

“You Aren’t What You Do”

Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13

2 Peter 3:8-15a

Mark 1:1-8

This is the Second Sunday of Advent and we light the peace candle. Last week, the First Sunday of Advent, the hope candle was lit. Both the hope and peace candles bring light into the world. The story of Advent is about the Light of the world, Jesus Christ. The story of Advent is the story of the incarnation, God coming to earth fully human, yet fully God. The story of Advent equips Christians for faithful witness of the good news of Jesus Christ. The story of Advent forms the foundation of our Christian faith.

During Advent, we prepare to engage others with good news that seems ridiculous. Advent’s call to “something new” is one to embrace our belovedness and love others. This “something new” is about identity. Our identity is in Christ not what we do. In this regard, Bobby Schuller, the pastor of Shepherd’s Grove Presbyterian Church in Irvine wrote *Creed of the Beloved*: “I’m not what I do. I’m not what I have. I’m not what people say about me. I am the beloved of God. It’s who I am. No one can take it from me. I don’t have to worry. I don’t have to hurry. I can trust my friend Jesus and share his love with the world.”¹ You are beloved by God. You aren’t what you do.

Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13, 2 Peter 3:8-15a and Mark 1:1-8 proclaim that culture tutors us to define ourselves by what we do instead of who we are in Christ.

¹Bobby Schuller, *You Are Beloved* (Nashville, Tennessee: Nelson Books, 2018), 16.

Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13 reminds us that the steadfast love, faithfulness, righteousness and peace of God is ours in Christ. We are created in the image of God.

2 Peter 3:8-15a beckons us to bring others not comfort, but transformation.

Mark 1:1-8 maps out the plan for restoration of alienated and broken people and an alienated and broken world. The name of Jesus is a common Jewish name, Yeshua/Joshua (“Yahweh saves”), in Hebrew. The road prepared for Jesus to walk by John the Baptist was a sharp detour from the power of the Roman road. Jesus challenged established religious and political systems. Jesus confronted oppression and the marginalization of people offering a peace which surpassed any rational and logical understanding. The kind of peace Jesus offered was far from the absence of discomfort. The peace Jesus promised is the power of the Spirit enabling his followers to do the right thing by resting in their identity in Jesus. Believers are given God’s power which is the agency to bring others not comfort, but transformation in and through peace.²

On this Second Sunday of Advent, we lit the hope and peace candles on the Advent wreath, lifting up the peace candle. Peace encourages the people of God to act. At Advent, God claims us as God’s own, as beloved. Advent announces the good news of “something new” the restoration of our alienation and brokenness with God, ourselves and others. The coming of Jesus Christ is not a onetime experience. Every day Jesus comes to us. He points us to words and deeds of justice and righteousness, giving us hope and peace to act. Jesus began “something new,” the unfolding of justice and

²In the four paragraphs of textual analysis above, I have benefited from the thinking of J. Clinton McCann Jr., Matt Gaventa, Michael Battle, F. Scott Spencer and Andrew Foster Connors in Joel B. Green, Thomas G. Long, Luke A. Powery, Cynthia L. Rigby and Carolyn J. Sharp, editors, *Connections, Year B, Volume 1* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2020), 23-24, 25-27, 27-28, 29-31 and 31-33.

righteousness into everyday experience for the sake of others to know they are beloved and not defined by what they do.

You aren't what you do educationally, vocationally or morally. Again, Bobby Schuller writes, "You are going to do great things in your life. I am so passionate about Christians finding an identity rooted in God's love, because I know that's ultimately the only way they will fulfill their destiny. Confusion about our identity is the main reason why Christians give up on the great callings God places on them."³ Stop comparing yourself to others and their accomplishments. Seize your belovedness. Act with hope and peace. Love others. Show others their belovedness. Own your identity in Christ. Be at peace, a peace that reconciles you to God, yourself and others. Amen.

*This sermon was preached (Livestream due to the Coronavirus) on Sunday, 6 December 2020,
The Second Sunday of Advent, by the Rev. Dr. Steven M. Marsh in his Study
at Geneva Presbyterian Church in Laguna Woods, California*

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³Bobby Schuller, *You Are Beloved*, 63.