



Email: manseltonurc@gmail.com

Weekly Letter – 28 January 2024

Mark 1.21-28 and Psalm 111

Perhaps like you, I have struggled to comprehend evil. I'm aware of this when I come to the end of the Lord's prayer, 'And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil'. Evil is without any doubt a tangible reality in the world. But, I don't like to think evil is within me – or you. So when we say, deliver us from evil, I think we are saying, 'do not allow the Evil One more room to manoeuvre than we can bear', and therefore we are saying to God our Father, rescue, redeem and free me, for we know evil destroys. So in a very real way as we ask this, we are also seeking liberation from the power of evil, so that we can join in with building God's Kingdom, and therefore be in union with God's will. (Quite a request!).

In this passage Jesus is saying something to his fellow Jews which they deep down know is true. Truth often shocks us, and it certainly shakes the man who shrieks out at Jesus, saying, "Have you come to destroy us?" This man clearly sees Jesus' message as a threat to his way of living; a challenge to his choices and sees his life crumbling before him, so he shrieks and screams at Jesus.

Perhaps you too are like this man, for when "Truth hits the spot", we too can feel overwhelmed and have little appetite for change, because deep down we have a desire to cling to 'my way', my convictions and my choices.

Jesus' truths are often not easy to absorb, and we understandably 'stamp our feet'. In the gospel reading, once the out of control man stops screaming and shouting, Jesus says to him, "Be still". Followed by, "Let all distress go" (v.25). He suddenly finds peace, and perhaps realizes he can hold Jesus' 'gentle hand', and so is able to cope with God's truth. Perhaps later on in life he also knew what St. Paul wrote in Romans 8.31-39 was undeniably true.

To listen and open our hearts to the truth has always been demanding. Perhaps today you would like to continue to pray for guidance from God's Spirit, and so find that truth always liberates and opens up a gateway to God's Kingdom.

Stephen

**Sunday Morning Worship in Christ Well, and on Zoom at 10.30 am will be led by Rev Simon Walkling
Bible Readings: Mark 1.21-28: Psalm 111**

Cycle of Prayer in the Region – we will pray for Temple, Gowerton

Discussion Group on-line – 30/01/24 7 pm -8:30 pm

During Advent we had a couple of group discussions in the lounge. This month we are trying sessions on-line. We will be meeting on January 30th. We will be starting with a Bible passage, but who knows where the conversation will take us? You can join us on Zoom.

CANDLEMASS

Friday, 2 February 2024

Luke 2.22-40

Mary and Joseph are once again startled by what they hear about 'their son'. I wonder, when were you last surprised or alarmed by Jesus' life? Simeon is quite clear, God working through this child will disturb many, and even Mary will be troubled by what her son says and does.

Simeon goes on to explain that the gift 'in' Jesus is that he has the means to look into our hearts and remind us, or even for the first time reveal to us what our hearts truly long for. We have seen in the last three readings, John 1.43-51, Mark 1.14-20, and Mark 1.21-28 that Jesus causes us both delight and distress. The reading concludes with Anna saying thank you to God, for his unfailing goodness, as she knows that anyone willing to share their hopes with 'this child' will be enriched.

Stephen

Blessing of the Candles – a prayer in the Celtic style

In the leaping of the flame, in the blazing of the light,
in the constancy of burning, we adore you.

In the flickering of the flame, in the dying of the light,
in the ashes and the darkness, have mercy.

In the dancing and the glowing, in the fluttering and the flaming
in the commonplace and the holy, be with us, Lord.

For the good times, and the joyful, for the clear times and the knowing,
for the tranquil and the restful, we praise you.

For the weakness and the fearful, for the daunting and the doubting,
for the cleansing and the painful, help us.

For the bright times and the strengthening, for the feeble and the loving,
for the ordinary and the sacred, we thank you Lord.

Carol Dixon (URC Prayer Handbook 2024)

