

Mark 1:4-11      Arise and Shine

I am sure that all of you are aware of the difference between a morning person and a night owl. The one is ready to go with the first shafts of the dawn's light and can think and act at maximum effectiveness and efficiency early in the day.

The other could stay in bed all morning if allowed, and if forced to awake early, doesn't like to be engaged in conversation much or have to make any major decisions until later in the day and can often work long into the night before fatigue steals away their best efforts.

One of the interesting encounters, universally known I am sure, is that between a morning person and a night owl or at least someone who is not a morning person, when they meet early in the morning. The one is ready for conversation, the other pained by it.

Myself, I am not particularly one or the other, but would have to admit that I struggle to awake early and like solitude in the morning.

I was, however, raised by a woman who was capable of completing her daily chores by 9 am and never failed to invade the deepest sleep with a cheerful, "Arise and shine, its time to get up."

Her enthusiasm was often met with groans and I doubt she was ever satisfied with the substance of before school communication.

It never did, however, occur to me that she was quoting scripture. But the lectionary reading, not for today, but for yesterday, took me by surprise and I had to make use of it, from Isaiah 60, "arise, shine for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you."

Epiphany

The birth of Jesus is seen, of course, as more than a mere birth, but the dawning of a new light into the world's darkness. The life of Jesus is not merely a great human life, but the making known of a life-giving salvation that can be characterized, as it is by Paul, as a new creation.

It begins with the ministry of John the Baptist, an odd character, dressed in camel's hair and eating a strange diet, locusts and wild honey. He was preaching a message of repentance and forgiveness and claiming that there was another coming, someone better.

And then Jesus came and in one of the great ironies of the biblical story, John baptized Jesus instead of the other way around, foretelling one of the great themes, "the first shall be last, and the last first . . ."

The event of baptism itself is really very simple. It doesn't take very long, not for John and all those he baptized, or for us with our baptismal pool and heater to make sure the water is not too cold.

Next, in this one case, a remarkable thing happened next. As Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven torn open, and the Holy Spirit descending like a dove, and he heard a voice that said, "You are my son, whom I love; with you I am well-pleased." At that moment, in that out-of-the-way place in a small crowd of unnamed people, the great light shined.

### From There

From that moment things immediately began to get sticky. Jesus was led by the Spirit out in the wilderness where he was tempted by Satan. Mark tells us that it lasted 40 days but, unlike Matthew, does not go into any detail about the nature of the temptations. One can imagine that Matthew was about right; the obsession with the meeting of his own needs, temptations to glory and power.

Even after the time in the wilderness, the road Jesus travelled was filled with tensions and conflict, a conflict that would finally lead to the tragedy of the cross; which is for us not a tragedy at all, but a glory, the glory of the Lord, rising upon us, like the new day's dawn.

### Each New Day

Each day is a re-creation; it is a re-enactment of the creation itself and it is also a re-enactment of the epiphany, Christ himself rises up out of the waters of sin and death though he knew no sin and would conquer death; shining God's Grace into the darkness of our world's life.

In one sense it gives purpose to our days. We believe that each of us is also tempted and met with trouble, but that to each has been given a purpose for living that marks our times in this life. Each day we pray that God would reveal that purpose to us, not just in general, in terms of redemption and the search for goodness and holiness, but even more specifically, in terms of vocation, and daily tasks.

But there is another sense that we should never lose, that the epiphany of Christ means the New Creation has dawned, and we have been drawn into it by faith, that our lives have been shaped by it and endowed with its power.

"Arise and Shine, for your light has come, the glory of the Lord rises upon us."

### The World

In many ways our world has changed since the day that John baptized Jesus in the Jordan River. Most of

the changes have to do with technology and the past 200 years have been somewhat extreme.

In my family we used to talk about my grandmother's life. She was born in 1896 and died in 1980. She saw the advent of automobiles and airplanes and lived to see the jet age and travel to the moon. I guess it never occurred to me that the pace of change would continue to grow.

Even though we haven't been back to the moon in decades and have not yet made it to Mars, information technology has continues to change our world. Since 1980, we have gone from having one or two telephone lines in each house, to everyone now having their own phone; and now the phones are computers, cameras, news sources, social gathering places, endless gadgets and more besides. Who knows what will come next?

But *people* have not changed at all. No matter when one is alive and under what technological circumstances, people are still tempted be be obsessed by the satisfaction of their now needs, tempted to power and glory; people are still characterized by; love and hate, selfishness and compassion, greed and sacrifice, confidence and fear, desire, and concerns about excess and deprivation, about being hurt by others and hurting others.

And no matter how one defines righteousness and sin, people are still torn between the two, and that rupture is a universal darkness out of which no one escapes.

Except this:

The heavens opened, the spirit came down like a dove, the voice spoke, "you are my son, whom I love . . ."

The Word became flesh and was anointed by the baptismal waters; he served, healed, taught, and fed the multitudes, and proclaimed the Holy Light. He died and was raised!

Arise, therefore, and Shine, for the light has come upon us, the Glory of the Lord . . .

[Back](#)

[Home](#)