

Sunday 10th January 2021

Opening Prayer

Lord God, giver of light and life,
by your word you bring everything into being –
the far-flung galaxies and the tiniest atomic particle.
You have given us a world to enjoy and to care for.
Give us compassion in the use of its resources,
wisdom in our stewardship of your gifts,
and reverence for all that you have made –
for Jesus' sake.
Amen.

Hymn: Breathe on me Breath of God *Edwin Hatch (CCL license: 256444)*

(Click here to hear the tune)

Breathe on me, Breath of God,
Fill me with life anew,
That I may love what Thou dost love,
And do what Thou wouldst do.

Breathe on me, Breath of God,
Until my heart is pure,
Until with Thee I will one will,
To do and to endure.

Breathe on me, Breath of God,
Till I am wholly Thine,
Until this earthly part of me
Glows with Thy fire divine.

Breathe on me, Breath of God,
So shall I never die,
But live with Thee the perfect life
Of Thine eternity.

Readings: Genesis 1 1-5, Mark 1 4-11

Reflection

At the beginning of a new year, we always tend to look ahead, following the difficulties of 2020, this is even more important, and many will be hoping and praying 2021 brings a more positive and easier period to our lives.

We are 10 days into the new year, many of us will have made new year resolutions and hopefully we are still sticking to them! They might be the usual things like eat less, exercise more, these are relatively straightforward in theory to achieve. But what about the more difficult issues? There is a tendency to look back at the start of a year and focus on regrets, wishing we had done something differently, said something different, provided different help or opportunities. Wishing we could start again. One of the great comforts of the Christian faith is that we know and love a God who by his very nature is forgiving, allowing and encouraging us to let go of past failures and begin again. We are reminded constantly of his forgiveness when we say the Lord's prayer.

In our new testament bible reading today, John the Baptist prepares the way for the Lord - to create the circumstances in which change could happen. He built a group of people whose lives were oriented towards the promise of a new future, ready and waiting for Jesus. His call was to the steady, patient work of preparation, laying the foundations for all that Jesus would do. Do we value John the Baptist's work highly enough? Do we value our own work enough when it does not lead to immediate change but demands steady, patient commitment to preparation, or do we become impatient as we wait to see what God is going to do?

The Greek word metanoia invites people to look towards a new future where old mistakes are left behind and new possibilities open up. We must avoid focusing on what has gone wrong in the past, rather focus on what could go better in the future.

Some of us might decide that this is the year to start something new, may be a new hobby or a change of direction. The bible reading is about new beginnings. We are being challenged to look for opportunities to make new beginnings for ourselves and for our community. How can we reshape ourselves and our Church community for a new purpose and what might that purpose be? Have we unintentional barriers that might stop new people joining our church? Are there hidden assumptions, unspoken "rules" unfamiliar language that might make newcomers feel uncomfortable? What can we do about it?

2020 was a very difficult year and as a church we are facing many challenges. Through prayerful reflection we must listen to what the Lord is calling us to do and fulfil his wishes for our church and the wider community. Together we pray for God's guidance and blessing at the start of this new year.

Prayer of Praise and Thanksgiving

God, through your might and power the world was created, and through it now the world is changed, and ever changing. We read in the Scriptures of how you changed people's lives. We hear it in the stories of saints old and new. We know it through the experience and lives of our own communities. We thank and praise you for all that you have done through the changes you have made – and are still making – in our lives. We thank and praise you for the gift of your Holy Spirit who gives us – your people – strength, and the blessing of peace.

Amen

Closing Prayer and the Grace

Lord, help us to be open to your prompting
as we seek to discover what you would have us be and do.
Remind us again and again that you have promised to be our
guide and companion on our journey.
Help us to look forward with renewed commitment,
and bless our thinking and speaking and doing.
In your name.

Amen.

The Grace

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and
the love of God, and the fellowship of the
Holy Spirit be with us all, evermore.

Amen.

Sue