

The Gospel Reading

In our worship, we have a formal dialogue with God's Word. After praying the Prayer of the Day, God responds to our prayer with the First Reading that is usually from the Old Testament. And then God responds to us in the Second Reading that is usually from a New Testament Epistle. And then God responds to our prayer with the Gospel reading.

The word 'gospel' means 'good news'. The Gospel is the good news of our Lord Jesus Christ. In the Gospel reading we hear God's Word through the words and actions of Christ Jesus.

In the Christian faith, we uphold that God's Word is most fully made known to us through Jesus Christ. And in our worship, we treat the Gospel reading as more important than the other Scripture readings because of Jesus Christ.

When the Gospel reading is announced, the congregation stands to honor the presence of Jesus in our midst. The congregation welcomes Jesus' presence by saying, "Glory to you, O Lord." In most congregations, the pastor or the preacher of the day reads the Gospel reading while other people from the congregation read the other readings. This emphasizes the importance of the Gospel reading. And here at Community Lutheran Church, we have a tradition of having the entire congregation read the Gospel reading in unison to emphasize that in our baptisms in Christ Jesus, all of us are called to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ.

After the Gospel is read, the congregation praises Christ Jesus for the Word that we had received. Here at Community Lutheran Church, we praise Christ after the Gospel reader says, "This is the good news of our Lord." The congregation says, "May it grow in our minds and hearts. Praise to you, O Christ." Then at Community Lutheran Church we sing the "Alleluia Verse" to not only praise Christ but also to affirm we want to live according to Christ's Word.

The Gospel reading is always focused on Christ's words and actions except on the 2nd & 3rd Sundays in Advent. On those two Sundays, the Gospel reading is focused on John the Baptist who prepared the world for the way of Christ Jesus.

Here is the Gospel reading for the 2nd Sunday in Advent (December 6th.)

Read Mark 1:1-8.

Here are some of my thoughts to help you in your reflection on this text.

- The text begins with the announcement that this is “the beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.” This is why we call the books about Jesus – Matthew, Mark, Luke, & John – the Gospels. The word ‘gospel’ means ‘good news’.
- Verses 2-3 quotes Isaiah 40:3. In Isaiah, the prophet says that way is prepared for God to come down and establish a new Israel.
- By applying the quote from Isaiah with the ministry of John the Baptist, verses 2-3 is also referring to Malachi 3:1.
- The description of John the Baptist makes him look like the prophet Elijah. This is a reminder of what Malachi 6:5 says about how Elijah will return to prepare the way of the Lord.
- In verses 7-8, John insists that someone else is coming who is more powerful than John. John's baptism in the Jordan River just symbolized people's desire to repent (change their lives) in order to follow God. But the one coming – the Messiah – will baptize with the Holy Spirit and make people's lives new again.

Close with your own personal prayer for relief from the pandemic and economic downturn, for your family and friends, and for the Holy Spirit to prepare your hearts to know and love Jesus all the more.