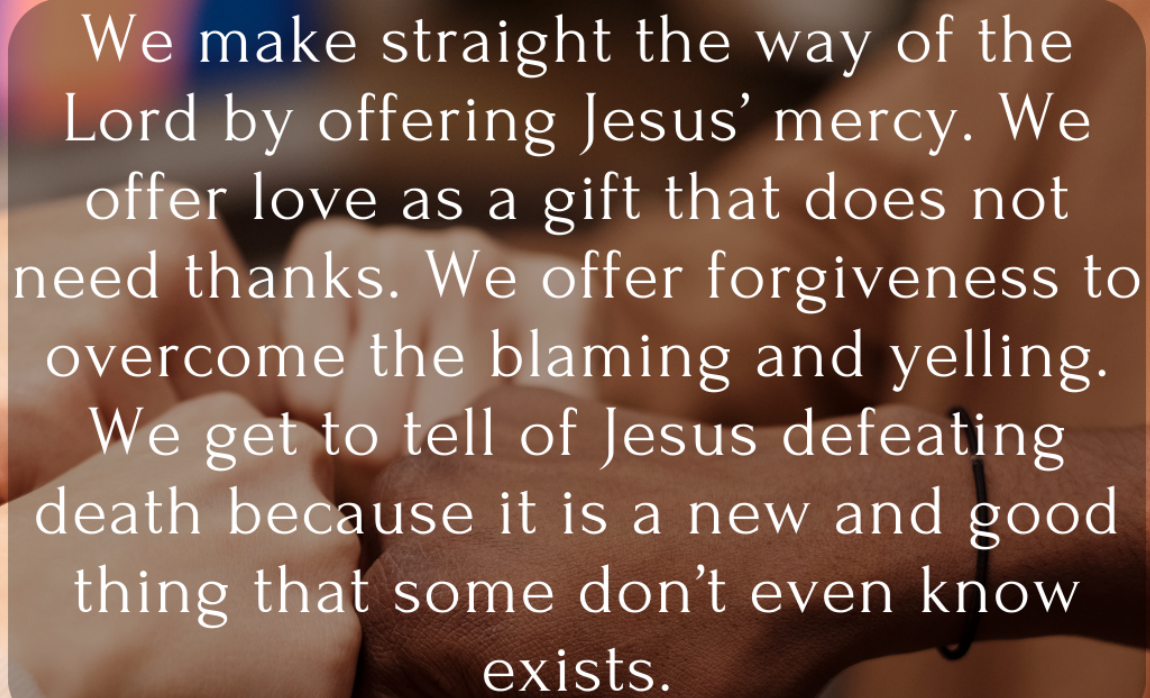
they were not trusting God. For when one confesses one's sins (v. 5), one is confessing one has not loved and trusted God. John's message freed the people to confess because they were promised that the one who was coming will forgive them instead of condemn them. Condemning is what they were used to.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem): We Know All Comes To An End

Grounding: This is the beginning of a new relationship with God. The new relationship is based on Jesus, the Son of God. Get ready because God is coming.

Tracking: When the plumber arrives at your house, it is not for a social call. The plumber comes because there is a problem that the plumber needs to fix. So when the Son of God arrives, something needs to be fixed, namely, "sins," that is, our faulty relationship with God and what

that relationship is based on (the crookedness of life) Right now it is based on judgment, on retribution, of getting what one deserves. It is based on a law that all things, all of us, must end. We know that. God certainly does.



We make straight the way of the Lord by offering Jesus' mercy. We offer love as a gift that does not need thanks. We offer forgiveness to overcome the blaming and yelling. We get to tell of Jesus defeating death because it is a new and good thing that some don't even know exists.

From Canva

Prognosis: God Makes the Crooked Straight

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution): The Beginning Starts With Jesus

Grounding: Someone more powerful than John the baptizer was coming (v.7). But it was not the power of force or threat or fear. It was the power of Jesus dying and rising from the dead. He is the power to defeat death and give life. He is the power to defeat condemnation and give forgiveness and create mercy. He

is the power to create new hearts in which God, the Holy Spirit, would live. That power of life and mercy and the Holy Spirit was a new relationship with God.

Crossing: That one more powerful comes to us now. He came to give us that new relationship with God. That is why we get ready for Christmas, for the coming of the one more powerful than John. That one more powerful arrives as a helpless baby, helplessness even unto death on a cross. There is the power of God.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution): Jesus' Promises Are For Us To Trust

Grounding: The one more powerful defeats death and condemnation for us. That is his promise. What Jesus did is for us today. He offers himself and his mercy to us as our new relationship with God. The Spirit comes to us and that Spirit creates in us a new heart that trusts Jesus and his promises.

Crossing: We celebrate Christmas because the birth of Jesus is how God keeps his promise to give us life and mercy. We tell the story of Christmas so that we hear God's promise of Jesus is for us. And the Holy Spirit is given to us and creates in us new hearts that trust Jesus and his promises. We trust the right promises, the promises of Jesus, the one risen from the dead.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution): We Make Straight The Way Of Jesus To Others

Grounding: We now know of this good news and the new things it brings into existence. The crookedness of people's lives is still there. They still do not know of the new things Jesus brings. We get to prepare the way of the Lord to them.

Crossing: As people still experience relationships and fears of judgment and condemnation, the threats of doing what they should do, as they blame and yell at each other, we make straight the

way of the Lord by offering them Jesus' mercy. We offer love as a gift that does not need thanks. We offer forgiveness to overcome the blaming and yelling. We get to tell them of Jesus defeating death because it is a new and good thing that they don't even know exists.