



Jan. 11, 2021 Mk. 1: 7-11 Is 55:1-11

Connie May © 12/6/14/08

Drawing with permission by Fr. Robert Beck

www.theark1.com

[Zoom Connection](#)

Link to additional [Beck](#) (Choose this week's column)

Stone, Naomi. [New Beginning](#)

Rolheiser, Fr. Ron. [The Loneliness of Leaving Home](#)

Additional [Resources](#) Trending Today

[Monastery Sunday Homilies](#) (right click & open)

[You tube link](#)

ENTERING THE SCENE:

Mark's telling of the good news begins at the river. But I got to wondering what preceded this day. Did Jesus toss and turn all night? Did that last person he met the day before get to him? Did he come to the realization that he could free all those people being held hostage by their inadequate understanding of his Father? Did his mother sense that something was going on in his soul at breakfast this morning? When she saw him striding out of the shop did she sense that something big was coming down? Maybe his talk about his cousin John last night at supper tipped her off. After all, he was well past the leaving home time at what was then advanced middle age. The women at the well often gave her a pitying look as if to say what no

grandchildren yet? Let us walk with Jesus to the river.

Mk. 1:4-11

4 John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. 5 And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins. 6 And John was clothed with camels hair, and with a girdle of a skin about his loins; and he did eat locusts and wild honey;

7 and John preached: There comes one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose. 8 I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit. 9 And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan. 10 And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him: 11 And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

DISCUSSION QUESTION: Jesus knew and accepted the fact that he was God's beloved. Do you also know you are God's beloved, and if not, what would it take for you to realize this?

PRAYER: Lord, why is it that I so easily let others tell me that I might be your beloved child only IF... if I do this, or if I don't do that? Yet every time I take quiet time with the gospels I find all kinds of people coming to you only to find that God's love isn't conditioned by anything but their ability to receive that love? Strangely enough, that seems to be the only real source of conversion. Help me to grow into a mature understanding of God's love, the kind of understanding you had at the river that day and then help me live in a way that reveals that to others. Amen.

WORD STUDY AND QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

JOHN: John was Jesus' cousin and was 3 months older than Jesus. John has had the experience of the wilderness and his total dependence on God for his needs and was given the role of preparing the way for the Lord. All John knows for *sure* is that he ISN'T the Messiah.

How does knowing who you are not, help you to find out who you are? What "wilderness" experiences have you had that have shown you your total dependence on God?

WILDERNESS: The wilderness is that place that is foreign to us. It is full of wildness and things that are beyond our control. We need to stay alert just to survive there. Mark has beasts out there.

In this New Year we will encounter things that seem to come from a form of wilderness. How can your baptism help you to face these challenges?

BAPTISM / BAPTIZED: This ritual signified a change of mind and heart that was to usher in a new way of being in the world. The person was to 'die' to their old ways and to 'rise' to a new way of living

Jesus was already in his 'middle age' for his time when he went down to the water that day. What might have impelled him to enter into this ritual now? How do you know when it is "now" for you?

REPENTANCE: To repent is to turn around and look at something in a new way. The early church found the baptism of Jesus to cause confusion, as Jesus was the sinless one. Scholars feel that this must be an accurate memory, because the gospel writers would have certainly not invented such a dilemma.

What do you make of this event? Is there another way to approach this significant moment in Jesus' life? Do you feel that Jesus thought of himself in a new way after the baptism?

JUDEA / JERUSALEM: Judah was the Southern kingdom, and its highest moments were under King David. It contained Jerusalem, the holy city. In the time of Jesus it was a kingdom ruled by the Herods and was part of the Roman province of Syria. A pious person felt it to be the center of the earth. All the rituals, the festivals, and the learning were centered there and it was occupied as far back as the fourth millennium.

Since Mark does not have a birth narrative, he situates us in the proper places by including this information. How does this catch us up on the thirty years that have elapsed since the birth? If you only had Mark's gospel, would you have enough to set the stage for the life, death, and resurrection, by having this information?

JORDAN: The Jordan River was one of those places in the bible that symbolized a transition point in the faith life of the people. Jesus is now making the transition from private to public life.

Can you remember crossing a "Jordan" in your own life? What feelings do you remember about the event?

CAMEL'S HAIR / GIRDLE OF SKINS: We can get a sense of John by knowing the type of clothing he was wearing. Both camel's hair clothes and a leather belt (girdle of skins) tell us that he identified with the prophetic role.

How do you recognize a prophet today? Do you know what to look for?

LOCUSTS / WILD HONEY: The desert provided these basic foods for John. There is even a recipe for how to roast locusts in existence. God provided protein and sweetness for energy out in the desert.

Contrast the times when you felt you had to do it yourself with those where you were able to rely on God's providence. What would you say were the major differences in those experiences?

DOWN / UP: In the ancient times people felt that God was up there and had to come down here in order to connect with us. This understanding of the creation of the cosmos no longer works as well for us.

If you were Mark, with our current understanding of the universe, what words would you use to explain how God interacts with humanity? Where is God? Where are we?

WATER: Water in the rite of baptism, symbolizes a dying to an old way of being, and a rising to a new way of being in the world. Today, we have a deeper appreciation of the role of water in the process of creation and its vital role in life..

Could this new appreciation deepen the meaning in the ritual of baptism? How?

HOLY SPIRIT: In the Hebrew scriptures there was a concept of the holiness of God's spirit, but until Pentecost, the people would not have experienced it personally. Jesus now experiences God's presence in a most powerful way.

Have you ever had an experience that you would characterize as the power of the Holy Spirit? How would you tell someone about it so that they could make sense of it?

NAZARETH / GALILEE: Nazareth was the home of Joseph and Mary. It is not mentioned at all in the Hebrew scriptures. Galilee was in northern Israel and was the site of many important trade routes. Its population consisted of people of mixed ancestry, and therefore looked down on by those of "pure blood". No one or nothing good (see John 1:46 and 7:52) was thought to originate from such a place.

If you lived in the time of Jesus, would you have expected anything important to come from these places? If you were a student of the scriptures, would you see a pattern in God's always choosing the least likely person or place to reveal something new? What examples can you cite to trace this pattern?

STRAIGHTWAY: One of the trademarks of Mark's gospel is the use of words that keep us on the move towards the end of the story. Some translations use the word immediately.

How does this use of words set the scene for this gospel? Do you get a sense of urgency? When you sense urgency, do you look and listen differently than when you are at leisure?

HEAVENS OPENED: The heavens were thought to be the residence of God or the gods. See Is. 64:1f.
Where is God for you? How do you talk about it to children?

DOVE: Doves were the gift of the poor person. They could be substituted for the more costly offerings such as cattle or sheep. They also carried the symbolism of the Spirit of God, and it was thought that God favored a person who had a dove rest on them. The dove was the one who brought back the olive branch after the flood. It is the symbol of love in the Song of Songs and the one who mourns in Is. 38:14.

How do all these uses of the dove as a symbol help to enlarge our understanding of Jesus' experience in the water that day?

VOICE: To be a voice is to give oneself to another in the gospel of Mark.
How is God giving God's self to Jesus in this experience? Have you ever heard God's voice?

BELOVED SON: Just before his time in the wilderness Jesus heard these words from the heavens. Jesus could be who he was, because he operated out of this awareness, he was son. Jesus would later call us sisters and brothers of this same voice.
What would it take for you to really believe and trust that this is indeed true? If you could operate out of this same sense of being unconditionally loved, how would this change your life? Could it turn you around (baptize) you?

PLEASED: The Greek word for "pleased" is *eudokeo* and can also mean "choice", thereby conveying the notion of election. This can connect us with the story of Isaac and the role that Jesus will play in salvation history.
Do you see your election as a son or daughter of God to be one of a role to play in salvation history? If so, how?

PARALLEL TEXTS: Mk. 1:4f // Mt. 3:4-12; Lk. 3:1-6, 15-18; Jn. 1:24-37; Mk. 1:9 // Acts 1:5; 11:16; 13:25; 19:4; Mt. 3: 13-17; Lk. 3:21f; Jn. 1:32f; Mk. 1:10 // Ps. 2:7;

OTHER TEXTS OF THE WEEK: Is. 42: 1-4, 6-7; Ps. 29: 1-4; 3:9-10; 1 Acts 10:34-38; Mk. 1:7-11; Revised Common Lectionary: Gn. 1:1-5; Ps. 29; Acts 19:1-7; Mk 1: 4-11;

SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION:

But according to Pope Francis, "a lay person has the strength that comes from baptism and his lay vocation is not negotiable. The way I see it, clericalism prevents lay people from growing," the Pope added. And this "is a two-way temptation because clericalism would not exist if there weren't any lay people who wanted to be clericalised."

Thus, through his baptismal experience, Jesus discovers his identity as Son, the continual presence of the Father in his life, the power of the Spirit who dwells in him, and his mission to be achieved through the proclamation of his kingdom and through suffering. In other words, from within his deepest identity he discovers a mystery to be revealed and a mission to be accomplished by himself. Pg. 44. Olivera, Bernado. OCSO. [The Sun at Midnight](#). Collegeville, MN. Liturgical Press. 2012

You see, transformed people transform people, and John's little offbeat ritual down by the riverside (outside of the temple where his father served) has become for us the very symbol of Christian transformation. Richard Rohr

"God wants us to know that this beloved soul that we are is preciously knitted to him in its making by a knot so subtle and so mighty that it is one with God. In this oneing it is made endlessly holy. Furthermore, he wants us to know that all the souls which are one day to be saved in heaven without end are knit in this same knot and united in this same union, and made holy in this one identical holiness." Julian of Norwich

First of all, it's an adaptation of what was common for the Jewish people when they were bringing a convert, a Gentile, into the Jewish covenant. They would undergo a baptism that would be a reminder of how the chosen people, when God led them through the desert to the promised land, brought them from slavery in Egypt to freedom, they had gone through the waters of the Red Sea, so John used

this, what was done for converts to Judaism. They would go through the bath of the water of the Jordan and be baptized as though they were going through the Red Sea, renewing that experience. Bp. Gumbleton

When you really plug into consciousness, maybe it feels like it's coming through your brain; but it actually comes through a whole-hearted surrender to the moment—a surrender that encompasses everything and eliminates nothing. Richard Rohr

The Gospel of the Ebionites (In Epiphanius, *Against Heresies*, XXX. 13. 2, 4, 6, 7-8) [2] There was a certain man named Jesus, about thirty years old, who chose us." [4] John was baptizing; and Pharisees went out to him and were baptized, and all Jerusalem. Now John wore a garment of camel's hair, and a leather girdle around his waist; his food was wild honey, tasting like manna, like a cake in olive oil. [6] In the days of Herod, King of Judea, when Caiaphas was high priest, a certain man named John came baptizing with a baptism of repentance in the river Jordan. He was said to be of the family of Aaron the Priest, son of Zechariah and Elizabeth, and all went out to him. [7-8] After the people were baptized, Jesus also came and was baptized by John. And as he came up from the water, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Holy spirit descending in the form of a dove and entering into him. and a voice from heaven said, "Thou art my beloved Son; with thee I am well pleased." And again, "Today I have begotten thee." And immediately a great light shone around the place; and John, seeing it, said to him, "Who are you, Lord?" and again a voice from heaven said to him. "This is my beloved son, with whom I am well pleased." Then John, falling down before him, said, "I beseech you, Lord, baptize me!" But he forbade him, saying, "Let it be so; for thus it is fitting to fulfill all things." (*Justin, Dialogue 88:3*) When Jesus went down to the water, fire was kindled in the Jordan; and when he was rising from the water, the Holy Spirit came upon him like a dove, as the apostles of our Christ have written.

Gospel According to the Hebrews: (in Jerome, *Against Pelagius III.2*) The mother of the Lord and his brothers said to him. "John baptizes for the forgiveness of sins; let us go and be baptized by him." But he said to them, "In what have I sinned that I should go and be baptized by him? Unless, perhaps, what I have just said is a sin of ignorance."

(in Jerome, *Commentary of Isaiah 11:2*) When the Lord ascended from the water, the whole fount of the Holy Spirit descended and rested upon him, and said to him, "My son, in all the prophets I was waiting for you, that you might come, and that I might rest in you. For you are my rest; and you are my firstborn son, who reigns forever."

Mention of John the Baptist: [Antiquities of the Jews](#) by Josephus: Book 18. Chapter 5. Section 2.

(For information on the role of leaving family and being incorporated into God's family)
Pilch, John J. [The Cultural World of Jesus-Cycle B](#). The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN. 1996. Pages 19-21.

For an earliest generation of Christians, Jesus was not the Savior but the Life-Giver. In the original Aramaic of Jesus and his followers, there was no word for salvation. Salvation was understood as bestowal of life, and to be saved was "to be made alive." This gift of life, moreover, was received in a clear rite of initiation, following the pattern of Jesus' own initiation. According to the ancient, Aramaic-derived traditions, Jesus' divine sonship began not in his sacrificial death of the cross, but in his spirit-filled baptism in the Jordan River. Entering the waters at the hand of John the Baptist, he emerged as the Life-Giver (in Syriac, *Mahyana*), upon whom the Spirit "rested." He came forth also as *Ihidaya*, "the only one," or " the Unified One," and in this pattern his initiates became known also as *ihidaye*, "those who are one." This early Aramaic Christianity - scholars call it "Spirit Christology" - knew nothing of dying and rising with Christ, but only of a larger, more vivified and unified life made possible through the indwelling of the Spirit. By the fourth century, however, Spirit Christology was already becoming a minority opinion. The day belonged to Paul, to the Greek language with its more intricate notions of "savior" and "salvation," and to a baptismal death-mysticism centering upon the cross. The emergent Christian church erected its structure on the foundation of Paul, and the older tradition receded - but did not disappear. Handed down orally, often through baptismal ceremonies, it was written out in the fourth and fifth centuries in liturgical texts of the Syrian Christian and, through Syrian influence, also in Armenian Christian communities. Bourgeault, Cynthia. *The Gift of Life. Parabola*, Vol. XIV, No. 2. Page 27.

Gn. 1: 1-5: In the beginning, the spirit-wind of God moves across the face of the deep. The deep is not barren but pregnant, and emptiness teeming with the promise of life. ... Creation, then, is an ongoing story of new beginnings, opportunities to begin again and again. God began to create, is still creating; nothing is finished. Creation continues to arise out of emptiness, take form, and dissolve over time, dust to dust, returning to emptiness. All life arises and falls away in this beautiful, fruitful rhythm. Muller, Wayne. [Sabbath: Restoring the Sacred Rhythm of Rest](#). NY. Bantam Books. 1999. Pages 35-6.

SELECTED READINGS:

Links to all the books mentioned in this guide are on The Ark web site: www.theark1.com

Beck, Robert. *Sunday Homilies: Cycle B* 2008-9. Pgs. 35-38. To order contact [Carol Oberfoell](#)

Shea, John. [Stories of Faith](#). Thomas More Press, Chicago. 1980. **The Son Who Must Die**. Pages 183-187.

Grana, Janice. [Images](#). St. Mary's College Press, Winona, MN. 1976. **PRAYER FOR MYSELF**. Cynthia J. Symonds Page 12.

THE JOURNEY. Mary Eleanor Rice Page 135.