

The Drive Methodist Church Sevenoaks
Morning Worship for Sunday 10th January 2021
Led by Rev Dermot Thornberry

First Reading Genesis 1: 1 – 5

The Beginning

1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

2 Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

3 And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light.

4 God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness.

5 God called the light “day,” and the darkness he called “night.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.

OPENING PRAYER

Come let us honour the powerful glory of our Creator God. Let us worship God’s majesty in the splendour of holiness. Amen.

A prayer of adoration – read by Dermot and Charlene

Lord God how awesome you are. Your voice is powerful and majestic. Once the earth was without shape. Dark and empty. Then you spoke awesome God. And light shone. You separated light from the darkness. The whole earth changed. You later sent your son, Jesus to live and walk among us on this earth. His ministry heralded by John the Baptist. He baptised Jesus in the Jordan and the whole world changed. The sky split open. And your holy spirit came down like a dove. Then you spoke, awesome God. And continue to speak today through your Holy Spirit. **Majestic, awesome, all powerful God we adore your holy name. Amen.**

STF 370 Breathe on me, breath of God

1 Breathe on me, Breath of God, fill me with life anew,
that I may love what thou dost love, and do what thou wouldst do.

2 Breathe on me, Breath of God, until my heart is pure;
until with thee I will one will, to do and to endure.

3 Breathe on me, Breath of God, till I am wholly thine;
until this earthly part of me glows with thy fire divine.

4 Breathe on me, Breath of God: so shall I never die,
but live with thee the perfect life of thine eternity.

Edwin Hatch (1835-89)

Assurance of forgiveness:

O God when Jesus was baptised, you spoke of your love for him. You showed your love for us through the death of Jesus and his resurrection. By the power of the cross, the darkness of our wrong doing is banished by the light of your loving forgiveness.

Say together the Lord's prayer

2nd Reading Mark 1: 4 – 11

4 And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

5 The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.

6 John wore clothing made of camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey.

7 And this was his message: "After me comes the one more powerful than I, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie.

8 I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

The Baptism and Testing of Jesus

9 At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan.

10 Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove.

11 And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

Address

Apart from us being a few days into the beginning of 2021 we have a few other new beginnings – namely the two approved vaccines and of course the beginning of our new relationship with Europe. Our reading today also reflects beginnings. What could be more beginning than the creation of the World? During Advent we heard again of John the Baptist heralding the coming of Jesus Christ and the beginning of his ministry. I am reminded here of all the hope that is attached to my Christian DNA! This gives me hope in my moments of darkness.

Mark used the dramatic figure of John the Baptist in the wilderness bringing a sense of hope that new things are beginning. The wilderness is an area where purity is distilled. And it is here in the wilderness that the Children of Israel were shaped. The wilderness is a place where bad can turn to good.

John is a good example of the purity of the wilderness. He is untainted. He eats simply of what the wilderness has to offer. He dressed in camel's hair. He wore sandals. This reflects a journey. In a previous church this reading popped up in the lectionary but at the same time I had hurt my foot so had to wear sandals – a brilliant opportunity to demonstrate this attire. In many cultures today to remove one's shoes is a mark of respect.

Jesus begins his journey after being baptised by John. He is baptised with water signifying a change from chaos to order – this baptismal water is a move from personal chaos to order.

Creation is so important for the Jewish nation along with their exodus from Egypt. Creation reflects God's gifting and endowment to people. In the beginning the first day when life begins out of the darkness. God created order from existing chaos. When John baptised the crowds, this was preparation for the coming of Christ. It was a national repentance brought about by a hope for renewal and liberation. It was an exhortation to an inner moral reform symbolised by the eternal ritual of baptism. This was more to evoke response and preparation for the coming of Jesus. They gathered together and represented a new remnant.

AND THEN JESUS APPEARS:

He is baptised by John – perhaps this represents the beginning of the call by God to his son. This is dramatically represented by the Spirit coming down in a dove like fashion. It represents a unique form of salvation. Jesus is the agent of God's salvation plan. The heavens opened and a voice was heard to say: *'This is my beloved son with whom I am well pleased'*

We know that head knowledge is sparked by inspiration. The Holy Spirit offers us heart knowledge which is sparked by compassion and care for all of God's creation – we are given a pilot light which bursts into flame and we experience heart felt compassion.

Water begins in chaos but ends in transforming our lives but we need to be aware of the chaos in us and around our lives. If we move towards wilderness moments we need to stop, be silent and reflect. We must know that God is always present with us. God sees us in Christ and sees Christ in us. Hear him say to us 'I am delighted in you'. Hear his encouragement. Now think of the people around you. As the Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness so he leads each of us. He will lead us through the chaos of this pandemic. At the moment he is inspiring the skill of those preparing the vaccines. We are each gifted as we are each uniquely created and now we are gifted with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. We have so much to be thankful for.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

We think now especially of our land going into lockdown. Lord be with those who are battling with their well-being, be with those who are ill, be with the families of all those who have died. Lord we pray for guidance not only for our government but for every government as they try to lay a pathway to healing. We thank you for blessing us with so many gifted scientists and yet we know that there is still so much we do not know of this planet that you have given to us.

I hold up to you all our congregation especially those who have requested prayer. May they know peace. In your name Amen.

STF 102 For the beauty of the earth

- 1 For the beauty of the earth, for the beauty of the skies,
for the love which from our birth over and around us lies:
Gracious God, to you we raise this our sacrifice of praise.
- 2 For the beauty of each hour of the day and of the night,
hill and vale, and tree and flower, sun and moon and stars of light
Gracious God, to you we raise this our sacrifice of praise.
- 3 For the joy of ear and eye, for the heart and mind's delight,
for the mystic harmony linking sense to sound and sight:
Gracious God, to you we raise this our sacrifice of praise.
- 4 For the joy of human love, brother, sister, parent, child,
friends on earth, and friends above, pleasures pure and undefiled:
Gracious God, to you we raise this our sacrifice of praise.
- 5 For each perfect gift and sign of your love so freely given,
graces human and divine, flowers of earth and buds of heaven:
Gracious God, to you we raise this our sacrifice of praise.

Folliott Sandford Pierpoint (1835-1917)

We end with the Grace.

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all now and for evermore.

Amen