

Teddington Circuit Worship at Home Sheets

Sunday 6th December

This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use whilst we are unable to use Methodist Church premises. We invite you to spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you. With thanks to David Innes, Jill Harker and the Connexional Team for their contributions.

Opening Prayer

Lord grant us the same eagerness in waiting and the bigness of desire that we had when children, and the faith that knows the greatest gift is Christ Jesus himself. Amen.

Hymn: Come, thou long-expected Jesus (Singing the Faith 169)

Sing/ Read /pray /proclaim the words or listen to it here

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0yKTZvZPz48&feature=youtu.be>

Come, thou long-expected Jesus,
born to set thy people free,
from our fears and sins release us,
let us find our rest in thee.

Israel's strength and consolation,
hope of all the earth thou art,
dear desire of every nation,
joy of every longing heart.

Born thy people to deliver,
born a child and yet a king,
born to reign in us for ever,
now thy gracious kingdom bring.

By thine own eternal Spirit
rule in all our hearts alone;
by thine all-sufficient merit
raise us to thy glorious throne.

Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

Let us pray together

Father God, whose is the world in which I live, and to whom I owe my being, accept the love and praise for which I was created.

Lord Jesus Christ, who for our sakes took human flesh to reveal God's glory and to bring the Kingdom; who for us sinners endured the cross and triumphed in resurrection, accept the love and praise for which I was redeemed.

Holy Spirit of God, sent as the seal upon the finished work of Christ to equip the church and to bear fruit in yielded lives, accept the love and praise for which I was sanctified.

Thanks be to you, Almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Today's Reading from the Old Testament Isaiah 40 verses 1 to 11

Today's Gospel Reading: Mark 1 verses 1 to 8

Time to Reflect

Agatha Christie is the world's bestselling author - apart that is from Shakespeare and the Bible. It's 100 years since her first detective novel was published. My mother was a fan and had the complete set of her stories. As a child, the adventures of Hercule Poirot and Miss Marple were read to me. The question was always, "whodunit?" The answer was never quite on the last page. It was always buried a page or two earlier. You couldn't just take a quick peak to find the answer.

When Mark wrote his gospel, he did the opposite. He tells us the solution in his very first verse. Jesus is the messiah - the special person that God's people have been waiting for. He is the Son of God - the almighty, come to us in human form. We don't to wait until the last page to find out what Mark's gospel is all about. He makes it clear that he is going to tell us about Jesus and that Jesus is the most important person that ever lived.

Having told us that he is going to tell us about Jesus, Mark then tells us about someone else! We have to wait for Jesus to actually appear. Mark starts by saying that he is going to quote from the prophet Isaiah. In his enthusiasm to tell the story, he forgets to mention that he is also quoting another prophet, Malachi. Malachi is the last book of the Old Testament. It tells us to expect someone - the forerunner - to come to prepare the way for this special person, the messiah.

In those days, long before photography was invented, people were easily mixed up with who was who. Was Jesus the messiah or was he the forerunner? Mark tells us about the forerunner first, so that we will be in no doubt. The forerunner is John the Baptist. Strangely, we know more of what John looks like than we do Jesus. John is a strangely wild figure with a camel hair coat and a leather belt. We even know

about his diet of locusts and wild honey. Mark is telling us that John is like Elijah who was expected to come and prepare the way.

The people, who were expecting the messiah to appear, wonder about John. Is John the messiah or the forerunner? John's answer makes it clear. "Someone more powerful than I will come". Someone who will baptise us with the Holy Spirit. The way is ready now for Mark to begin to tell us about Jesus in the next verse.

We are now in Advent – the period which runs through the four Sundays before Christmas Day. It is a time of watching and waiting. Let's prepare our hearts for Jesus to be born afresh this Christmas. Let's not be like Agatha Christie, hiding the greatest truth from others and making it impossible for them to find it. Let's be like Mark, who in his gospel, makes it obvious to others who Jesus is. Let's share that through our words and our actions of love.

Take a time to sit quietly



During this season the Methodist Church is proclaiming "God is with us". God is with us is more than a statement. It's a reminder

that God is always with us. We are encouraged to share our story (and other people's stories) of walking with God in this extraordinary year. How might you share how God has been with you this week? Find out more here <https://www.methodist.org.uk/christmas/>

A time of prayer

We also remember East Molesey, East Elmbridge Food Bank and the country of Niue

Lord Jesus Christ, how little the world seems to have changed in 2000 years! We pray for those situations that are still sadly too familiar:

you were born to a couple too poor to afford the usual sacrifice, and we pray for those who struggle to make ends meet;
there was no room to welcome you at your birth, and we pray for so many homeless on our streets, and refugees from danger;
your touch brought healing to the sick, and we pray for those who suffer today;
you fed the hungry crowds, and we pray for those who are hungry, for those dependent on the food banks;
you were familiar with the sight of soldiers in the streets, and we pray for places of conflict, that peace, justice and

reconciliation may come;
people whose lives were broken by failure and shame found restoration and hope in you, and we pray for those who feel they have lost all their worth or have sinned beyond redemption; may they know your grace that can give them the worth of children of God;
the lost and weary and bewildered found a yoke that was easy; be so gentle a Saviour to the many who still find life overwhelming.
We bring our prayers in your name, Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father

Hymn: Listen to 'The prophets' voice comes down the years' (Singing the Faith 162) or sing a verse of a hymn that comes to mind

https://youtu.be/wPy4vpjU_f8 [tune only]

The prophets' voice comes down the years
to teach and to inspire,
to show the nature of our God
in words and deeds of fire;
not to disclose some rigid plan
that God has set in stone,
but to renew the promises
the saints have always known.

The prophets' voice speaks of the past --
the actions that reveal
the way God used the people then
this broken world to heal;
and then translates the things gone by
in ways that we find new
so we can judge the world we know
by standards ever true.

The prophets' voice holds up a glass
in which to see our day;
events which span the globe around
and things we do and say.
It calls us to repent and turn
from things that tear life down,
to choose the path that Jesus chose
and share his work and crown.

Alan Hinton

A prayer of blessing

Christ Jesus, the Light of the world, shine upon us;
Christ Jesus, the Prince of Peace, fill our life with his peace;
Christ Jesus, gift of the Father's love, set our heart ablaze with his love; and the blessing of God –

Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be with us and all we love and pray for, now and always. Amen.

Original Materials by Rev Godfrey Nicholson
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Local Churches please insert CCLI No here

A bonus second reflection on the Mark 1:1-8

(editors note: this second reflection from Jill was so good I didn't want to leave it out!)

I expect you know about the warm-up people for a radio or TV programme. They are used to get the audience ready to hear and participate in the programme, so that it gets off to a good start – they are expected to be ready to laugh or applaud from the beginning, at appropriate times, of course!

Well in our reading we hear about this strange man John who seems to be acting like a warm-up man for the Messiah. He has been sent to give a message for people. But he is out in the desert. So, what is he doing? We read that he has been sent to prepare people for the “One who is to come”, so that when “the One” arrives, people will be ready to listen to what he has to say. John says that the people need to prepare themselves to hear because it is going to be “Good News”, and they need to prepare by changing the ways that they behave. Mark is telling us that “what I write here is going to be “Good News” for all people who will listen, take it in, and furthermore act on”.

This messenger John is in the Wilderness. Now why should people come out from Jerusalem to see a strange man proclaiming forgiveness of sins by baptism in the Jordan? The Temple had always been the place where sins were forgiven by special rituals designed for the purpose, but clearly something new and different is happening here. It is an in between time, when the waiting for the Messiah is almost over, but not quite. The people are being prepared by John for something different to happen. They are given this opportunity to re-evaluate their lives. What is the role of the Temple and how important is this message from John? Will they go back to their old ways, or will they look to the future for a new way?

We might feel we are in a bit of a wilderness at the moment. Many have taken the time to re-evaluate what they want to do **now** and what they might hope to do in the **future**. We need to take this opportunity to pause and think particularly with respect to our church communities. What type of “church” do we want to return to? Do we hope it will

eventually be exactly as it was before, or have we thought that things could or should be different?

Wilderness times are not unusual in the Bible; the Israelites were led out of Egypt into the Wilderness. They were led from captivity to freedom, but on the way, there were many struggles they had to overcome. The Wilderness was a place where God formed them into His people, but there were many times when they felt God had abandoned them and they blamed Moses for lack of food and water. Sometimes they even wanted to return to Egypt, but when they finally arrived in the “Promised Land” of Canaan, all their troubles faded into the past. They now knew they were in a much better place. Did they give thanks to God? Let's hope they did!

In the N.T. we remember Jesus was in the desert after his Baptism, being tempted by the devil. I think of that as a wilderness experience for Jesus when he was preparing for his ministry. How was he to fulfill God's purpose to get people to understand about the Kingdom of God and how they should live. Jesus needed this time to think through what he was going to do and how he should set about it.

We might well hope that when our wilderness experience is over, we find ourselves in a “better place”, both as individuals and as a church community. In the meantime, while we wait, let us remember to praise the Lord for his faithfulness, kindness and compassion which is helping us through this difficult period.