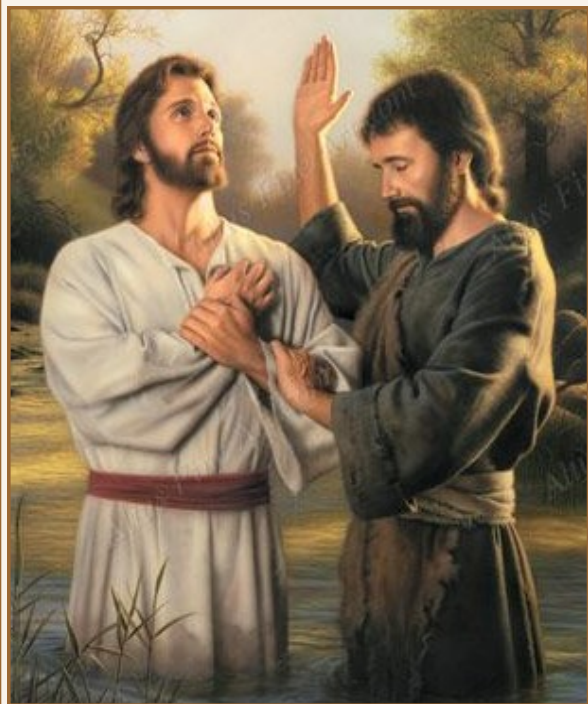


The Beginning of a Wonderful Journey

“1. The Ministry of Jesus Christ”



“Now the Pharisees who had been sent questioned him (John the Baptist), ‘Why then do you baptize if you are not the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?’ ‘I baptize with water,’ John replied, ‘but among you stands one you do not know. He is the one who comes after me, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.’”

John 1:24-26

The ministry of Christ on this earth began with his Baptism by John the Baptist, the son of Zachariah and Elizabeth. John had been preparing the people and telling them that there was a person coming that was greater than he was. As we think of John, the Bible tells us that his clothes were made of camel’s hair, and he wore a leather belt around his waist. He ate locusts and honey. This doesn’t sound too much like someone that people would flock to, but they did, even the Pharisees and Sadducees. Some of those people he referred to as a “brood of vipers!” and warned them they would be destroyed.

One day Jesus went to the Jordan to be baptized by John. John asked “*I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?*” Jesus replied, ‘*Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.*’ Then John consented” Matthew 3:14-15

When Christ was baptized, Heaven opened. We read “*Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove.*” And a voice came from heaven: “*You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.*”

This was not a time of honor for very long. Shortly after Christ was baptized, he was tempted by the devil. We read about this in three of the Gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke as being the very first thing recorded. As the song says “*God is Not Dead, nor does he sleep.*”

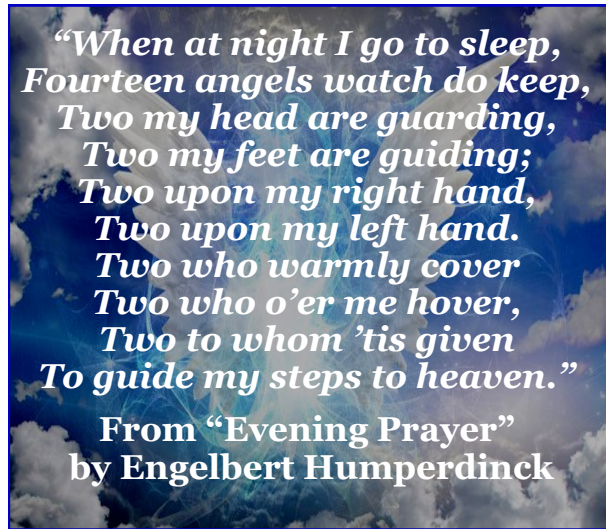
According to what we often read, Jesus fasted for forty days and according to

“At once the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness, and he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him.”
Mark 1:12-13

Mark he was with the wild animals and had angels taking care of him. How often we hear of animals taking care of someone who is stranded by lying next to them and keeping them warm. The trained animals today are unreal in what they can help people know. Often they can do something to help that individual to aid them physically. As far back as Proverbs 12:10 we hear about helping animals and their place in our lives. “*A righteous man regards the life of his animal, But the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.*” Did God really care for the animals. He trusted his son’s life to them in the wilderness, and even sent angels to attend him. There are many times in the ministry of Christ where animals play an important part.

And angels attended him. I am reminded of the song from Hansel and Gretel from Engelbert Humperdinck’s opera. Whether or not we believe in an angel on our shoulder, we know from the Bible that angels did appear and the children lost in the forest in this opera felt protected. It always delights me to hear when faith in God is brought into our world in wondrous ways, telling me that no one can really deny the existence of Christ and His wonderful message. As I read about this opera, one person said that not only is it touching to think about the small children being protected by angels, but knowing that angels attended Christ and they attend me and

the lost child in each of us. This is a wonderful blessing to each of us.



The ministry of Christ's teachings were so important they have lasted until today began. Today we are a part of that journey. Not only are we a part of it, but we have an obligation to carry it on so future generations will know the truth, just as people of that day told others and wrote it down for us.

After the temptation of Christ, he began to gather people around him to help him on this journey. They began a journey that would influence the world forever. They also willingly sacrificed their lives on this earth. We are not sure exactly when some of them were called to begin this journey. We do know that he chose the common man like us.

We do know that he calls us and we answer at different times and places in our lives. Some are raised in the faith from birth. Some are influenced later in life by someone they knew or by a stranger. Some are called later in life like the thief on the cross.

But each is called by God, and the time of acceptance is not really important just as the exact time each disciple was called is not important. It is important that we answer the call also, and help spread the "Good News" as the disciples did.

The first called were a couple fishermen, Simon and Andrew. As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee he saw two brothers and said *"Come, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."* They immediately left their nets and followed him. He renamed Simon, Peter and labeled him "Son of Thunder!"

There were two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee (called James the Elder) and John, called "The Beloved."

He called Philip and Nathaniel (Bartholomew) whom scholars believe had already known about his teachings.

He called Matthew (Levi) a tax collector. Tax collectors were not popular people, but Matthew left and followed.

There was Thomas, who became known as a doubter because he questioned and wanted to know everything.

There was Judas Iscariot, who would eventually betray Jesus, many believe due to greed for money.

The list concludes with Thaddaeus (or Jude) his brother James (called James, the Lesser or Younger) and Simon called The Zealot who has been called very political, but he was a devout disciple for Christ. *The journey begins!*

Prayer: Lord, we know that you are with us every hour of every day, and we know that You love us more than we could ever imagine, enough to give Your life for our sins. Help us to tell others about You as you have asked and live our journey here to glorify you. Amen

1. How would you have reacted if you were called to leave your job immediately and follow someone who was going around telling everyone about a God that you didn't know?
2. What is our part in this journey?
3. At one point Christ calls John the Baptist greater than he is? What did he mean by this comment? *"Let me tell you what's going on here: No one in history surpasses John the Baptizer; but in the kingdom he prepared you for, the lowliest person is ahead of him. For a long time now people have tried to force themselves into God's kingdom."* Matthew 11:11-14 The Message
4. What is the cost of this journey for each of us?
5. Is there any baggage involved?

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