



Beloved

Mark 1.9-15

Where, after a description of the eccentricity of John the Baptist and a sense of the power of his preaching, Mark relates the story of Jesus coming to John to be baptized. God is seen in the form of a dove and a voice from heaven pronouncing love and approval of Jesus. Jesus then spends 40 days and nights in the wilderness, before returning to Galilee and starting his own campaign to declare the good news of the kingdom.

Now read **Mark 1.9-15** see p.2 for text.

A note on the passage

Mark intends us to read these two passages together so that Jesus' baptism is clearly seen as preparation for his time in the wilderness. Knowing he is, 'Beloved' in God's eyes, helps him to get through this time of testing. How aware are you of your identity in God? What has helped you get through tough times?

MIRROR PRAYER

Set aside 10 minutes each day for this imagination prayer exercise using a mirror. Find a comfortable seated or lying position and close your eyes. Imagine being baptized by John in the river. Try to awaken all your senses as you imagine. What can you see, hear, smell, taste and feel? As you imagine coming up out of the water, open your eyes and look in the mirror, as you think about God's voice speaking words of love and approval over you. Take a moment to write down what you imagined God saying, and come back to it throughout the day.



PADDLE

Baptism is an outward sign of an inward grace – we show the power of God in our lives by symbolically dying to old ways of life as we go under the water, and rising to new life in Jesus as we come back up. Find a place when you can go into some water – it might be a river or beach where you can have a paddle, some puddles on the street or just have a bath or shower! As you go into the water, reflect on what it would mean to leave behind old ways of behaving, and as you come out, imagine entering the new life that Jesus offers.

LENT GARDEN OF RESPONSES

Lent is a time when people will often give something up for these few weeks before Easter to reflect on Jesus and his journey to the cross. Other people take on a new habit for Lent – like daily acts of kindness.

Over the course of Lent this year, create a garden of responses. You can either do this by putting soil in a tray and placing particular objects there as directed; or take a large piece of paper and make a 'garden page' by drawing, writing, cutting and sticking. If you live with others, you could build your 'garden' together.

Make a list of the ways you see God's kingdom – in the actions of others, in nature, etc. Either paint or write the words, 'God's kingdom is near' on a rock or stone, and place it in your garden tray, along with the list of the ways you see God's kingdom; or write the words decoratively, alongside your list on your garden page.

FAIR TRADE

Both John and Jesus preached that the kingdom of God was near. When the Bible talks about the kingdom, it's the idea of everything being as God intended it. One way that our society often isn't the way God intended it is in the area of people getting paid fairly for the goods they sell. 22 February – 7 March is Fairtrade Fortnight. As you shop during this time, consider swapping some items for Fairtrade alternatives. Most major supermarkets will stock Fairtrade bananas, tea, coffee and chocolate, but you may find other options as well.

MAKE

You will need: paper and a pencil.

- Draw round your hand to make a dove shape. You will need to stretch your fingers one way (as the body and wing) and your thumb the other way (as the head).

- Add features (feathers, eye etc.) to the dove and words/drawings about yourself. Try and keep in a meditative frame of mind, with your ears open to hear God's words of approval for you, his beloved child.



Lent in lockdown

Dear Friends, the Lent course "For such a time as this" that will be running through Lent. Please let me know **as soon as possible** if you would like to take part. The course begins on Wednesday 24th February at 7.30 p.m. If you would like to see a copy, please follow this link:

<https://www.uspg.org.uk/engage/support5/forsuchatime/lent-course-2021/>

In addition to this throughout Lent I will be circulating copies of a 40-day Lenten retreat put together by the Jesuits in Scotland called "knowing Jesus". There is a daily Bible reading and reflection, with music for those able to access it. Look out for a copy in you Inbox or through your letterbox.

'Hello! Who are you?' I wonder how you reply. I guess it depends on who is asking, but, in general, what would you say? Or, what if you're asked, 'What do you do?' or 'Where do you come from'? Do you find those easy to answer, or not? More importantly, do our answers to those questions define us? Aren't we much more than just what we do, or where we come from?

So, who are you? Not 'What is your name?', but... what makes you the wonderful and unique person that you are? And... do you realise how special you are?

In the Gospel for this Sunday, we hear how Jesus truly realised who he was. Jesus is baptized by John, just like the others who came to John at the River Jordan. But, as he comes up from the water, Jesus hears a voice, God's voice, saying to him, 'You are my beloved Son'. Jesus then – 'immediately' Mark says – goes into the wilderness where he can explore what that means for him. We sometimes focus very quickly on the three temptations. Mark doesn't even mention them in detail. He says only that he was tempted, while he spent 40 days among the wild animals. And 'angels waited on him'. In the Bible, angels are a way of talking about the presence of God. God was with him.

What's truly amazing is that God loves us all like that! We too are God's beloved and valued sons and daughters. When we are in the wilderness – whatever that means, and whatever that feels like, in our lives – angels wait on us. God is with us. As we begin this year's Lent, think about what it means that you are God's much-loved child.

| Daily Readings for week commencing 22 nd February 2021 | | |
|---|--------------------|----------------|
| Monday | Jeremiah 4: 19-end | John 5: 1-18 |
| Tuesday | Jeremiah 5: 1-19 | John 5: 19-29 |
| Wednesday | Jeremiah 5: 20-end | John 5: 30-end |
| Thursday | Jeremiah 6: 9-21 | John 6: 1-15 |
| Friday | Jeremiah 6: 22-end | John 6: 16-27 |
| Saturday | Jeremiah 7: 1-20 | John 6: 27-40 |

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