

**The Bride Valley Telephone Service for
Sunday 22nd January 2023 Epiphany 3
Prepared for you by the Reverend Jane Williams**

Welcome in the name of Christ. God's grace, mercy and peace be with you: **and also with you**

Hymn: O Worship the Lord

- 1 O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness!
bow down before him, his glory proclaim;
with gold of obedience, and incense of lowliness,
kneel and adore him, the Lord is his name!
- 2 Low at his feet lay thy burden of carefulness,
high on his heart he will bear it for thee,
comfort thy sorrows, and answer thy prayerfulness,
guiding thy steps as may best for thee be.
- 3 Fear not to enter his courts in the slenderness
of the poor wealth thou wouldst reckon as thine:
truth in its beauty, and love in its tenderness,
these are the offerings to lay on his shrine.
- 4 These, though we bring them in trembling and fearfulness,
he will accept for the name that is dear;
mornings of joy give for evenings of tearfulness,
trust for our trembling and hope for our fear.
- 5 O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness!
bow down before him, his glory proclaim;
with gold of obedience, and incense of lowliness,
kneel and adore him, the Lord is his name!

*John Samuel Bewley Monsell (1811-1875)
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Opening Prayer

Lord God, our maker, you are the source of all our life and strength, the fountain of all that we know and the provider of all that we need; reach out to us in this act of worship, that it may be more than a formal exercise of religious tradition, but rather, a means of grace.

Draw near to us, Lord: **that we may come closer to you.**

Enlarge our understanding to take in some of your greatness; and make our minds sensitive to such light and truth as we can bear. Move us by your Spirit to respond to the mystery of your presence, be our daily companion on the journey of life – for you know the way we should go and only your purposes are of lasting worth.

Draw near to us, Lord: **that we may come closer to you.**

Forgive us when we seek after lesser things and turn away from you and from our neighbours, make us more aware of the needs of others and of your glory in the world around us. Disturb us with inner restlessness which will never be satisfied until we become what you have made us to be.

Draw near to us, Lord: **that we may come closer to you.**

Lord, hear our prayers and help us not only to speak but to listen, and not only to listen, but to obey, and not only to obey, but to love, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

From The Electric Bible by Peter Dainty

The Collect

Almighty God, whose Son revealed in signs and miracles the wonder of your saving presence: renew your people with your heavenly grace, and in all our weakness sustain us by your mighty power; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Old Testament Reading: Isaiah 9:1-4

But there will be no gloom for those who were in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he will make glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.

The people who walked in darkness

have seen a great light;

those who lived in a land of deep darkness—

on them light has shined.

You have multiplied the nation,

you have increased its joy;

they rejoice before you

as with joy at the harvest,

as people exult when dividing plunder.

For the yoke of their burden,

and the bar across their shoulders,

the rod of their oppressor,

you have broken as on the day of Midian.

New Testament Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:10-18

Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you be in agreement and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same purpose. For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there are quarrels among you, my brothers and sisters. What I mean is that each of you says, "I belong to Paul," or "I belong to Apollos," or "I belong to Cephas," or "I belong to Christ." Has Christ been divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?

I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, so that no one can say that you were baptized in my name. (I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else.)

For Christ did not send me to baptize but to proclaim the gospel, and not with eloquent wisdom, so that the cross of Christ might not be emptied of its power. For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

Gospel Reading: Matthew 4:12-23

Now when Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee. He left Nazareth and made his home in Capernaum by the lake, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, so that what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:

‘Land of Zebulun, land of Naphtali,
on the road by the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—
the people who sat in darkness
have seen a great light,
and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death
light has dawned.’

From that time Jesus began to proclaim, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.’

As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the lake—for they were fishermen. And he said to them, ‘Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.’ Immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him.

Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the people.

Reflection

After John’s arrest, Jesus leaves the Judean wilderness and settles in Capernaum, “so that what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled”. It is not so much that a long-ago prophecy has now come true, but rather that Jesus’ return to Galilee is “filled with meaning,” especially for the people “who sat in darkness” (Matthew 4:16). Jesus’ departure from the Judean wilderness to his “home” in Capernaum represents the dawning of a new day as he proclaims the coming of God’s realm referred to as the “kingdom of the heavens” in Matthew.

“Now when Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee. The verb for withdrew ‘an-akh-o-reh-o’, is used in Matthew when there is movement from one place to another in the face of threatening circumstances. For example, after following the star to Bethlehem, the magi left ‘an-akh-o-reh’-o’, for their own country by a different route, having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod. Jesus’ parents went into Egypt (an-akh-o-reh’-o’, 2:14) after the angel warned them to flee, and they went away to Galilee ‘an-akh-o-reh’-o, 2:22) upon their return after a similar such warning. Jesus departed from the synagogue an-akh-o-reh’-o, 12:15 after becoming aware of a threat against him by the Pharisees. Later, after hearing that John has been killed, Jesus departed to a deserted place an-akh-o-reh’-o, to be alone. Thus, the passage’s opening verse is not simply a way to mark time, but it signals that John’s arrest is a dangerous situation for Jesus, and he must choose how to respond. There will come a time, later, to face such threats head-on (particularly when Jesus goes to Jerusalem prior to the crucifixion), but for now Jesus pulls away in order to carry out his ministry of proclamation in and around Galilee.

Unlike the Gospel of John, Matthew does not identify Jesus as the light of the world. Nonetheless, the prophecy from Isaiah makes clear that Jesus’ return to Galilee will be the occasion for those who sit in darkness to see “a great light”. No doubt Jesus’ ministry of teaching and healing is the basis for that light. At the same time, however, as the gospel proceeds, readers learn that **it is** the followers of Jesus who bear his light in the world by their own, collective way of life. In the sermon on the Mount, Jesus tells the people, “You (plural) are the light of the world,. . . Let your light shine before others so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven”. Jesus’ proclamation that the kingdom of heaven has come near is the first flicker of a light that will grow and burn among his followers until they are able to “proclaim it from the rooftops” (Matthew 10:27).

Jesus calls people as they are, from where they are, being who they are.

As Jesus walks beside the water, the soon-to-be-disciples are engaged in their everyday jobs: earning a living for themselves and their families by fishing in the Sea of Galilee. They are probably at the lower end of the socio-economic ladder; their work is dirty and physically challenging, and it demands their attention from sunup to sundown. Jesus does not seem to be bothered by their grimy fingernails, their wet and dirty clothing, not even by their low social status or lack of political power. The One with the kingly pedigree does not demand that they shower up before joining his mission, nor does he ask questions about their education, their abilities, nor their availability for an extended time away from home.

To Simon and Andrew, James and John, they receive only a call: no hints about what follows, no details about the mission, no promises of success. Remarkably, all four of these people, just as they are, follow after this stranger who interrupts their daily routine. All that is asked of them at this point is simply that they follow: as they are, from where they are, being who they are. As is true for the followers of Jesus who come after them, the meaning of their choice will unfold only over time.

Jesus might have preferred to stay in the Judean wilderness, where “the angels came and waited on him” (Matthew 4:11). When the news comes to him about John’s arrest, he makes a different choice, however, by withdrawing to Galilee, where he calls his first disciples, preaches the Sermon on the Mount, begins his ministry of healing, and teaches what it means to be the Messiah who is “God with us.” Those first disciples, for their part, might have preferred to keep their jobs, to remain with their families, to stay with the life that they knew. When they see Jesus and hear his words to them, they make a different choice, however; they take a risk, they step out in faith, they leave behind that which is comfortable and secure. They choose to follow Jesus.

Prayer of Humble Access

Lord, we come to this your table trusting in your love alone, hoping in your mercy, for we have no goodness of our own.

Yet you do not give us only crumbs, which from your table fall; you provide that bread and wine, which is the richest food of all.

Broken bread and broken body, poured out wine and blood you give, we in you and you in us Lord, by this grace forever live.

Though we cannot receive you sacramentally at this time we receive from you spiritually in the nourishment of us you freely give. **Amen**

And now we join our prayers together in the words of the Lord’s Prayer:

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.**

Give us today our daily bread.

**Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.**

**Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.**

Final Prayer

God of compassion, through your Son Jesus Christ you have reconciled your people to yourself. As we follow his example, may we obey you with willing hearts and serve one another in holy love; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Let us bless the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Final Hymn: As With Gladness Men of Old

- 1 As with gladness men of old
did the guiding star behold,
as with joy they hailed its light,
leading onward, beaming bright;
so, most gracious Lord, may we
evermore be led to thee.
- 2 As with joyful steps they sped,
to that lowly manger-bed,
there to bend the knee before
him whom heaven and earth adore;
so may we with willing feet
ever seek thy mercy-seat.
- 3 As they offered gifts most rare
at that manger rude and bare,
so may we with holy joy,
pure and free from sin's alloy,
all our costliest treasures bring,
Christ, to thee, our heavenly King.

- 4 Holy Jesu, every day
keep us in the narrow way,
and, when earthly things are past,
bring our ransomed souls at last
where they need no star to guide,
where no clouds thy glory hide.
- 5 In the heavenly country bright
need they no created light;
thou its light, its joy, its crown,
thou its sun which goes not down;
there for ever may we sing
alleluias to our King.

William Chatterton Dix (1837-1898)

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