

## “Awaken to Advent - Get Up to Clean Up”

Scripture: Mark 1:1-8

Graphics: bedroom, large alarm clock, time, wash basin, towel

Big Truth: Advent is a coming, and appearing. For Christians, this is the season during which we prepare our hearts to once again celebrate the incarnation of Jesus on earth. In many ways, we've felt like we've been sleeping - not knowing how to be awake right now - amidst all the political, social, medical, and financial struggles. Yet, while the world is in darkness, God IS light. Advent gives the people of the Panama UMC the opportunity to awaken to the advent of Jesus and prepare for His second coming.

Focus Phrase: Every day is a new opportunity to prepare to follow Jesus through repentance.

### 1. Introduction

#### A. PRAY!

- B. Back in the old days, every bedroom had a **wash basin** like this one in it. Before the days of running water or sewers, a wash basin like this one would be used to wash up after you got up in the morning.
- C. I don't know about you, but washing up in the morning is a great way for me to wake up.
- D. I read an article this week that said that besides turning on a bright light or opening the curtains first thing in the morning to let in light (if you get up after sunrise), washing one's face is a great way to stop the sleep cycle and wake up!
- E. Last week, we heard from Jesus in the gospel of Mark when he told the disciples that He was going to come back. And just before He comes back, the world will seem to be in darkness. Yet...in the darkness, there's hope because God is at work. God is putting things in place for Jesus to come back, just like He did when Jesus came the first time. In the darkness, God is preparing to shine His light of HOPE in our world.
- F. The darkness was and is no surprise to God. It's not like God is fumbling around in the dark, not knowing what is coming or when. Even though WE don't know when the darkness will end and Jesus will come back, this season of Advent is an incredible gift of preparing for that second coming, as we prepare to celebrate Jesus' first coming.
- G. In today's scripture from Mark chapter 1, we go back to the beginning. And that word “beginning” is an important word for us today, so jot that down somewhere in your notes and underline it.
- H. We'll be at the beginning of Mark's gospel. We'll watch as John the baptizer begins to prepare the way for Jesus. We'll witness the beginning of Jesus' ministry through his baptism. And, we'll get some application for us to begin each day with Jesus. And, an added bonus for us today is that we'll celebrate the baptisms of three people who are beginning their journey with Jesus.

- I. The title of our message is **Get Up to Clean Up**. And, from the beginning of creation to the beginning of THIS day, God has been calling His people to turn their faces to Him and reject the sin in their lives...in our lives.
- J. When the alarm goes off and we wake up, it's time to get up and clean up. Jesus is calling us today to Get Up to Clean Up, so we'll be ready for Him!
- K. Let's turn in our Bibles to Mark chapter 1, starting in verse 1.

## 2. Scripture

### A. READ Mark 1:1

- i. There's that word - beginning.
- ii. Each of the gospels - Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John - are a testimony about Jesus Christ. The gospels were not written to be historical records of things that Jesus did, although they are that. The gospels weren't written as a set of teachings that we are to follow, although they contain those.
- iii. The gospels were inspired by the Holy Spirit working through men and women in the first century after Jesus' death, to tell the world about God's divine action FOR the world, as His kingdom - His rule and reign - was BEGINNING - breaking into - the world. And it all started with Jesus.
- iv. So, not only is verse 1 the beginning of Mark's testimony about Jesus, but it's THE good news (in the Greek is euangelion - the gospel proclamation) about God's divine purposes through Jesus.
- v. The gospels are SO much more than four accounts of Jesus. They are the trumpet sound preparing us for the beginning of the coming of the new heaven and new earth when Jesus Christ returns - God's anointed...that's what Christ means.
- vi. The BEGINNING of the good news of Jesus Christ, Son of God. Look at verse 2...Mark shifts from Jesus, to someone who will prepare the way for Jesus to begin his ministry...John the Baptizer...

### B. READ Mark 1:2-8

- i. Throughout this whole passage, you just get the sense that Mark was telling his readers that when John appeared out of the wilderness, everything was beginning. What the Jewish people had been waiting in hope for, was beginning to happen. There's an incredible sense of hope, even in the darkness, that God was up to something amazing...world changing...life altering.
- ii. The prophets Isaiah and Malachi told about this person that would be the one to announce the coming Messiah. The Jewish people were on the lookout for this person - this prophet of prophets, who would sound the alarm.

- iii. John the Baptizer, coming out of the wilderness, wearing camel's hair and a leather belt, eating weird stuff from nature...HE would be the one to begin the beginning. And when the Jewish people, who had been waiting, heard the bell sound, they went out to prepare themselves for this beginning.
- iv. Mark wrote that John had one message: "REPENT!"
- v. The beginning of the beginning is to repent of sin, SO THAT there can be forgiveness of sin. There is no salvation apart from repentance and forgiveness. And he did that by inviting people to a ritual washing that symbolized the washing away of sin through the act of repentance.
- vi. Repentance is not simply feeling sorry for the bad things we do. It's SO MUCH MORE. Repentance for the forgiveness of sins is an intentional process of seeing our sin, rejecting the sin, turning FROM the sin, so that we can face God.
- vii. What we're tempted to do is look in the mirror and see dirt on our faces, then simply turn away from the mirror so we don't see our sin. If we avert our eyes and don't look at the sin, or call it something else, then it's OK.
- viii. Yet, John was calling everyone to look in the mirror, see dirt on your face, go to the wash basin, wash the sin off, and then turn to face the day that God has given you to live.
- ix. People from ALL OVER were flocking to the Jordan River to go down into the waters of baptism. But before they could go under the water, they needed to confess and repent of their sin, and then go down into the river.
- x. When they came out, it was a new beginning...a new life...a new trajectory and set of rules.
- xi. But, see, that was just the beginning. John was not the Messiah. John was the one preparing the people FOR the Messiah. When the Messiah appeared, he would baptize with the Holy Spirit... In Matthew and Luke's gospels, they add "...and fire." It's a cleansing. It's a purification. It's a refining. It's the beginning of the process of re-orienting one's life to the Messiah Jesus, the Christ, and His life.
- xii. Baptism is never the end of a journey, but a beginning. It's a doorway. I like to think of it as a jetway that takes you to the plane that then takes off for the life that God wants for you.
- xiii. It's all about Jesus. And, it begins with repentance, forgiveness of sin, and baptism by water AND the Holy Spirit and fire.

### **3. Application**

- A. When you awake in morning, does anyone here look their best? It's not always pretty, is it? There are always crusty things in your eyes. Wrinkles

from the pillow. Hair a mess, PJs bunched up. Yet, you get up to clean up! You prepare for the day, right from the place you start.

- B. It's no different when you begin your Christian journey. You started where you started. You've heard it said, "...that you don't clean up BEFORE you can come to Jesus. You come to Jesus to begin the process of getting clean."
- C. The biggest mark of the transition to the beginning of the Christian life is that you have a collective set of sins that have been pulling you away from Jesus. And it's from that sin that you and I are called to awaken and clean up - to get our hearts right so that the life we live is holy and useful to God.
- D. Hebrews 12:1-3 says this, "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart."
- E. Jesus is calling you to turn from your sin, today, and fix your eyes on him. The beginning of the gospel has always pointed to the Cross and empty tomb...and is now pointing to the second coming.
- F. Yet, you and I live NOW...and are called to repent and live for Jesus.
- G. J.D. Walt said this, "Some people still believe we can't fix our gaze on Jesus until we've "thrown off" our entangling sin. People, the exact opposite is true. We can't throw off our entangling sin until we fix our eyes on Jesus. When we do this, sin has a way of becoming irrelevant, doesn't it?"
- H. For centuries, the season of LENT has been the time when new believers are prepared for baptism...when the church reflects on its sin. That's why LENT starts with Ash Wednesday...a day of repentance.
- I. Yet, Advent is also a season of preparation. Lent, Advent, and every day between those two seasons, those are your opportunity to turn to God.
- J. In your notes, write this down, **Every day is a new opportunity to prepare to follow Jesus through repentance.**
- K. Every day! Not just the day you went down into the waters of baptism...but every day! Every day is the day to repent and be forgiven. Every day is the day to confess your sin and be made clean.
- L. Let me give us two practical applications for this teaching about the beginning of the good news, coming to you and me this Christmas.
  - i. First, **Get Up to Clean Up EVERY DAY in FAITH.**

- a. You have the opportunity every day to wash up for the day, without full knowledge of what's coming today or tomorrow.
  - b. Every morning, you have some plans...maybe a to-do list or mental list of things that need to be done. Yet, how many days of the week does everything go JUST like you planned it? Maybe 1? Probably ZERO.
  - c. When something happens to the plan, do you just give up and go back to bed? Nope...even though you probably threaten it. It may shake you and take some time to recover, but you keep going.
  - d. God continues to call you to Him every day, even though it's not like you planned. News flash: your day doesn't go as God planned for you either. Why? Because you may have said something to your spouse, or coworker that hurt them. Someone cut you off in traffic or you didn't take the time to talk to God.
  - e. Yet, it's still today! You still have Jesus in your life. He's still ready to talk to you. And as long as it's still today, there's always an opportunity to repent and turn your face to Him...to be alert and put together so that whatever comes, you'll be ready because the Holy Spirit is with you.
  - f. Every day is a new opportunity to prepare to follow Jesus through repentance.
- ii. Then, **confess your sin and repent to prepare for today** and every day.
- a. In many ways, we've lost the desire to repent. I get it. It's not fun to recount all your sin to God.
  - b. And if you have a hard time identifying your sin, think about it this way: sin is defined as missing the mark...missing the bullseye. Or, my favorite definition is that **sin as anything that grieves the heart of God**. So, when I fail to listen to someone in my office, that's sinful. When I get angry in traffic for a stupid thing, that grieves the heart of God. Certainly when there's greed, or lust, or idols I've created, that grieves the heart of God. If there's any lying or apathy or lack of love, that grieves the heart of God. That's sin.
  - c. I would encourage every one of us to get 2-3 accountability partners together and confess your sin, like scripture commands in James 5:16, "Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective."
  - d. Every Wednesday morning, I meet with 3 other pastors. The purpose of that meeting is to check in about how our souls are doing. But one piece of our meeting is to confess every sin to the other three. Talk about vulnerable! Throughout the week, I've become very aware of the things

that grieve the heart of God because I'll need to confess those to them. Doing that prepares us to lead churches and love people who are also sinners who grieve the heart of God.

- e. When you confess your sin, to God and to others, forgiveness floods in, and the beginning of the rest of your life starts.
- f. Every day is a new opportunity to prepare to follow Jesus through repentance.

#### 4. Conclusion

- A. Today, we'll be coming to the Table of Communion. Prior to that we'll be baptizing three youth and welcoming new members. We'll ask them some critical questions that they will publicly answer as a proclamation of the gospel's work in their lives. We'll join them by remembering our baptisms and, once again, going down with them into the waters of baptism...to put to death our sin nature, and rise again at the beginning.
- B. The jetway for us to come to the table...the entryway for us to be baptized...to repentance and forgiveness.
- C. Jesus' first public words after his baptism were these from Mark 1:15: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."
- D. So, as we prepare to Get up and Clean Up...we're going to pray together a prayer that was written almost 100 years ago by Bible teacher John Hunter. It will be up on the screen...and it's fairly long. Let's not rush through it, but pray it with genuine hearts. Every day is a new opportunity to prepare to follow Jesus through repentance.
- E. **Almighty and most merciful God, we acknowledge and confess that we have sinned against thee in thought, word, and deed; that we have not loved thee with all our heart and soul, with all our mind and strength; and that we have not loved our neighbor as ourselves. We beseech thee, O God, to be forgiving to what we have been, to help us to amend what we are, and of thy mercy to direct what we shall be, so that the love of goodness may ever be first in our hearts, that we may ways walk in thy commandments and ordinances blameless, and follow unto our life's end in the footsteps of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**
- F. Every day is a new opportunity to prepare to follow Jesus through repentance.
- G. PRAY!