Week One: February 16, 2015
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Text: Mark 1:9–15

9In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. 10And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. 11And a voice came from heaven, “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.” 12And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. 13He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him. 14Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, 15and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.”

Reflection:

Mark connects for us the baptism and temptation of Jesus with the beginning of His life in ministry. We perceive in this the natural relationship between our personal spiritual growth and our readiness for ministry. However, we do well not to miss another connection that Mark makes: the impact of the ministry of John the Baptist upon Jesus. It is the Baptist’s arrest that compels Jesus into ministry, and it is the Baptist’s core message that primarily influences Jesus’ own proclamation.

Whether we are students, alumni/ae, faculty or staff, our experience at United undoubtedly demonstrates how indebted we are to those who have gone before us and who have inspired us as we form our own unique sense of calling and ministry. Our colleagues and peers here at United, as well as historical voices that arise from our studies and research, are shaping who we are as ministers and servants within the Body of Christ.

As you begin this week — with many faculty, staff and students newly returned to campus — take note in the many faces you pass those who have proven to be John the Baptist to your Jesus. Let the knowledge that this is by God’s design fill you with warmth and gratitude!

Personal Prayer:

Holy God, thank you for bringing people into my life whose own journeys of ministry and calling have profoundly affected my own. By your grace and favor continue to bless me with such relationships throughout my life of ministry — a life that might in turn be an inspiration and influence to others in their own ministry journeys. Amen.

Community Focus:

Pray for others in the United community, particularly new students with whom you come into contact, that they will make connections here that inspire and shape them as they continue to cultivate their own ministry callings.

Meeting Idea:

Share with the group two or three members of the United family who have proven a great influence and inspiration to you during your time here. If they are present/available this week, let them know personally!