

**II EPIPHANY 2012**  
**SERMON – CHRIST CHURCH PARISH**  
**FATHER CRAIG LOONEY**  
**ROMANS 12.6 ST. MARK 1.1**



This is the Good News about Jesus...Mark proclaims...the Good News foretold by the prophet Isaiah when he wrote, "Someone is shouting in the desert; get the road ready for the Lord; make a straight path for him to travel".

Getting ready for Jesus is the theme woven throughout the Advent Season. We prepare our hearts and minds, and souls for the first epiphany...the first appearance...of Jesus as the little child born in a stable...whose birth was announced by angels to the shepherds. And the angels sang, "Glory to God in the highest; Peace and Good Will to all".

Mark sees the entire life of Jesus as an Epiphany...a showing of who he is...God's Son. Jesus shows who he is not so much in his words and teachings...but in and through his selfless actions of Love. Jesus made his entire life an Epiphany of doing things for people who came to him for help. He healed people, raised the dead, and restored families to wholeness.

We don't know what Jesus was up to from the time he wandered off from Mary and Joseph when he was twelve years old and was found three days later in the Temple in Jerusalem, talking with the priests and teachers. We are only told he went back to Nazareth...probably after getting a good scolding on the way back by Mary...and obeyed his parents. He must have spent some of that time getting ready for his next Epiphany...his next appearance.

The Baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist marks the beginning of his public ministry. With the exception of Jesus himself, John the Baptist plays a pivotal role in more Gospel lessons in the Prayer Book than anyone else. He appears in two of the Advent Season Gospels, in today's Gospel, and in the Gospel for his own feast day of June 24th.

Baptism...getting immersed in or otherwise washing oneself with water as a sign of repentance and starting over...was not something new. The people who came to John for baptism were responding to his call to ask God for forgiveness and to turn their lives around and stop sinning. He asked them to show they were serious about making changes in their lives by getting baptized. But Jesus is God and cannot sin.

Why did he get baptized? It was for our sake!

John himself tells us that he is baptizing only with water. He was getting people ready for the epiphany...the appearance...of the one who would baptize with water and the Holy Spirit. John's baptism was fine as far as it went, but it was incomplete and didn't forgive sins. When John baptized Jesus, the Holy Spirit appeared like a dove above Jesus, and a voice from heaven said, "You are my own dear Son. And I am pleased with you".

God made his love for Jesus known in a very public way. The Baptism of Jesus ultimately points to our own baptisms. We became God's children when we were baptized in a public setting and received the gift of the Holy Spirit. We were baptized by Water and the Holy Spirit. Our sins were forgiven and our lives were changed forever.

When Jesus was baptized he was showing he was ready to do his Father's work, the work he told Mary and Joseph he must do when they found in him teaching in the Temple. When we were baptized we became part of the great fellowship called the Church...the Body of Christ. That fellowship comes with the responsibility to take action just as Jesus took action.

It's our job to figure out what God wants us to do with our lives so they can be epiphanies...appearances for Jesus. We all have gifts, as Paul tells us, that the Holy Spirit empowers us to use. The strongest of these gifts are Faith, Hope and Love. Putting those gifts into practice requires diligence, which we should do cheerfully.

Our love as Christians, Paul tells us, must be completely sincere. God our Father knows what is in our hearts. We are to hate what is evil; hold on to what is good. Love each other as Christians; be kind to strangers; show them the kind of hospitality God shows us. We should be happy with those who are happy; cry with those who cry. We must work hard and not be lazy. Our hope will keep us joyful and patient during our times of troubles. We are to encourage each other in our Faith. And our work must be done with the same kind of humility Jesus showed.

Our lives are epiphanies for Jesus. We show the Good News about Jesus in how we live and how we act toward others. We want our lives to be the best epiphanies...the best possible appearances for Jesus!

