

Mark 1:1-8 Sermon for 8am

New beginnings are fantastic. When something new happens for the first time, it can change everything. It can reinvigorate us; motivating us start again. It can give us new vision; helping us when life seems stale. And it can give us a fresh start; giving us a clean slate to replace the grubby scroll on which the story of our life may have been written until now.

Today's reading begins, "The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." It's the same language as the entire Bible starts with "In the beginning". Each time this phrase is used in the Bible, these words signify something incredible – a new beginning. Each time, they are a fresh act from God, a new work of creation and a whole new way of being.

Imagine - that first creation when humanity first walked upon virgin sands, our footprints the only mark on the landscape. Or imagine when humanity first broke the ripple-less surface in cool pools of water. Or imagine when the first human gazed upon the first mountain with a snowy top and wondered at its magnitude and majesty. All because there was an "in the beginning" and all because of God's new act, his new origin.

And now at the beginning of Mark's gospel we have the same language. It marks a new beginning; a new origin. And this new creative act is on a par with the first one. The story of the Good News of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is the story of this point where God changes history, where God makes a change in the fabric of the universe as we know it and inserts himself into it.

And suddenly the now-crowded desert sands, filled with human footprints are walked upon by divine feet. Suddenly, the crashing waves of seas where humanity live and die are made ripple-less by a word spoken by the Son of God. Suddenly, the mountains which have been worshipped or conquered, are moveable servants of the divine Jesus Christ. All because there was "The beginning of the good news".

The world has changed. It cannot return to the way it was. There is one, more powerful than any who ever came before, one who we are not worthy to even serve as slaves, one who has been expected, anticipated, and prepared for in advance for millennia. And this one has come. Finally, and yet unexpectedly; at long last, and yet missed by many; announced ahead, and yet creeping in on a starry night in Bethlehem.

It is a wonder of new creation that happened at that first Christmas, and we are the witnesses to the ripples through time of that first day. The prophets foretold, and John the Baptist prepared; but words could not fully express that day. Minds still cannot fully comprehend the magnitude of the change... when God came to earth. It is called in infinite understatement, Good News. But why?

The Good News is that this second origin is as ground-breaking as the first. It gives a fresh start to all who turn to God. The crowds came to John the Baptist feeling their guilt and wishing it would stop clinging to them, and John washed them, but this washing was only temporary until Jesus. John came dressed as a prophet, as one from whom God's words were spoken so all could hear. But what was hearing God's words spoken by a man compared to hearing God's words spoken by himself, by Jesus. John prepared the way for Jesus, making straight the paths for his coming, but it was in Jesus that God himself returned to his people and set them free.

This new origin, this new start is Good News for us. In fact, it's the best news we could ever hear. It makes our ears tingle, our hearts beat; it fires our imaginations and our dreams; it lifts our eyes from the daily humdrum and lets us linger on a new life with new possibilities.

In Jesus' coming the world is made new. In Jesus' coming we can tread again the virgin sands of a clean conscience. In Jesus' coming, we can dive into the cool depths of God's real and true words to us, submerging ourselves in his never-finishing stream of love. In Jesus' coming, we can explore the vast mountainous realities of life set free from servitude to ourselves – Set free from our petty grievances. Set free from the painful spikes of irrational anger. Set free from the need to be successful and valued. Set free from the need to hide from what we've done. And set free from the need to bury all the parts of life that shame us so deeply that they cannot rise again.

In Jesus' we are set free. In Jesus we can return from captivity to self and worship God in thanks for what he has done. In Jesus we are assured that the world has changed. A new beginning is granted. A new start has begun. And a new life is here. This surely is Great News. It surely is the beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Praise God!