

Reflection Sunday 6th December

Mark 1:1-8

1 The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

²As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,
"See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way;

³the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

"Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight,"

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."

Mark is straight to the point in referring to Jesus; he is Jesus, the Christ/Messiah, and the Son of God. No holding back; this is how Mark saw Jesus and believed others should too.

Much is made of the opening of John's Gospel and its link to Genesis – "in the beginning was the Word". Mark starts his gospel with "The Beginning," is it a hint that God is doing something new?

Mark is delivering something new: and it's 'good'.

How the world needs Good News and new beginnings.

At the end of a year many each year are glad to see the end of the year as it has not been a good year and they hope that with the change of a number life will change. On that basis most people around the world will be glad when 2020 is over for it has not been a good year an "annus horribilis" as the Queen described 1992 (Yes it was that long ago) might be a better description.

Changing a number from 2020 to 2021 is not going to make things any better. What may make things better is the rolling out of a fully functioning vaccine across the world together with a change of thinking in the minds of many about what is valuable in life.

The other thing that will make a difference is the listening to the message of Jesus and the transformation to life that following him brings.

John the Baptist – or as a friend of mine colloquially referred to him, "Jack the Dipper", was the messenger going ahead of Jesus to prepare the way. Do you see yourself as a messenger preparing the way for people to meet Jesus as you share the message with your friends, neighbours and family?

I wonder is the Holy Spirit the "John the Baptist" character being sent ahead of us preparing the way for us to be the new message of God's love?

We can be so reluctant to share the message of Jesus for fear of what may be the reaction of the recipients. The reaction of the recipient is not our problem if we have played our part properly for not all received Jesus.

Do we need to ask the Holy Spirit to prepare the way for us, as individuals and Church, to be the image of Christ in the world? It is called prayer.