

Second Sunday of Advent, 4/12/2011, Holy Trinity

Mark 1:1-8

For to-day's Gospel we go to the beginning of Mark's Gospel.

When it was first written, the writer did not sit in front of the parchment and write "The Gospel according to Mark" at the top of the first page.

Rather, this story is "The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God."

This may be brief but it is packed full of meaning.

Does it mean that it is the beginning of this document or is it more than that?

I think it is more than that.

I think it refers to the whole story: the whole document that follows: all of it is the beginning of the gospel of Jesus.

It is a story that is not over. It has only just begun.

It is not just about past good news, but about good news that continues to unfold.

Remembering that this was written some forty years after the historic life of Jesus, I suspect that Mark was not writing good news about the past.

It was good news about Mark's present and our present.

This verse then affirms two important early Christian teachings about Jesus: he is "Christ" and "the Son of God".

Jesus, then, is the Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed One of God.

In the Jewish tradition the Messiah was very important.

For many Jews, the Messiah was a future figure who would be anointed by God to deliver Israel from centuries of oppression.

Mark affirms at the beginning of his gospel that Jesus is the Messiah, the long-awaited and hoped for anointed one of Israel.

The good news, then, is the story of Jesus the messiah.

The gospel is also the story of Jesus, the Son of God.

This is the good news for us in our present time.

This is the theology on which the Christian faith and the Christian life is built.

Jesus is the Messiah. Jesus is the Son of God.

This is the faith and life into which this child is baptised this morning and into which we were baptised.

How, then, are we holding up to this faith and life?

Is the good news of God in Jesus still good news for you?

If your answer is in the negative to these questions, then this is a good time of the year in the weeks before Christmas Day to do a spiritual check-up with prayer and reflection upon your faith and life.

I would like you to contemplate the love of God for you and all whom you love, your love for God and others and how you can hold the good news of Jesus in your life and pass it on to others.

A few weeks ago at another baptism in this church I finished with some words that I asked you to repeat and take away with you.

These words were LOVE, FAITH, HOPE, CHARITY.

Now I want you to do it again and include the word EXPECTATION.

This is expectation at the coming of Jesus in the Christmas story and his coming into your life.

So here goes: LOVE, FAITH, HOPE, CHARITY, JOY AND EXPECTATION.