

Bulletin for Sunday 10th January 2021

Very warm greetings to you all in this cold weather!

Please see the notices at the end of this Bulletin for news of a Sunday morning service on Zoom at the familiar time of 10.30am. Just until we can worship in our buildings again.

Let's think of each other as we come to worship God, sharing this worship together...

Hymn: Praise the Lord, ye heavens adore him (R&S 116)

Prayer: God of hope,

we praise you for crisp, misty mornings
and wonderful pink and orange sunsets;
we thank you for friends voices on the phone,
and for the assurance that you love us
unconditionally, and more than we will ever know.
We ask your blessing on everything we do,
and everything we give in your service,
today and every day. Amen

followed by The Lord's Prayer

Readings: Mark chapter 1 verses 4-11

Reflection: Mark's Gospel doesn't start with a baby in a manger; or with shepherds; or even with angels; but with the strange figure of John the Baptist, eating and dressing in very odd ways, symbolically suggesting a prophet in the tradition of Elijah. Despite (or perhaps because of) this strangeness, a lot of people were heading into the wilderness from all around, to seek him out. They listened to what he preached, and they acted on what they heard.

So what was his surprisingly attractive message?

He called people to repent; which basically means to have a change of mind (and heart). To turn from their old priorities and concerns towards a new future and a new perspective. And to symbolise this new direction by being baptised, washing away their old life to prepare for the new one. He was not the Christ, the long-awaited Messiah. Rather, he was called to lay the foundations for change; to give the people hope, and point them towards the new thing that was just beginning. Can you imagine the excitement of being presented with a glimpse into the future, a sense that change was coming, and change for the better?

John was called to create the circumstances in which change could happen; to prepare the way for Jesus by getting people ready to hear a new voice, ready for a new perspective.

Are we, like John, committed to laying the foundations for the new things which God is continually doing?

Hymn: O Breath of life, come sweeping through us (R&S 302)

Prayer: Compassionate God
In awe and wonder we pray for our beautiful, fragile planet...
You challenge us to hope for better things,
and support us as together we step into new ways....
We pray for those yearning for peace and stability...
for those weighed down by anxiety, ill health, poverty...
We hold before you our communities,
and all those we love, and miss, and worry about...
Hear all the prayers of our hearts. Amen

Hymn: God is love: let heaven adore him (R&S 95)

Blessing: May God lead us gently into new beginnings;

and may the blessing of God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
be with us and with all those we love
this week and always. Amen

There will be a **new Sunday morning service**, for all three churches and any friends who would like to join us, on Zoom, this Sunday morning starting at 10.30am. Including hymns to sing! We will aim to finish in time to boil the kettle and make a drink before the usual 'After Church Coffee' Zooms at 11.30am. A joining link will be sent out shortly...

There's the usual chance to chat at the 11.30 'After Church Coffee' Zooms, and 'Sunday at Six' worship, using the Old Testament reading for this week, and with different hymns, at 6pm. All very welcome - contact me for more details.

Anne Lewitt