

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.

Choose a version of the passage to read. The first is the ROOTS version for children, the second is the NRSV text which may be suitable for older children, young people and adults.

They had heard what John the Baptist had been saying, the people gathered by the river. He kept telling them: someone else is coming; someone more powerful; someone who will baptize with the Holy Spirit, not just with water. And then they saw him for themselves. Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee, and was baptized by John in the River Jordan, along with them. And just as he was coming up out of the water, Jesus saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: 'You are my Son, the Beloved; I am very pleased with you.'

And immediately the Spirit drove Jesus out into the wilderness. He was alone, absolutely alone, in the wilderness, and Satan tempted him for 40 days. There was no one else there, just the wild beasts and the angels. The angels waited on him.

When Jesus came out of the wilderness, he discovered that John had been arrested and put in prison. It wouldn't be easy, but Jesus knew what he had to do. So he began to proclaim the good news of God in Galilee.

'The time has come,' said Jesus. 'The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe in the good news.' Mark 1.9-15



Did you know?

- Neither Nazareth nor Galilee were very important places at this time. Therefore, people probably wouldn't have thought Jesus was the 'powerful' person John had told them about.
- The word 'wilderness' meant a wild area or desert where you can't grow food.

Mark 1.9-15 (NRSV)

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And 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. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

Now 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."