

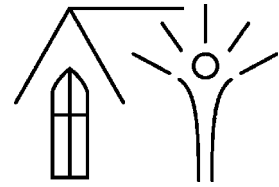


ROSELLE
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

206 S. Rush Street
Roselle, IL 60172
(630) 529-1309
www.roselleumc.org

Our Mission Statement:

*“To Know Christ,
To Grow in Christ,
To Show Others Christ”*



December 04, 2005

Sermon – “Fake News”

Mark 1:1-8

Reverend Thomas Kim

A couple of months before I left The Chicago Temple in 2004, an old woman who was on a wheelchair asked me to meet her after the service. Helen Day was her name, and was 92 years old, and a pastor’s daughter. Ms. Day said she had something she wanted to give me, and asked me if I would receive them. The following Sunday, she brought two bronze candle holders with a hand written letter.

The letter read,

“Dear Rev. Thomas Kim,

These two candle holders are from Bishop Welch who was the first bishop of the Korean Methodist Church. He received them from the first Korean Methodist church to celebrate his installation. Then the Bishop came back to America, and handed them to my father who was a Methodist minister, and wanted to be a missionary to Korea, but he never made it, and I received them from him. I am his only child. I think it is right to give them to you since I am too old and I have no idea what to do with them. I hope you know where they can be used well.

Helen Day.”

When I came to Roselle, I totally forgot about them till few months ago, I saw them again while cleaning bookshelves and records. I contacted Helen Day and learned that she died soon after I came to Roselle. I prayed about the use of them and decided to donate them to the Korean Methodist Church in Seoul. And I was invited to preach at a Korean Methodist Churches’ gathering, and I went to Korea.

The candle holders made to celebrate the installation of the first Bishop of the Korean Methodist Church were a very precious treasure to the Korean Methodist church, however, in the possession of Helen Day, they could have been sent to a garage sale or a flea market.

In the season of Advent, preparing the coming of the Lord, we decorate the church sanctuary with poinsettias in memory of loved ones or in celebration of life. This morning I remember Helen Day.

The Gospel lesson from Mark begins straight forward. “The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God” (v. 1).

It used to be that when 10 p.m. rolled around on a weeknight you had only a couple of options for tuning in to the news of the day, each of which involved the mix of news, weather and sports from a local network.

Now, of course, when you flick on the TV, you can tune in to CNN 24/7, or check in Bill O’Reilly’s “Fair and Balanced,” at Fox News.

But that's not all. Keep trolling and you're likely to drop in on *The Daily Show* with Jon Stewart (motto: "When news breaks, we fix it") and get a *sense* of the news, but with a heavy dose of hilarity.

The political parody and "fake news" that used to be the property of *Saturday Night Live* has gone mainstream as comedians are jockeying with journalists at the forefront of our media consciousness.

Stephen Colbert is one of the comedian/correspondents on *The Daily Show* and understands that what he and Stewart are up to isn't about "news," nor is it about real intelligence. Says Colbert, "There's a difference between wanting to *be* smart and wanting to *seem* smart. (emphasis added). Unlike cable news pundits and anchors, Colbert and his compatriots can make up news or spin it without fear of fact-checkers.

Viewership of network news is down. The slide has been steady.

Interest in phony baloney is up — way up.

A man who thought he was John the Baptist was disturbing the neighborhood, so for public safety, he was committed.

He was put in a room with another crazy, and immediately began his routine, "I am John the Baptist! Jesus Christ has sent me!"

The other guy looked at him and declared, "I did not!"

This is the world we live in. We're more interested in bogus, pseudo and phony news than we are in the real stuff. Since there's virtually nothing we can do about most of the news we watch, read or hear about on a daily basis, the thinking goes, we ought to at least get a laugh out of it.

However, Mark 1 provides a road map for real engagement with the news. The writer begins with a simple statement — "The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (v. 1). No spin or quip there, so why is it important? It's actionable information!

The broadcaster of this particular news would not have been a candidate for a modern-day anchor desk. John the Baptist is not what news corporations are looking for today. His low-carb diet kept him fit, but he would have looked better *sitting* on a camel than wearing a camel.

But the man's information was anything but fake. In the desert, far from the spotlight, John was bringing news that was immediately applicable to and actionable by the people: "a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins" (v. 4) in preparation for the real Newsmaker who would be coming up next, the one who John said was "more powerful than I ... I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals" (v. 7).

Real news. John the Baptist was calling for nothing *less than a complete change of heart for the whole community*. Massive cultural and spiritual change was on the horizon — the rough terrain of sin and disobedience was about to be leveled in anticipation of the coming Messiah (v. 2-3).

While I was in Korea, I heard a sad news about one of my best friends that he had a cancer. This was "breaking news" of the highest priority — not a source of jocularly, but of changing ways of living and working. Some of my friends went to a doctor for their check-up which they'd do it often. Some of them stopped smoking and drinking. Some of them changed their working habits, and cut their working hours. It was a serious breaking news, and an applicable to and actionable by my friends.

To a people who had longed for a savior, John's news was very personal. He was announcing a new world order in which they could participate — the kingdom of heaven. So, out into the desert they went to be baptized by this holy man with a camel skin coat in the river and emerging cleansed and changed by the promise of new life (v. 5).

A man once owned a large and expensive clock crafted in Switzerland. He kept the clock in a window, where it was seen by passersby who set their watches by it. But something was wrong with the clock. Its hands habitually showed the wrong time. So the man spent considerable energy

every day in turning the clock's hands to the right positions. This went on for several years, and this kept the owner weary. One day someone suggested, "Instead of wasting your time and energy in correcting the hands, why don't you fix the clock's inner parts?"

"What a tremendous idea!" the owner exclaimed in astonishment and delight. "I never thought of that!" (Vernon Howard, *Inspire Yourself*, Four Star Books, 1975)

God did not intend to make a few cosmetic changes by sending Christ into the world, but to ask to fix our inner selves—a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins—an applicable to and actionable by us. That's why each Advent we encounter this straight forward news from John the Baptist.

Advent is a time when we once again share the news of the Messiah's coming — to respond to the good news of Jesus Christ instead of just chuckling at another round of Santa jokes.

John the Baptist's good news is a call to set our transformed minds on a different plane ... to response to God's Word — the Word that was made flesh in Jesus Christ.

To put it another way, Advent is a chance to smile at some "good news" for a change.