

GROW Guide

December 31, 2023

It's Time

Mark 1:1-8

CONNECTING QUESTIONS

What has spoken “Christmas is here” to you this year?

What smell do you connect with Christmas?

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Let us pray, Stir up our hearts, O Lord, to prepare the way for the coming of your Son. Give us courage and faith to proclaim, in word and deed, the good news of your coming, even as we wait in patience for that day when Christ will come again. Amen.

CONTEXT

It is time! The season of Advent is over! Emmanuel—God with us—Jesus Christ has come. Our weary world could use some rejoicing, no? We long for the Prince of Peace in our neighborhoods, homes, cities, and war-torn countries. We also long for Jesus’ homemaking in our hearts. Come explore the many opportunities to grow in faith and carry on the work of Jesus Christ at Easter. So glad you are here!

From Pastor Paul Berge at EntertheBible.org:

The Gospel of Mark is about the good news (gospel) of Jesus Christ, who is identified as one from Nazareth at his baptism, recognized as God’s Son by fearful demonic spirits, and proclaimed as the resurrected Lord by a young man in a white robe. In Jesus of Nazareth, crucified and risen, the reign and rule of God’s kingdom has come among us.

LOOK AT THE BOOK

- Open to Mark 1. Genesis means “beginning,” which is also a key word here. What do you know about Mark?
- What’s missing? Christmas! There is no birth story of Jesus in Mark. Does verse 1 help us understand why?
- In verse one, we learn Jesus comes to us and his very presence is newsworthy. What kind of news is it? Why?
- Verse two, “as it is written”, immediately, Mark quotes a prophet. Who? Why this one?

- What does Isaiah want to tell us?
- Angel and messenger come from the same word in Greek. Notice this messenger has a specific location. Where is it? Why does that matter?
- What do you remember about the people Israel's time in the wilderness? What happened?
- Verse four, we meet someone. What do we learn about him? What was his location? What was his message?
- Repentance is a term about turning around. Why is that important to "repent" in our journeys of faith?
- Forgiveness is at the heart of John's message. Why does that seem to be at the center of the good news? Why does forgiveness matter?
- Verse 7 tells us about how John sees himself. What do we learn?
- Why is humility hard for people?
- Reflect on this poem: The Work of Christmas by Howard Thurman.

When the song of the angels is stilled, When the star in the sky is gone, When the kings and princes are home, When the shepherds are back with their flock, The work of Christmas begins:

*To find the lost,
To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among others,
To make music in the heart.*

- What do you want to talk about that has not been brought up yet?

TAKING IT HOME

Text someone this week to remind them of your appreciation for their presence in your life.

An Advent Hymn as Benediction

"Comfort, comfort now my people;
Tell of peace!" So says our God.
Comfort those who sit in darkness
Mourning under sorrow's load.
To God's people now proclaim
That God's pardon waits for them!
Tell them that their war is over;
God will reign in peace forever!