

# Sermon Starter – Oh, That You Would Reveal Your Peace

*Isaiah 40:1-11, Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13, Mark 1: 1-8*

The prophetic calls for God to intervene become prescriptive on this Sunday. Both Isaiah and the psalmist cry to God to bring God's peace to the world. The opening line of Mark's gospel tells us God has heard the people's prayers and has indeed responded. Just as boldly as Isaiah's words announce the end of the exile, so John the Baptist boldly announces the coming of the Messiah of God.

People were not expecting this announcement to come in combination with a call to repentance. They were waiting for a figure on a white horse, for companies of soldiers that would lead the people of Israel in the defeat of Rome. Instead, they are confronted by a man covered in camel's hair who invites people to identify with their ancestors' walk to freedom, to walk through the waters. This walk in the waters combines repentance with deliverance; it is a walk that is necessary for entering God's new kingdom. It leads not to an overthrow of the Roman oppressors but to a kingdom of peace, in a deeper sense of the word.

As Christmas Day approaches, many people find comfort and meaning in rituals they celebrate every year. But those rituals can lose their sparkle over time. Growth and newness can occur when familiar rituals are altered by actions that align with God's intentions, which lead to the peace of Christ ruling our hearts and lives. Adjust your Christmas rituals by inviting new people to celebrate Christmas with you, initiating a gathering in your neighborhood, or by Christmas caroling for those who are in extended care. These changes may be unnerving, but they also hold the promise of renewal as we extend the peace of Christ to others.

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