

**Sermon Notes December 10,2023**  
**Peace Lutheran Church**  
**The Holy Gospel of Mark 1: 1-8**  
**“Reordering Our Lives Brings Peace!”**

We know a lot about waiting: Children wait for Christmas. Adolescents wait for driver's licenses. The engaged wait for the wedding. The pregnant wait for a child. The infirm wait for healing. The terminally ill wait for death. For what are you waiting today? What tugs at your heart? What will end that waiting?

The Bible knows of waiting. The Israelites wait forty years in the wilderness before crossing the Jordan into the Promised Land. The captives in Babylon wait for God to free them and make a way in the wilderness back home to Jerusalem. Jesus waits forty days in the wilderness before beginning his ministry. Wilderness is the Bible's metaphor for waiting.

In the wilderness of waiting comes John the Baptist: messenger, angel, voice, baptizer, bug-eater. And the Old Testament prophet Elijah, who foretold of waiting for the One; and Ezekiel (Exod. 23: 20, Isa. 40: 3; Mal. 3: 1). As God did the impossible for the Israelites, now God will make a new way through our deserts. As the Israelites passed through the Red Sea and crossed the Jordan to reach the Promised Land, so we pass through the waters of baptism into the new Jerusalem. As Isaiah announced God's forgiveness for the captives in Babylon, now John announces God's forgiveness for us.

Our wilderness guide, John the Baptist, is a curiosity, eating locusts and wild honey. Winged grasshoppers are unclean in the Torah, but Leviticus 11: 22 makes three exceptions: locusts, crickets, and grasshoppers. High in nutrition, locusts were free, not taxed (unlike fish), and plentiful.

John announces a baptism/washing of repentance for the forgiveness of sins and “people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem” (Mark 1: 5) clamor to see him. This forgiveness is not authorized by the priests, takes place outside the temple precincts, and does not require animal sacrifice. No priests, no temple, no animals - what will become of the religious economy? John rages against the machine of the day. This added to his immense popularity, and probably led to his execution.

For what are YOU waiting? Name your wilderness. For what are you hoping - peace, joy, healing, forgiveness, a restored relationship, a new start, clarity, conflict transformation, safe schools, civility in public discourse, an end to hatred and war? Who are the wilderness guides challenging the status quo,

making a new way through the desert, and offering restored relationship with God and one another?

In today's texts, Isaiah promises that the valleys shall be lifted up and the mountains made low, creating a level playing field for all. Peter encourages us to wait in peace with patience. John baptizes for repentance, then points to Jesus, who is our "wait" lifter. Let us call for personal and public repentance.

Let us call the church to wait and watch and pray, to see what God is up to in the world. Then, empowered by the Holy Spirit, let us follow Christ into the hurting world with faith, hope, and love, praying for the day when the time of waiting is lifted.