

Epiphany 2: 2017 (St Michael the Archangel)

I love the Gospel of Mark – the shortest of the Gospels and yet Mark has a way of going straight to the point.

I believe that Mark saw his function, his mission, as being one of preparation, the preparation of the people to receive their king.

The first verse of the Gospel of Mark reads:

**THE BEGINNING** OF THE GOSPEL (THE GOOD NEWS!!!) OF JESUS  
CHRIST, **THE SON OF GOD:**

Mark is so excited by this Good News, that he then immediately quotes the prophets in verse two and three...

Can you imagine his excitement...his joy...the long wait is over.

The coming of the King who is THE SON OF GOD, as foretold by our prophets of old.

It is as if he is saying: now is the time to turn away from ourselves, and to turn towards Jesus, **THE SON OF GOD.**

Yes indeed my brethren...the long wait is now over for us as well / and it is time to become excited.

It is time to get fired up for our Salvation, for He is here among us as we sit this VERY day within His Church.

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**PREPARE YE THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT.**

Mark is urging all, including each one of us to prepare the way for Lord, by God's Grace and power, that is, we are to prepare of our heart, soul, and mind.

Each one of us / are to make ready a way, an access, to our hearts and lives.

We must make straight whatever is crooked in our lives, whatever is not in line with God's holy will.

We are to throw away any obstacles which we have put in the way of His Path,

such obstruction / as self-righteousness, smug complacency, and all greed, cruelty, and slander towards one another.

Even the words of Mark concerning John the Baptist,

of his simple mode of life, reveals to us a living protest / against all selfishness and self-indulgence.

And still, even with all his self-denial /

he considered himself unfit and unworthy to render the service of untying his Masters sandal straps.

And yet, there are many who will boast with arrogant confidence their own assurance of their relationship with Christ.

Instead of being "unworthy" and humble in their service to God, they seem to want to challenge Him as they accept every form of evil – justifying through their own reasoning the acceptance of evil and wrong within our society and the world...

Well, just maybe then,

John's example of not considering ourselves worthy is a good and acceptable example for each of us.

Each of us has a wilderness within our own hearts.

A place where our will is not God's will,

a place void of the Gospel (The Good News) of Jesus Christ.

This dark place must be exposed to the Light of Christ and His Church, as her sacraments can help to bring light into those dark places.

In this Gospel, Mark is also speaking directly to the Jews,

even unto the children of Abraham for they also must be converted by Mark's baptism of conversion (of repentance and remission of sins.)

Jew or Gentile, we are to prepare the way...

that is our duty and must be the focus of our lives.

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Love first the Lord thy God, and thy neighbor second...

Is it odd to you that strangely enough, "The SELF" is not even mentioned,

which is contrary to what the world teaches and accepts.

And yet, how frequently do we put ourselves above our God and our neighbor?

How often do our priorities get confused?

Oh shall I count the ways! Don't worry, for time's sake, I will not count the ways, for they are many.

Seems simple doesn't it?

If you were do these two things, all else will fall into place...

and yet, salvation flows from this simple “summary of the law” – God and neighbor.

### Simple in words, so difficult in deeds...

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During this epiphany season, as we show forth Christ unto the world, let us begin by strengthening ourselves in order that we may strengthen others

for we are told in Mat 7:5

“..., first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.”

Today may we begin with ourselves –

let us become strong,

strong in God’s will (not ours or the worlds,) so that we may help others in spirit and truth.

Within our families let us show forth the love of Christ,

Husbands: love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it Ehp 5:25.

1Pe 3:7 As well, “Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, **giving honour unto the wife,**

as unto the weaker vessel, and as **being heirs together** of the grace of life

(of the absolute fullness of life); that your prayers be not hindered.

He that loveth his wife loveth himself we are told in Eph 5:28

/ so the contrary “He that **loveth not** his wife, loveth **not himself**.

And wives, oh yes let us come to that piece of scripture that many today ridicule as being out of date,

Eph 5:22 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.

This word submit (meaning submission comes from the same Greek word that we heard last week when Jesus returned with his parents after being unaccounted for three days, that when he was reunited with them

“he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject [G5293](#) unto them:

meaning Jesus was simply under their protection, their care, and their love.

To me, this seems like a wonderful place to be...

Now, to both parents:

Of God’s Commandments and teachings we are told:

“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD:

Deu 6:5 And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

Deu 6:6 And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart:

Deu 6:7 **And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children,**

and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house,

and when thou walkest by the way,

and when thou liest down,

and when thou risest up.

PARENTS IT IS YOUR DUTY TO GOD,

TO TEACH YOUR CHILDREN OF CHRIST;

THEREFORE, IT IS YOUR DUTY TO HAVE THEM IN CHURCH EVERY SUNDAY (ESPECIALLY IN THE SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES.)

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And finally Col 3:20 Children, (YOU ARE TO) obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.

Children, I PLEAD OF YOU, JUST BE CHILDREN before you grow and mature and lose your childhood and its innocence.

Follow Jesus Christ before all things...walk with Him, serve HIM...

and if you do this, then you will be able to survive all the so called tragedies that will pass through your lives.

The power of Jesus makes each one of you victorious over whatever ills you may have.

NOTHING IS AS IMPORTANT TO YOUR LIFE, YOUR HAPPINESS, YOUR JOY, AND YOUR PEACE –

NOTHING should ever be ABOVE JESUS CHRIST.

Not friends, not sports, not entertainment, not drugs, not lifestyles, not politics, not pride, not even self.

LET ME TELL ALL OF YOU A SECRET – AND IT IS TRUE...

If you want to become a REAL MAN OR A REAL WOMAN,

FIND JESUS AND WALK WITH HIM AND LOVE HIM.

Nothing will make you stronger – nor braver.

Experience true Freedom, Experience Life, find Christ and cling to Him.

Childhood is meant to be a marvelous time of your life.

Make it so...

Let God's love rule your day as you learn to walk within His will.

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So, let our Epiphany (the showing forth of Christ) begin at home within our own families.

Let the parents be once again become the PARENTS –

love one another as Christ loves His Church.

Give yourselves / for the others sake...

walk with one another within the Love of Christ.

Children, take the time to enjoy being Children and come, take the time to know Jesus, call upon Him, love Him, invite Him into your life.

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I will end as Mark ends his Gospel as the centurion says a truth that is above all truths:

“Truly this man (jesus) was (and is) the Son of God.

Love and treat Him as He Is...the great I AM.