

2nd Sunday of Advent B 2020

When you hear the word “Gospel,” what is the first thing that comes into your mind?

It means the Biblical books about the life of Jesus: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. It could be a metaphor for the “truth.” (At home, my parent’s words are the gospel because every time I ask them growing up, “Why?,” they would always tell me: “because I told you so”) As many of you may know, the word “gospel” comes from Old English, *gōdspel* (*gōd* "good" + *spel* "news"). St. Mark is the only evangelist who introduces the word “Gospel” in his opening statement: “*The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.*” What does this word, “Gospel” really mean?

The word gospel comes originally from the Greek word, *euaggelion* (εὐαγγέλιον), which primarily means a “reward of good tidings.” The prefix, *eu*, means “good.” The root word is *aggelos*, which means “messenger.” It came to mean “semi-divine beings” that is “angels”. However, in Jesus's time, *aggelos* did not mean “angels,” though it is often translated that way. It only meant messenger. The ending of *euaggelion*, “*ion*,” is a diminutive that makes the word into a neutral thing. The literal sense meaning then is “little something for good messengers.” But there is also a verb form of this word from the same root, *euaggelizo*. (εὐαγγελίσασθαι). It is usually translated as “preach” or “preach the gospel.” However, the ending of this word means “to be.” So, the literal sense of this word is “to be a good messenger.”

It is good for us to know the etymologies of the word, gospel, so that we can better understand the proclamation of St. Mark today. In the gospel passage today, we heard that John the Baptist is preparing the way for Jesus, the Son of God – the *euaggelion*, the Gospel – the reward of good tidings. God has become human like us to save us. Jesus is our Gospel, our reward because He has been given to us by God, the Father because of His great love for us, his children. For this reason, we can then translate the words of St. Mark as “*The beginning of the Gospel which is Jesus Christ, the Son of God.*”

Now, what is interesting on this meaning of the Gospel is its verb form, *euaggelizo*. It pertains to the being the Gospel – the to be, that is, following Jesus Christ and proclaiming His message in our lives so that we can become the Gospel ourselves, that is, the messengers of the Good News. John the Baptist did that in our gospel passage today by preparing the way of the Lord. By living the life and doing the ministry that God has ask of him, he became the bearer of Good News, Jesus Christ, which in turn, made him an instrument of God’s presence to others. The word Gospel then pertains as well to the people that God has entrusted to proclaim his message of love and peace in the world. The people should manifest the glad tidings of the Lord’s presence in their midst so that they can become the instruments of God’s redemptive presence toward others. And we are those people. We are all challenged to manifest Jesus in our midst. We are to become, “the heralds of glad tidings,” the “Gospel.”

In this time of the Pandemic, we are more than ever asked to manifest the Gospel, that is, to become the heralds of glad tidings in the challenging world that we live in today. We are asked to become the light in the darkness. In this time, it is so easy for us to become “not so much the Gospel” in our lives and the people around us. It is so easy for us to be pessimistic and discouraged because no matter what we do, we cannot seem to avoid the suffering of this world. On the personal level, we also just keep on falling into our sins, our mistakes, our doubts. When we look at our society, we see so much division, so much injustice, so much poverty, and we wonder if there still hope for a better tomorrow.

But in this Second Sunday of Advent, God has something to say to us: "I am the Gospel. I am the Good News. I am in your midst." Yes, pessimism and discouragement will always come knocking at our doors, but we must not let them in! Let us not be afraid of the seeming darkness around us. Let us not be discouraged because Jesus is our Lord and Savior; He is our Light. He will never abandon us. John the Baptist tells us, "He is coming". Isaiah assures us, "Comfort, I will give comfort to my people." St. Peter guarantees us, "God does not delay in fulfilling his promises. Indeed, the Gospel who is Jesus Christ our Lord is present in our midst. Let us find inspiration in this amazing Good News we heard today. May we become like Christ the Gospel and proclaim him in our lives. By doing this, we become, the Gospel ourselves, "heralds of good tidings", and with that comes the euaggelion, "the little something for the messenger", that is, the peace, comfort and hope that we are all longing for in our lives which we can only find in Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.