

**“Walk On” - Rev. Jennifer Adams**  
**March 1, 2009 - Lent 1B**

You gotta love the gospel of Mark. No extra fluff or padding of any sort in this gospel. This is the bare bones of the good news of Jesus Christ. We're still in chapter one for heaven sakes and already Jesus is a grown man. Within 6 verses Jesus is baptized, led into the desert for 40 days and 40 nights where he's tempted by the devil and surrounded by wild beasts and angels -- and then before you even have to turn the page, Jesus is off into Galilee preaching the good news about the kingdom of God. According to Mark that's all we need to know. We don't need to know specifics about what the devil did. We don't need to know what the wild animals did either or how the angels cared for him. And, unlike other gospel tellings of the temptation story, there's not even a conversation between Jesus and the devil. Because none of that seemed to have mattered to Mark.

Which in some ways, makes Mark the perfect gospel for Lent. He gives us a good, down-to-the-important-stuff sort of approach. In a season where we use language like “getting back to the basics” Mark is perfect. Because the basics are all that's here in this gospel. He's already done the stripping down for us.

And so what is it we're left with as we enter the wilderness this season? What are the basics we have to take with us? Actually, as far as I can tell it's only one thing.

At Jesus baptism, a voice came from heaven and said, “You are my Son, the Beloved. With you I am well pleased.” And then Jesus was led into the wilderness. And that was it. Notice that Jesus wasn't told about his powers or his strengths or given tips about facing down the challenges of the desert. He wasn't warned about the dangers or armed to fight them down or given any divine secrets or special powers to help him make it out there. He wasn't loaded down with lots of stuff or even major teachings. He was simply and basically told who he was, beloved of God and then the spirit moved him along. According to Mark, those words and the identity that came along with them were all that he needed.

So maybe that's all we need too. I often wonder what would happen in the world if “You are Beloved” was the primary message ushering forth from the Christian community, one simple, loud and consistent proclamation to us and all people that we and they are the beloved of God. Don't you think the world would be a different place? Don't you think we'd be different people?

If we believed we were Beloved, we could probably manage any wilderness life put in front of us, knowing truly in the depths of our beings that no matter what, ultimately and forever we are in the loving hands of God. Belovedness as the ground we walked on and the air we breathed. “Beloved” would be what we saw when we looked in the mirror and “beloved” would be what our only response when asked “who are you, really?” If “Belovedness” were our primary, basic message it would become more true than anything else – more true than wretchedness, or failure, or even sinfulness in terms of core identity. We'd could let go of so many things as belovedness trumped it all. We'd live differently if we believed belovedness about ourselves.

U2 has a song called Walk On, which you probably guessed is about a journey and it reminds me of this season and the simplicity and challenge of Lent. Like Mark, this song focuses in on the only thing that you need bring with you. Here are some of the words:

And love is not the easy thing  
But the only baggage you can bring...  
And love is not the easy thing...  
The only baggage you can bring  
Is all that you can't leave behind

Walk on, walk on  
What you got, they can't steal it  
No they can't even feel it  
Walk on, walk on  
Stay safe tonight...

You're packing a suitcase for a place none of us has been  
A place that has to be believed to be seen

Walk on, walk on  
What you got they can't deny it  
Can't sell it or buy it  
Walk on, walk on  
Stay safe tonight

Leave it behind  
You've got to leave it behind  
All that you fashion  
All that you make  
All that you build  
All that you break  
All that you measure  
All that you steal  
All this you can leave behind  
All that you reason  
All that you sense  
All that you speak  
All you dress up  
All that you scheme...

Leave it behind. Walk on. So what if we laid it all down as we entered the wilderness and only took a sense of our belovedness for the journey ahead? It would change the way we walked forever.

And maybe the basic message of this season is that really, that's all we need to know whether we're in the desert or anywhere else. And allowing that message to sink into our very beings would be a wonderful and faithful Lenten undertaking. I would hope too that we could make it our Lenten message to others, helping them to feel it too. Because what a different world it would be if everyone were given the opportunity to believe their own belovedness was true. What a different world it would be if everyone were given the opportunity to experience through the way in which they were welcomed or listened to or touched or companioned as they walked on through their darkness their own belovedness. What a different world it would be if everyone were given the chance to hear and believe that they were beloved of God. Maybe no wilderness would seem so impossible then. And that place that has to be believed in order to be seen would be more and more present. "You are my beloved," God tells us. And then the Spirit leads us to walk on.  
Amen.