

SUNDAY January 25, 2026 “Starting UP! Jesus’ Ministry Begins”
Isaiah 9: 1-4; I Corinthians 1:10-18; Matthew 4:12-25

How many of you know about remote starts for your vehicle? That is you can stand inside your house and then take your key fob for the car click a button or two and start the engine for your car? This is an amazing thing especially in the winter cold as long as your car's heater is turned on before so that when you are ready- you can get into a warm vehicle to go where you were going! But in order for this to work you need battery or electrical power, the ignition signaled the button/key, a starter motor to crank the engine, and fuel/air/spark for combustion. With all of this being coordinated by the ignition system, and ensuring the car is in Park/Neutral the vehicle will start! This is just an amazing thing when it works!

Some days we might think about whether we need to have a remote started in us - especially if we have been sluggish or not feeling well, or even in this cold weather at least until the sun shines brightly. Just what does it take for you to get started in the morning? We can say we are starting our morning at 6 but really- do we really roll out of bed at that time or just contemplate waiting for the timer on the coffee pot to signal it is ready? Just what starts you up for the new day? And what do you do in those first minutes when you awake?- think about the plans for your day or do you just get moving into your routine?

The hardest thing for many people is that movement to start- to put feet to the floor and then go on with your day.

Jesus' ministry seemed to have a slow start. The prophet spoke of the one who is to come for many years and it is Isaiah who states the prophecy in chapter 9, a part of which we read on Christmas Eve, which states: The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness on them light has shined. This light is the light of Christ which shines and is reflected in those who believe and have faith in Him. This light is what we are called to shine and share with others! Jesus' ministry started many years before he was born into human existence. But it is not until after certain things took place which enabled him to be ready

Just think that when you started your job- you had to be ready to do it. You just didn't just jump in and know all there is to know; nor did you replace the previous person and do the exact thing right away. You had to be trained and made ready to do it on your own.

Jesus begins his ministry after his introduction to the people at his baptism. John's gospel tells us that the next day John the Baptist sees him and calls him the Lamb of God. And then Jesus calls his first disciples. Yet according to Matthew after his baptism, Jesus is led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. Jesus fasted forty days and forty

night and afterwards he was famished. After this 40 day period when Jesus is tempted, and eventually the devil leaves him, he goes to Galilee. These temptations in the wilderness relate to Jesus' identity as the Son of God, but were also common human temptations. This is because we too doubt God's goodness, test God's faithfulness and turn to false worship. Satan appealed to Christ's valid human needs for food, reassurance, and success. But upon returning back from the 'wilderness' Jesus learns of John's arrest and goes to Galilee. He knows that it is now time to do what God wanted. So Jesus goes to Capernaum in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali (just as Isaiah prophesied). It is here then that Jesus starts to proclaim, "Repent for the kingdom of heaven has come near!"

The circumstances in which we find ourselves to do a task have to be made ready. Anything from doing a load of laundry to baking a cake. Each action takes steps of preparation. Laundry has to be sorted; put in the machine with detergent and then the machine starts. Baking a cake begins with eggs and flour in some proportion being put together and then put in a dish to bake. Jesus did not start his ministry when John was at the river Jordan and speaking. But as John had told his followers, the one who was to come would do more. John is in jail and Jesus is now ready to pick up the task-- and speaks about the need to repent.

How often are we called to do a task and we say we cannot? How often do we say yes and really don't know what is required but there is a sincere offer to try? In churches today there are many tasks to do--from administration to teaching to listening to others as you visit with them. All are important but what is key is that you start by asking questions about what your interests are or what is needed to be done? Not everyone can do every thing-- that's not how God made us but we each have gifts to offer. As Jesus is ready to start his ministry he probably prayed hours and hours with God while in the wilderness asking questions and seeking answers. Yet he did not hesitate because He knew God was with him as he began and continued in his ministry. And this is where each of us need to begin. Start by praying- what would you have me do for in ministry, what might I take on right now?

And what does Jesus do? He knows he cannot do it alone. He knows he needs people to support him, listen, learn and grow in faith and knowledge of him. Jesus recruits them and they follow. We read that as he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw 2 brothers- Simon Peter and Andrew casting a net into the sea. He said, "Follow me and I will make you fish for people." Jesus spoke, they moved immediately and followed. Two other brothers- James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were with their father in the boat saw Jesus. He called them and they too left the boat and their father and followed. They followed Jesus and word spread about him.

Jesus and the disciples, went throughout Galilee- teaching in synagogues and proclaimed the good news of the kingdom. Jesus also cured disease and sicknesses among the people. He became famous throughout Syria and people came to him to be healed- sick and those with diseases, pains, demoniacs, epileptics and paralytics-- and he cured them. Jesus' ministry was now going strong. Great crowds followed him from all around the region.

Was everyone happy with Jesus' teachings and healings?- Those who listened and/or were healed were and believed in Jesus. But there were others who were not.. Right from the beginning, the Pharisees watched Jesus and what he was doing. They watched the crowds who followed him and they just waited to see what would happen next. They were the established faith group and they had power-- and for this son of a carpenter to be able to heal and teach as he did, what changes had he started?

Even in those early days people were concerned about Jesus welfare as he taught his message of repentance and faithfulness. And these concerns turned out to be valid which lead to Jesus' arrest, trial and crucifixion. But Jesus also caused divisions in families and households about what people should believe and do.

This also came to be a problem in the early church settings including the church at Corinth. After Jesus ascends into heaven, Paul's mission work enables churches to be established. But like any organization, there may be problems arising. Paul writes to this church and states that the people are to be united in mind in purpose and be one with each other. The early churches of Paul's time were struggling in leadership and purpose.

This is the situation of many churches in Canada, Ontario and Essex County and we too are facing today. There are fewer people committed to serving the church and are saddened when churches close but the willingness to be a part of a living moving organism like a church is slowly dissipating. They may like the idea of church but are just unsure because they might be changed for good. But we who are a part of the church family, know that when we experience those amazing Spirit filled moments of joy and wonder: like last week when we felt the Spirit of God as we shared in the sacrament of baptism, we know that the church is important in our lives and we are willing to do what God is calling us to do. This is because we need to share who we are and who we might be and become because of the Spirit touching our hearts. We also need to focus on what God calls us to be and do in this time and are we willing to do it?

Jesus' ministry started as he called 4 people to support him. As we consider our church family today, we need to see the people whom God has brought together to serve each other in faith. How might we start anew or at least focus on what we can do rather than what we

cannot. This is where our faith is needed. For as Paul says, 'the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God.' This means that as we live in this time of conflict between worldly wisdom and divine truth there is division between what we think we know as human intellect and what is supernatural faith, Paul's words are spoken across cultures and centuries. As believers, we're called to embrace the death of Jesus on the cross and recognize that true understanding of Him as the Son of God and the One who rose to new life, comes through the Holy Spirit. This does not come through human reasoning. Our world values logic, but the cross is difficult to understand logically. How did one who died rise again. This is what we are called to boldly proclaim. Jesus' death on the cross occurred yes but it is his resurrection that brings salvation to all who believe and this goes beyond human logic and wisdom.

So as Jesus' ministry starts where are we? What are you called to do? What is it that we need to seek and find as we strive to live as brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus? A new path will emerge but we must have faith and believe that is God's Spirit leading us. The question is are you needing a remote start from the Spirit to do this? Or are you willing to step forward in faith because of your faith. No matter your age-- young or older, you have been gifted by God and now it is time to answer your call to serve. This is why we are called by Christ. Let us pray.

God of grace and hope we praise you and thank you that you still call us even though we often turn away and say no. We come up with excuses because of the actions of others but in reality we are just not sure where to place our faith. Hear our prayers O God. SILENCE> In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.