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Weekly Letter –14 January 2024

Mark 1:1-11

Jesus Emerging from the Crowd

In Mark's gospel Jesus appears as his ministry begins. There are no stories about Jesus' birth like in Matthew or Luke, nor a theological prologue like in John. It's as if Jesus bursts on to the scene heralded by John the Baptist. Except ... the very first verse says, 'The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.' It's the formula that would have been used to announce the birth of the Roman Emperor, so it's a birth narrative loaded with a challenge to the powers that be. It harks back to Genesis and God's creative love in calling the world into being 'in the beginning', and it names Jesus as Christ (the Greek for Messiah) and Son of God, ready to tell of the saving love of God that is revealed in the rest of the gospel, so the first verse is a theological prologue in 13 words.

The first scene also prepares us for what will happen in the rest of the gospel. Jesus comes as part of the crowd from across Judea to be baptised by John. The crowds come in repentance seeking forgiveness of sins. Jesus comes in solidarity with them, identifying with them in their feelings of sinfulness, just as he will be crucified in solidarity with those who feel forsaken by God, to bring God's forgiveness and new life.

Although Jesus comes as part of the crowd, he is singled out by God, with the Spirit descending and identifying him as God's beloved Son, echoing the Messianic Psalm 2 (vs 7). It assures us that despite rejection, betrayal, denial and death, God's love is at work through all these things.

There is a freshness and urgency about Mark's gospel as he paints vivid pictures of the life of Jesus with a few words. Let's hear afresh that God is with us in all that we are going through. Let's find fresh ways of sharing that as good news.

Simon

**Sunday Morning Worship in Christ Well, and on Zoom at 10.30 am will be led by Rev Simon Walkling.
Bible Readings: Mark 1.11: Acts 19.1-7**

Cycle of Prayer in the Region – we will pray for Hall Street, Llanelli

Tuesday, 16th January – Tea and Chat in Christ Well – 2-4 pm – Fabric Painting

Discussion Group on-line – 16/01/24

During Advent we had a couple of group discussions in the lounge. This month we are going to have a couple of sessions on-line. We will be meeting on January 16th and 30th. In the first session we will start by talking about Simeon and Anna whose story can be found in Luke 2:21-38, but who knows where the conversation will take us?

You can join us on Zoom.



**'You shall love the Lord your God... and your neighbour as yourself is the theme for the
Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2024 – 18-25th January**

We thank God for the unity we share as Christian people from different traditions, and for the various activities and projects that we are all involved in during the year.

The material this year has been prepared by an ecumenical group in Burkino Faso using the parable of the Good Samaritan. They call us to reconnect to God's dream for us – a dream of unity formed of ties of love and compassion. They remind us that Jesus said 'Go and do likewise'. (Pointers for prayer can be found on the CTBI – Churches Together in Britain and Ireland website ctbi.org.uk).

You formed me (Lectionary Readings; 1 Samuel 3.1-10: Psalm 139.1-6, 13-18: 1 Corinthians 6.12-20: John 1.43-51)

O God, with deep concentration,
tender care loving creativity
You loved me, know me, formed me
Before I came to be.

When I feel incomplete
when I feel alone when I feel inadequate
You are there.
Whispering:
You are fearfully and wonderfully made.

And in the future
when I will experience
unsettling and uncomfortable times
I can know deep in my inmost being
Your presence in an intrinsic part of me.
Amen.

Nicola Robinson (URC Prayer Handbook 2024)

