



10-16 January 2021 • Faith 24/7

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## The whole world changed

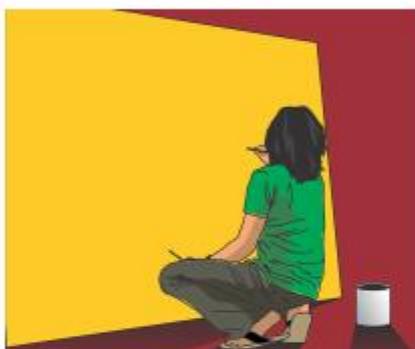
 **Mark 1.4-11**

In which, Mark begins his 'good news' (Gospel) with John the baptizer, the prophet who heralds the coming of God. He calls people to be baptized as a sign of repentance and forgiveness – that is, turning their lives around. It is, he says, a preparation for receiving God's Holy Spirit. Many came to him, including Jesus. As Jesus comes up from the water, the Spirit of God descends upon him.

Now read **Mark 1.4-11** see p.2 for text.

### A note on the passage

John's clothes and the place where he is preaching make him look and sound a bit like the Old Testament prophet, Elijah. But John says that he is not him; he is preparing the way for the one who is to come – Jesus. To most people watching, the action Mark describes probably looked like nothing much. But this was a hinge point in human history: Jesus was pledging himself to his life's calling, and it was as if the universe itself was responding to this deep-down change.



When have you experienced a fresh start?

## WALK

Take a trip to some water near you. Most of the year, the river Jordan is not very impressive – just muddy water and reeds – so a stream, a pond, a storm drain, even a puddle could be your 'Jordan'. When you are at this place, ask God what your calling is. Be open to an unexpected answer.

## WATCH

- In the story of Hercules, the fifth task that he had to complete was to clean the King Augeas' stables of massive amounts of dung. Hercules said he could do this in just one day. The king did not believe him, and – providing him with a small shovel – promised a great reward if he could. Hercules, however, did not use the shovel but the power of water. Learn more about this story here: <https://youtu.be/F3svQQJZ3C0>
- Think about the power of water to clean and give a 'fresh start'. You could wash something at home – e.g. the front step, the inside of a cupboard – and, as you do your own 'Herculean task' and see things refreshed, talk to God. Ask to understand the personal fresh start on offer to you at this moment. What could it be?

## DAILY PRAYER

Imagine that you have started the week with a blank canvas, a chance for new beginnings with God. Each day, think of one new thing that God may be calling you to do and write it on a piece of paper, or make an entry in your diary, praying for God's help in doing it.

At the end of the week, revisit what you have written, comparing it with what you have actually done.

## Prayer Activity

**You will need:** a shallow dish or bowl, some small clean stones or pebbles.

- Fill the bowl about two-thirds with water. Be still and look at the reflections in the water. Play some quiet music if this helps.
- Think about John the Baptist and Jesus in the river Jordan, each choosing to be engulfed in God's will. Carefully place a stone in the water and give thanks for each of them.
- Think of people you know who are facing challenges. Place a stone for each person and pray for them. If you are doing this in a household, you could take turns. Notice how the water changes the appearance of the stones.
- After a while, take the stones out, one by one, praying again for each person: 'May the Holy Spirit comfort you and give you strength.' When you remove the last two stones, give thanks again for John and Jesus.



**You will need:** a piece of paper, a dinner plate, coloured pens/pencils.

- Happy or sad, content or restless, the ripples of our lives are constantly moving and God moves us towards new beginnings. Draw round the plate to make a large circle. Use the circle to make a picture of yourself –

but not who you are on the outside. Make a picture of your thoughts and feelings on the inside.

- Now look at your picture. Does it show you something about how you are feeling? Can you guess why some parts of the pattern are as they are? Pray about what you see.



Dear Friends,

This comes with my very best wishes for a Happy New Year. I do hope that you all managed to have a good Christmas despite the unusual circumstances, and a big thank you for all your good wishes over the festive season.

Having said all that obviously the year has not got off to the best of starts and here we are again facing a new lockdown. Let's hope that with the introduction of a vaccine that this might be the beginning of the end, although I fear it still will take many more months for us to find a new normal. Unlike the last national lockdown, the government has not insisted that places of worship should close along with everything else. The Archbishops and Bishops have given local churches autonomy to either hold public acts of worship or not depending on individual contexts.

We, of course, do not have exclusive use of a building and this has partly led me to decide that public acts of worship in Ronkswood will cease until such a time when the lockdown restrictions are relaxed. I also feel that it is unreasonable and irresponsible to expect people to gather in groups when we have been expressly asked not to. I also think it sends out the wrong signal to communities who themselves are asked to refrain from gathering in groups. We must sacrifice our gatherings to encourage others to do the same.

From this Sunday we will revert to worship online. This will alternate between services on Zoom and pre-recorded services on YouTube (Zoom services will be recorded and uploaded to the YouTube channel afterwards). Joining instructions for a Zoom service will be sent to you on the Saturday morning before, so do check your email then. For those without internet access I am working on a new batch of resources that will be posted out to you in the next couple of weeks. This is less than ideal I know, but a change will come if we are all sensible and obey the rules. Most importantly pray for a better outcome in the ensuing weeks, for our wonderful NHS staff, for those in government trying to control the situation, those worried about income and livelihoods, and those who are sick and dying as a result of this terrible virus.

As always, stay safe and God Bless, Rob.

Daily Readings for week commencing 11 <sup>th</sup> January 2021		
<b>Monday</b>	Amos 1	1 Corinthians 1: 1-17
<b>Tuesday</b>	Amos 2	1 Corinthians 1: 18-end
<b>Wednesday</b>	Amos 3	1 Corinthians 2
<b>Thursday</b>	Amos 4	1 Corinthians 3
<b>Friday</b>	Amos 5: 1-17	1 Corinthians 4
<b>Saturday</b>	Amos 5: 18-end	1 Corinthians 5

***Pray for those in need...***Sally, Zena, Katie-Louise, Pam, Sue, Bryn, Evelyn, Shane, Pat, Heather, Dorothy Lily, Mandy and Joyce. ***Please remember those who mourn the loss of loved ones at this time...especially William and Bertha.***