

Reflection Sunday 10th January **Mark 1: 4-11**

⁴John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. ⁶Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. ⁸I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

⁹In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. ¹¹And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

"You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased." That message proclaimed by the God of heaven as Jesus came up from the water of baptism. What a message of affirmation before he was "released" on his public ministry.

Forget the gender base of the comment for a moment and consider what a confidence boost that must be to any child to hear a similar phrase; - such an assurance of parental love and delight in what is being done.

We all delight in being appreciated. When was the last time you received appreciation for something you have done? When was the last time you showed appreciation for what has been done for you?

In recent months many people have received help with a variety of tasks that formerly no help was needed with. Shopping, assistance with medical appointments, collection of medication and many more things besides has been received. Sometimes people can feel guilty for needing such help; there is no need to feel guilty unless you are taking advantage of the situation.

Most people like helping and being helpful. When I was working in the eastern valley of South Wales I came across many women in the community who would do anything for another person and found great pleasure in doing so. At the same time they were fiercely independent and would struggle on rather than ask for or accept help from someone else; someone who would get great delight from being of use to another was denied that joy.

The words "thank you" go a long way in making many tasks a delight rather than a chore. May be saying, "with you I am well pleased" could be a little over the top.

For those who are parents, when was the last time you said such a phrase to a child or grandchild of yours? To offer encouragement by saying such words as; "your loved and you given me pleasure."

In these days of lockdown there are many opportunities to help another but also many times when living in close confines in a family home can be a struggle for all parts of the family.

Words of encouragement are words for peace and motivation. Can we find something to take delight in with those we live, and declare it, that they might know they are loved, appreciated and honoured?

Ultimately the phrase we all desire to hear is "Well done, good and faithful servant" coming from the voice of God.