



(image:mixcloud)

We take a breath and come into God's presence.

Holy Spirit draw us close and minister your grace to us. May we recognise your presence in our midst. **Amen.**

Almighty God, you wonderfully created us in your image and yet more wonderfully restored us through your Son Jesus Christ: grant that, as Jesus came to share in our humanity, so we may share the life of Christ's divinity. **Amen.**

Be with us Holy Mystery of love. **Amen.**

Bible Reading: Mark 1:14-20

After John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."

As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, "Follow me and I will make you fish for people." And immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

Reflection – Alastair France

Those of you that know me will know that I've been blessed in my career with a love of travel and a job that actually has paid me to do it. That's all a bit of a challenge at the moment (although I've been trying to make some good use of my time). Anyway some years ago around this time of Epiphany I was talking with a colleague of mine who is a devout Muslim in Casablanca (where there is a particularly beautiful new Mosque). I knew from previous conversations that he was somewhat of a critic of "over the top" celebrations of religious festivals becoming less about the faith than being about the party. He also was a particular student of the Christian New Testament, and could quote whole passages from it, chapter and verse. We were talking about our Christmas services. It was one year when I had been leading the

Christmas Eve service in Stetchworth and had read the first few verses of the Gospel according to St. John – a particular favourite of mine.

“Ah, Sidi Ali”, he said (he knew that many people called me Ali, and thought it was quite funny – and there is a particular brand of bottled water in Morocco called Sidi Ali – or “Mr Ali”) – “my favourite Gospel when dealing with Christmas is Mark’s”.

St. Mark’s Gospel, of course, doesn’t mention the birth of Christ – but goes straight in, at somewhat breakneck speed into “the good stuff”. It’s real action-packed, and the fact that in the first 13 verses (before today’s reading) we have covered the work of John the Baptist, Christ’s Baptism and the temptation in the wilderness gives you something of a flavour.

And in our relatively short passage today we cover the arrest of John, and the commissioning of the first four Apostles.

I remember being struck by what almost felt like clumsy language in the Gospel – the word “immediately” appears twice in that passage. Actually Mark rather seems to like “immediately” – apparently it occurs 27 times in the whole Gospel. No – I didn’t count them. It does though suit Mark’s fast pace.

It’s also quite interesting that certainly James and John were part of the “family business” as Mark talks about leaving Zebedee, their father, in the boat with the hired men. We might consider they had a lot to lose (although being a fisherman under the Romans in Palestine meant paying substantial taxes).

But I’m missing an important part here just in the first five words – “Now after John was arrested” (the Baptist that is, not the fisherman). John had built quite a substantial following from a people from Jerusalem and the Judean countryside, yet he had always said that he was not the Messiah.

John’s arrest was at least partly a political act – Herod Antipas (the son of Herod the Great) as the ruler of that area had been criticized by John for marrying his brother’s wife but it allowed Jesus’s ministry to start.

So – maybe we might say that the fishermen’s “immediate” response was just Mark compressing time. Maybe they really did have time to think.

I don’t see it that way. Indeed later in Mark’s gospel, Simon, then called Simon Peter, discusses how he had then left everything and followed Jesus.

In this passage we see Jesus using the talent that he has available – he says to the Fishermen to follow him and he will make them fish for people.

Now, Jesus has a huge pool of talent. He says to all of us to follow him. He will use our talents, whether they are talents that we know we have, or ones that we don’t. We may feel that we have little to offer, or that we have no time, or too many things going on. There’s never a good time...

But we should be open, just as those fishermen were to hearing that voice. Acting on that voice, and continuing to hear and to act. That voice won’t necessarily be

telling us to do things at the speed at which things seem to happen in Mark's Gospel – but it just might.

Worship Music

O worship the Lord

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=URdcwd2_XAY&ab_channel=GrantaValeBenefice%2CStMary%27s%2CWestonColville

Who is he in yonder stall

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vraG9hlBrAM&ab_channel=RoryMcClure

Jesus we enthrone you:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-8MrZj_mBx4&ab_channel=DarleneBAZ

Lord for the years

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MkTrFQLy6js&t=92s&ab_channel=HymnChannel

Give me joy in my heart- Lucy Gibson attached

Prayers of Intersession

Almighty God, Creator of all, we praise you.

We thank you for all your seen and unseen blessings to us.

Your faithfulness and care through-out all generations, times and seasons. Amen.

We come before you now to pray for the needs of the world:

For healing from the pandemic and all its variants.

For all hospitalised with Covid and other serious illness, and the families that worry for them.

For medical teams, hospital staff, emergency workers, chaplains and funeral directors.

For care homes and carers.

For school staff and all frontline workers.

Lord hear us: **Lord graciously hear us.**

Give wisdom to our government and all leaders as difficult decisions are made.

We give thanks for the development of vaccines and pray for the logistics and generosity with their local and international distribution.

We pray for America and the new presidential team.

May your kingdom of truth, equity and justice come.

For Yemen, South Sudan and Somalia that famine may be averted.

For those effected by flooding and other extremes of weather.

Lord hear us: **Lord graciously hear us.**

We pray for those who have lost jobs and livelihoods.

For those fearful of the future.

For families, children and young people in all the uncertainty.

For the vulnerable, the homeless and hungry.

For those whose homes are not safe places to be.

Lord hear us: **Lord graciously hear us.**

We pray for one another and those we hold dear.
For those who have no one to pray for them.
For those in pain, and who await treatment.
For those in recovery.
For those who are unwell.
For those who are depressed.
For those who are anxious.
For those who feel alone.
Breathe upon them your healing, your hope and peace.
Lord hear us: **Lord graciously hear us.**

We commend to your eternal keeping those who have died.
And all whom we have loved.
Hold and comfort all who grieve.
And reassure us all of your eternal care, outside of time for us all.
Lord hear us: **Lord graciously hear us.**

We take a moment to lift the prayers of our own hearts before God

We commend ourselves and the whole of creation to your unending love. **Amen.**
Joining all our prayers together we say the prayer our saviour taught us:

**Our Father, who art in heaven; hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive them that trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.**

Blessing

May Christ, who by being born to us,
gathered into one all things earthly and heavenly,
fill you with hope, joy and peace.
And the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be with you and those whom you love always. **Amen.**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord: **In the name of Christ. Amen.**