



12.7.25...Making Room, In Your Heart | Mark 1:1-8

Will we make room in our lives for Advent?

We just heard how John the Baptist went ahead of Jesus to make way for him and his ministry. And in this season of Advent, we ask:

How will we keep making room in our hearts for Jesus and those he loves with special tenderness; the stranger, the poor, the hungry, and the homeless?

One of my happiest childhood memories was the week every July when Grandma and Grandpa (who so tall...his head got cut off), Aunt Bev, Uncle Mike (not pictured), and my cousin David would come from Stillwater, MN to visit us.

It was the highlight of our summer!

And yes, that was my brother Jay messing with my face.

Moose the family dog, my cousin David is wearing a red baseball cap. Mark, always the goofball! Apparently, I was bored.

So, as a family we intentionally spent a lot of time getting ready for them, intensely preparing for their arrival, each according to their capacities.

My mom cleaned the house from top to bottom and planned meals. My dad made sure the gardens and yard were immaculate. And that the adults had their favorite beverages...umm, letting you translate that.

Mark made sure our boat was bailed out, fueled up, and that we had enough life preservers.

And me? I made sure we had enough worms for fishing for sunnies - my favorite!

We worked hard, cleaning up everything, cleared our calendars and made sure everything was ready for when the “relies” (as we called them) came. Not accidentally but intentionally, we made space for them.

And even though no “relies” came at Christmas, we still practiced that rhythm of preparation—decorating the tree, watching *Emmet Otter’s Jug Band Christmas*, having special holiday foods on hand like pickled herring, lefsa, cheese, wrapping gifts in secret.

We also made room for the Christmas season with intention.

During this season of Advent, I often overhear snippets of your own plans and the ways you get ready for your own family celebrations. You set up your nativity sets, your Advent calendars, your travel plans, your arranging and rearranging of schedules.

And it is good.

So, maybe we just need a little reminder, a little voice helping us to keep the true spirit of Advent alive. To remember we are blessed to be a blessing.

To not get too narrowly focused on our families, so that we are forgetting to reach out to those in need.

Let’s take a deeper look at Mark chapter 1, another unique passage to help us prepare for the coming Messiah.

From Mark chapter 1, verses 2 and 3 and as it is written in Isaiah, **“I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way – a voice of one calling in the wilderness, Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.”**

First, let’s note that Mark is using this reference that is found in the book of Isaiah.

Meaning God has been working up to Christ’s birth for approximately 800 years from that prophecy in Isaiah and God started in the Garden actually. So, God has been carefully preparing for this season for a long long time.

We cannot out prepare God.

And then in the King James Version, it reads, “...**a voice of one CRYING out in the wilderness,**” I like that word choice, evokes a stronger sense of urgency than “calling”, and maybe even a bit more volume.

Maybe to be heard over the noise of our busy lives?

And then in the ancient world, “**preparing the way**” was a well-known intentional practice whenever a king was about to visit a city or region.

Long before a royal procession arrived, messengers were sent ahead to announce the king’s coming and ensure that everything along the route was ready.

Men worked feverishly and with a single purpose to level rough roads, fill potholes, cleared debris, and sometimes even straightened paths. All done so that the king’s arrival would be literally smooth, dignified, and worthy of his status.

The preparation wasn’t only practical—it was calculated in its symbolism. It signaled honor and ascribing worth, showing loyalty, and expressing joyful expectation.

A people who prepared the way showed they were ready to receive their king. And this was fitting and pleased the King.

This cultural backdrop gives powerful meaning to this week’s Advent text, to that message proclaimed over 2,000 years ago in the Judean wilderness.

When John the Baptist called out, “**Prepare the way of the Lord,**” he was deliberately using language everyone understood. But he wasn’t calling for road crews and the repair of physical roads but instead...for the renewal of hearts.

The people heard a call to spiritual preparation...”Clear out what gets in the way of the King!”

Israel’s true King was coming—not an earthly ruler, but the long-promised Messiah. Just as ancient communities carefully cleared the path for a visiting monarch, John called people to take real action.

To clear the spiritual obstacles through acts of true repentance, humility, and justice.

For example, John's call to confession and repentance that we find in verses four and five, **"And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins."** John didn't call people to merely listen but to respond, to change their lives.

Becoming our invitation to act, of making real room in our lives and in our hearts.

How might we make room in our hearts? How might our congregation work together on preparing for Jesus?

How can we make more space here and make more space for others?

We are preparing the way, we have been and are taking real steps, worthy to share and celebrate!

This fall we celebrated our front doors being equipped with a disability tower, removing a barrier to physical access into our building.

We are working on offering greater access to our worship services for those with hearing limitations.

We are working on making this space as safe as we possibly can with health issues, fire, tornado, and active shooter.

And we mentioned that on Wednesday, November 19th we hosted a time in our church to learn more about homelessness and food scarcity.

That night we heard about a very neat opportunity a woman had launched from her home. And we thought we should hear more, figure out if we could help.

So, we have invited her to come and share that idea with us this morning, to see if people here would like to "prepare the way of the Lord" with those struggling with food scarcity/hunger.

What better way to make room, than to make room in my sermon for someone/for two who has made room in their hearts for the hungry.

So, now I would like to invite Susie and Karl Wolf to come up and share with us about her ministry opportunity.

Thank you so much, Susie and Karl for coming and sharing with us.

Grateful we can model this to our church and to our kids.

As we enter these final couple of weeks in Advent, I want to invite us—as individuals and as a congregation—to continue to take up the ancient call: *Prepare the way of the Lord*.

Preparing by what we practice, what we do. And maybe get involved in this ministry that we just heard about.

Let us make room, be intentional, prepare the way for the King and love those he loves with a special fondness; the stranger, the poor, the hungry, and the homeless.

May we not do it by accident, or grudgingly, not squeezed in amongst the Christmas chaos. Instead, may we do it deliberately, in a measured kind of peaceful pace, full of holiness and reverence.

Let us love the stranger, the poor, the hungry, and the homeless and make room for all! Amen!

Time of Reflection:

Where is God nudging me to prepare the way for others—especially the stranger, the poor, the hungry, the homeless, or the lonely—so that they might experience the welcome and love of Christ this Advent season through me?