

28th December - 2nd January 2021 *Compiled by Canon Janet Chapman (Rector)*

Monday 28th December (The Holy Innocents)

Psalm 124

Matthew 2 : 13-18

Well, it is down to earth with a bump today as we hear how Herod slaughtered so many little children. It is hard to answer the question, “Why does God allow such suffering, especially in the light of the escape of the Holy Family?” What if Jesus had been slaughtered too? Pray for families whose little ones are in danger today and weep with the many Rachels of the world. But also pray that God will frustrate the evil designs of those planning to harm others, especially children.

Tuesday 29th December (John, Apostle and Evangelist -transferred from 27 Dec)

Psalm 117

Exodus 33 : 7-11a

John is almost certainly the John who received ‘The Revelation’ which forms the final book of the Bible, hence this reading about Moses meeting with God. Often after Moses met with God, his face shone. Read the passage again and imagine being Moses; how do you feel? What would you say to God? Would it feel as though you are speaking with a friend?

Merciful God, cast your bright beams of light upon me today, so that I might walk in the light of your truth

Wednesday 30th December

Psalm 96 : 7-10

Luke 2 : 36 - 40

I wonder what has happened to the “Annas” of the current age, especially whilst churches and cathedrals have been closed? In many churches and most cathedrals there are a group of elderly women and men who are in the building almost every time it is open, praying, pondering, cleaning, arranging flowers. To quote the psalmist, “they ascribe to the Lord the honour due to his name.” What would you do if you were locked in a church for 8 hours? Once you’d got over the shock, found the toilet and the box of biscuits, consider how you would spend the time? And if you could choose a companion for 2 hours who would it be?

Thursday 31st December

Psalm 96 : 1, 11-end

1 John 2 : 18 – 21

(The letters of John come just before Revelation)

We don’t often speak about the ‘antichrist’ never mind, several of them. What/who have been ‘antichrists’ to you in 2020? John makes clear that we are protected from them by the anointing of the Holy One. Take this to heart and picture yourself receiving the sign of the cross with oil on your forehead in the way we anoint both children and adults at baptism. Hold this picture for a couple of minutes. Then remind yourself that in Christ we find the truth for ‘the Word became truth and lived among us full of grace and truth’ (Gospel of John 1.14.) As we leave behind us 2020 let us approach 2021 with confidence in God’s truth.

Friday 1st January (The Naming and Circumcision of Jesus)

Psalm 8

Galatians 4 : 4-7

Happy New Year!

St Paul, writing to some of the first people to become Christians, reminds them that ‘when the time was right, God sent his Son.’ I wonder what made it the right time? And, as our psalmist puts it, ‘Why should God be mindful of mortals?’ Sit with these questions for a couple of minutes.

As we step into this New Year, let us remind ourselves that God’s coming as Jesus all those centuries ago shapes our todays, for we are now children and heirs of God. Let us step forth with hope but also aware of the responsibilities that go with having been ‘put in charge of God’s handcrafted world’ (Psalm 8 v 7 Message Bible.) Maybe, this could shape a New Year Resolution....

Saturday 2nd January

Psalm 98 : 1-4

1 John 2 : 22 – 28

Today we continue to read on from Thursday’s reading from the first epistle of John. Do you ever worry that one day you may deny that Jesus is the Christ and thus be denied his promise of eternal life? It is a chilling thought. I often think that the opposite of faith is not doubt but fear. The Bible tells us not to be afraid – in fact, someone has worked out that it says it 365 times; once for every day of the year, for we do need constant reassurance. Take courage from St Laurence and many other saints whose faith shone bright when faced with martyrdom. But also bring your fears before God now, cast them down before Him and then say today’s Psalm verses as boldly as you can.

4th – 9th January *Compiled by Revd Theresa Morton (Assistant Curate)*

Monday 4th January

Psalm 98 : 1,8-end

John 1 : 35-42

“The Lord is coming” says the Psalm. “What are you looking for?” asks Jesus. Imagine Jesus coming to sit beside you now. What will you tell him you are looking for?

Tuesday 5th January

Psalm 100

John 1 : 43-end

Nathanael seems dubious about Jesus: “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” He has judged Jesus before he has even met him, simply because of the place he is from. We all make judgements about others based on various characteristics, often without realising it. Perhaps today, as you encounter other people (whether in ‘real life’, seeing them on television, or simply thinking about them), ask God to help you become more aware of the judgements you make about them, and to remember that they are all made in God’s image and equally loved and valued.

Wednesday 6th January

Psalm 72 : 10-15

Matthew 2 : 1-12

What gifts would you like to offer to Jesus our King today?

Thursday 7th January

Psalm 2 : 7-end

Matthew 4 : 12-17,23-end

In our Gospel reading, we hear of Jesus starting his earthly ministry. “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.” What do you think he means by this? What questions would you like to ask him?

Friday 8th January

Psalm 72 : 1-8

Mark 6 : 34-44

This passage from Mark holds great depth. What resonates with you?...Jesus’s compassion for the people who needed someone to guide them? The call for disciples to feed the hungry? Perhaps the action of Jesus blessing, breaking and sharing bread stirs something within you about the Holy Communion we have been missing. Spend some time pondering whichever part of the passage is speaking to you.

Saturday 9th January

Psalm 72 : 1,10-13

Mark 6 : 45-52

The disciples have witnessed Jesus doing some amazing things – healing, feeding thousands, now walking on water – and yet Mark tells us they didn’t understand; the Message version of this passage tells us “none of this had yet penetrated their hearts.” Think back over your Bible readings and reflections over the past week: what has penetrated your heart?

11th – 16th January *Compiled by Fr John Richards*

Monday 11th January

Psalm 97 : 1-2,6-10

Mark 1 : 14-20

In Mark’s Gospel we catch a glimpse of the sheer humanity of Jesus, and that brings him very near to us. Reading almost any part of Mark’s story of Jesus you can see that we share some of the same passions. Are there times in your life when this is very true, and are there times when it seems hard to believe? What similar passions do you think you share?

Tuesday 12th January

Psalm 8

Mark 1 : 21-28

In this passage from Mark’s Gospel we see the confrontation between two super powers. The power of God and the power of darkness. At Jesus’ command, the power of the possession that dominates the man’s life disappears he is freed. Here we see Jesus using his power to liberate people from the evil forces that become part of their lives. Perhaps we feel gripped ourselves or we know others who are going through such difficulties. We need to pray and seek his power in the world.

Wednesday 13th January

Psalm 105 : 1-9

Mark 1 : 29-39

Jesus was busy. He was teaching and he was healing. The people never seemed to stop coming to him and he never turned them away. So a busy man has to get up very early to find enough peace and quiet and time to say his prayers, even if you are the son of God. Our busy lives are difficult and we struggle to find the time we need to spend with God in prayer. Let us remember Jesus. He never made an excuse!

Thursday 14th January

Psalm 95 : 1,8-end

Mark 1 : 40-end

We are drawn back to the humanity of Jesus with human feelings and strong emotions. Are you drawn to his personality? Does this passage address your own understanding of Jesus? St Mark believes that Jesus is the son of God, but he also portrays him in such a human light that we are all able to identify with him. The good news is that when we discover the Gospel of Mark we rediscover the person of Jesus.

Friday 15th January

Psalm 78 : 3-8

Mark 2 : 1-12

This is a lovely story from Jesus early ministry, but it's where the real trouble starts. The scribes, who are always numbered among the traditional enemies of Jesus, have enjoyed a front seat in all the drama. But suddenly they question Jesus about the forgiveness of sins. It is a difficult question for all Christians. For Jesus, forgiveness is not the exclusive right of God, it is the shared duty of all who would follow him. Jesus wants everyone to imitate God's practice of forgiving sins, not sit back and leave the business of forgiving to God alone. What do you think?

Saturday 16th January

Psalm 19 : 7-end

Mark 2 : 13-17

Levi was a man hated by everyone. Out of all the disciples he probably had the most to lose when he chose to follow Jesus, and there was no going back for him. But Jesus wanted the man no one else wanted. Jesus offered his friendship to the man whom all others would have scorned. Are there people you know or have met that fall into the same category as Levi? How do you feel about the outsider no one else talks to or likes? Are you going to do anything about it?

18th – 23rd January *Compiled by Fr David (Associate Priest)*

Monday 18th January

Psalm 110 : 1 - 4

Mark 2 : 18 - 22

Imagine that you are at a Jewish wedding feast or even a wedding breakfast following a non-Jewish wedding. Everyone is merry, eating, drinking and sharing anecdotes. Can you imagine being present when you are fasting? Constantly being invited to eat something or have your glass topped up. How would you avoid these invitations without appearing impolite? It is bound to appear that you do not wish the bride and groom well. You will be ready to fast after the bride and groom have left, after you have eaten and drunk more than perhaps you should have done. Then you will probably feel ill at the thought of eating or drinking more. Thinking about the wedding and fasting are there any ways in which you feel that you have not focused on being present as a disciple of Christ?

Tuesday 19th January

Psalm 111

Mark 2 : 23 - end

Read this meditation then read the Bible passage.

Imagine that you are out for a walk one Sunday, in a remote place. Picture the landscape as you walk along a not so clear footpath. You stopped for lunch. What is in your lunch box? What do you have to drink? You have been walking hard over rough terrain and your lunch scarcely touches your sides. You walk on. The walk takes longer than you expected and by late afternoon you still have some distance to go. You have no more food or drink. You are passing by an orchard and help yourself to a couple of apples. They taste really good. Now read the passage.

How do you feel about the disciples having gathered a few ears of corn as they walked through the wheat field? Do you think it was wrong to pick an apple on the sabbath; was it wrong to take an apple from the orchards?

Wednesday 20th January

Psalm 110 : 1 - 4

Mark 3 : 1 - 6

Follow this meditation then read the passage.

You are walking to church. It is a pleasant day, neither too warm nor cold. It is not raining. As you walk you reflect on the week gone by. For once you managed to pray most days. A car has broken down in a busy lane. There is quite a lot of traffic and the driver is a woman with two young children in the car. Do you walk on so as not to be late for church or do you offer your help and with others help to push the car to safety? You arrive 20 minutes late for church. You try to slip in quietly but the door creaks than swings shut loudly and everyone looks around. How do you feel? You think you can hear the unspoken "Tut tut". Do you feel that it was right to stop and help? What if you were supposed to read the first lesson and as a result arrived too late to do that?

Thursday 21st January

Psalm 40 : 7 - 10, 17 - end

Mark 3: 7 - 12

Did you have a childhood hero, perhaps a musician that you followed to concerts, a sports person that you really admired or perhaps a teacher, who could do no wrong, in your eyes? What lengths did you go to in order to get an autograph or what did you do to get the attention of the teacher? Imagine what it would be like to have someone who could heal everyone who was brought to them; those who were lame, blind, deaf or a little crazy. What lengths would you go to in order to hear all that they had to say or to get a friend to them to be healed? What if having healed your friend of a psychological illness Jesus said to tell no one?

Friday 22nd January

Psalm 85 : 7 – end

Mark 3 : 13 - 19

Can you remember what it was like in your school days when it came to picking teams for rounders, hockey, football, cricket, rugby or any other sport? Were you picked first or last? Were you offered to the other side? Did you understand why you were offered to the other side, and did they take you? What did it feel like to be chosen? Did you feel confident and pleased to be chosen or were you apprehensive, worried if you were up to the task? Is Jesus calling you now to join his team, to be a key member of his team? How does that feel and how do you respond?

Saturday 23rd January

Psalm 47 : 1 – 8

Mark 3 : 20 - 21

Do you ever get so absorbed in doing something that you forget what time it is, forget to eat or drink? Is it perhaps at work when there is an endless stream of demands? Is it when painting or drawing a picture, when reading a book, playing a computer game, designing and building furniture, writing a computer programme or building an electronic gadget? What is it that you find completely absorbing? When this happens does someone bring you food and tell you to take a break? How do you respond? Do you look up or keep on doing what you were doing? When do you stop? Do you get told 'you must be crazy'? Do your family try to remove the paint pots, your tools, turn off the lights, ask you if you've forgotten where home is or where your bed is? How do you respond? Can you imagine being this absorbed as a disciple of Jesus?

25th – 30th January *Compiled by Claire Whitmore (Ordinand)*

Monday 25th January

Psalm 67

Matthew 19 : 27 - 30

Today's psalm echoes a beautiful blessing in Numbers, "The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace." I love the image of God's face not just looking on us with love, but shining with it! Elsewhere, in Exodus, Moses' face shines after speaking to God face to face. Can you feel God's face shining on you today? What about your own face? Does it shine with your love of God?

Tuesday 26th January

Psalm 40 : 1 - 4, 7 - 10

Mark 3 : 31 - 35

What a statement from Jesus! Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother. We are all invited into such a close relationship with Jesus, simply through following the will of God. But is following the will of God simple? Often it is difficult to know what the best path is, what choices God wants us to make. Today's psalm offers a clue: time spent waiting patiently for the Lord can give us the reassurance and guidance we need.

Wednesday 27th January

Psalm 110 : 1 - 4

Mark 4 : 1 - 20

As the world battles with coronavirus, many of us have spent more time than ever tending to our gardens. Does this sower sound like a sensible gardener? He throws his seeds on the path, on rocky ground and bad soil – yet still ends up with a crop that bears fruit thirty, sixty and a hundredfold. God's extravagant love showers down on all of us, whether we respond or not, but for those of us who choose to follow God, there is a promise of an abundant harvest for God's kingdom.

Thursday 28th January

Psalm 24 : 1 - 6

Mark 4 : 21 – 25

God's face appears again in the Psalms today – but the criteria for who seeks God's face is demanding. The Mark passage also reminds us that there are no secrets from God. Thankfully, God promises us grace and forgiveness for the times we fall short. Perhaps you can think of some ways that you have fallen short in recent days. Bring them to God in the knowledge that God forgives our sins.

Friday 29th January

Psalm 37 : 3 - 6, 40 - 41

Mark 4 : 26 – 34

More seeds again! This time the emphasis is on how the seeds grow, often in ways that are hidden and we do not see. Today's psalm speaks of God's faithfulness, and our call to trust in God. Sometimes we cannot see what God is doing, but we know that God is always with us, always working to our good. Are there situations that you are waiting for God to act in? Offer them to God in prayer, trusting in that faithfulness.

Saturday 30th January

Psalm 147

Mark 4 : 35 - 41

How do you feel about storms? Do you love to watch lightning zigzag across the sky? Or are you more inclined to hide under the duvet? Either way, it's one thing to watch a storm from the safety of our homes, and another thing to be exposed to the elements in a boat! Jesus, though, is always in control. Not only does he calmly sleep through the storm initially, but he brings it to an end immediately. One thing this story reminds us of, is that Jesus is not simply a messenger of love and peace, but God incarnate. Even the winds and the waves obey him!

1st – 6th February

Compiled by Janice Wones (Reader)

Monday 1st February

Hebrews 11 : 32 - end

Psalm 31 : 19 - end

Mark 5 : 1 - 20

You can read about Gideon, Barak and Samson in Judges chapters 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8; about Samuel in 1 Samuel and about David in 1 and 2 Samuel. They were called, they responded and they conquered. The prophets were called, they spoke out about their times and were badly treated. You have been called. How have you responded? Rejoice about all that you have achieved. Consider what you still need to do.

“Be strong and take heart, all you who hope in the Lord.”

Tuesday 2nd February

Hebrews 12 : 1 - 4

Psalm 22 : 25b - end

Mark 5 : 21 - 43

Be aware of the opposition, both without and within. What are your own personal weaknesses that can prevent you from following your faith? What are the outside influences and people that discourage you from telling of your faith?

“Posterity will serve him; future generations will be told about the Lord.”

Wednesday 3rd February

Hebrews 12 : 4 - 7, 11 - 15

Psalm 103 : 1 - 2, 13 – 18

Mark 6 : 1 - 6a

Have you found some things tough in your life? Would you prefer to be a spoiled brat who has everything done for him? The world is not perfect. The difficulties have enabled you to gain strength and wisdom. God loves you as his child and is with you in hard times.

“The Lord's love is with those who fear him.”

Thursday 4th February

Hebrews 12 : 18 - 19, 21 – 24

Psalm 48 : 1 - 3, 8 – 10

Mark 6 : 7 - 13

Think of a mountain. The closer you get to it the more awesome it appears. God is so much more awesome than a mountain. His presence is not a place of fire and fear. His presence is a place of love and holiness, a place to approach with confidence, but with great respect. Rest in that place for a while.

“Within your temple, O God, we meditate on your unfailing love.”

Friday 5th February

Hebrews 13 : 1 – 8

Psalm 27 : 1 - 6, 9 - 12

Mark 6 : 14 - 29

Contemplate your daily life. You care for your family and friends. You have concern for those in need, those ill-treated or confined any way. You are content with what you possess. You hold to your faith. If you feel you fall short in any of these attributes, think what you could do to do better. “Teach me your way, O Lord.”

Saturday 6th February

Hebrews 13 : 15 - 17, 20 – 21

Psalm 23

Mark 6 : 30 - 34

The world is in a sad state. Pray for those with authority, who have the immense responsibility of making things better. Do you do all you can to help? Do you obey all the regulations? Do you do good and share what you have? Then thank God and praise him for the opportunity to make things better.

“He guides me in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake.”