

The Gathering – first video

Welcome - [OLIVER]

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Early in the New Testament, we read about lots of people going out into the middle of nowhere to hear a preacher named John. That must have seemed strange to some. (What was wrong with the local minister?)

And yet here we are today, gathering in out-of-the-ordinary places, in unusual ways for a spiritual encounter. Out here on the frontiers of cyberspace, it may feel odd to one or two—like wearing an itchy coat or a diet that isn't familiar or ideal. But today's Gospel reminds us that in far-flung places—in the wilderness—God's Spirit is moving.

Welcome to this outpost of love in the year 2021.

Collect for Purity - [KIERAN]

**Almighty God,
to whom all hearts are open,
all desires known,
and from whom no secrets are hidden:
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you,
and worthily magnify your holy name;
through Christ our Lord.
Amen.**

Confession

[KELVIN] God is love and we are God's children.
There is no room for fear in love.
We love because God loved us first.

Let us confess our sins in penitence and faith.

[Silence]

God our Father, we confess to you and to our fellow members in the Body of Christ that we have sinned in thought, word and deed, and in what we have failed to do. We are truly sorry. Forgive us our sins, and deliver us from the power of evil, for the sake of your Son who died for us, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

[OLIVER] God, who is both power and love, forgive you and free you from your sins, heal and strengthen you by the Holy Spirit, and raise you to new life in Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Gloria - [MORVEN]

Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to his people on earth.

Lord God, heavenly King,
almighty God and Father,
we worship you, we give you thanks,
we praise you for your glory.

Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,
Lord God, Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world:
have mercy on us;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father:
receive our prayer.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High,
Jesus Christ,

with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Collect - [OLIVER]

God of salvation, in the river Jordan you bathed your Son Jesus in glory and revealed him as your obedient servant. In spirit and in power, rend the heavens and come down to us. Strengthen us to acknowledge your Christ, that we who are reborn in his likeness may walk with him in the path of obedience. Grant this through Jesus Christ, your Word made flesh, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, in the splendour of eternal light, God for ever and ever. **Amen.**

The Ministry of the Word – second video

GOSPEL: Mark 1:4-11 – [UCHE]

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke.
Glory to Christ our Saviour.

John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. He proclaimed, 'The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.'

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.'

Give thanks to the Lord for his glorious Gospel.
Praise to Christ our Lord.

Sermon [JOHN]

‘And all the country of Judaea and all the people of Jerusalem went out to John and were baptised by him, confessing their sins.’
Mk 1:5

It is not easy, after listening to Luke and Matthew’s warmingly beautiful stories of shepherds and wise men – however hard we try to put them in their harsh political context – to catch the sheer wildness and disruptiveness of Mark’s opening to his Gospel.

It’s a story of mass desperation and panic: people pouring out of the city and the surrounding countryside into the desert to seek release, to escape from some terrifying threat, confessing their sins. It’s a scene which is reminiscent of mediaeval reports from times of famine and plague: large groups of people roaming through Perugia, through the cities of Northern Italy, and Germany: whipping themselves mercilessly, confessing their sins, praying desperately for a route out of their distress.

Here, in Mark’s account, the crowds flock to the ultimate Wild Man, John, clothed in camel hair, living off the land: locusts and wild honey, hoping against hope that here was some strange new way out. Flocking to a Wild Man who enacts a powerful ritual of death by drowning and restoration to new life, pointing them to a coming stronger one who will baptise them with the Holy Spirit.

It’s one of those major breaks in history where the old is left behind and the new is still to come and people experience the acute expectations and deep anxieties of that which is not yet: the pull of the promised resolution and the horror of the present vacuum, of the void opening up before them. Everything which had previously provided security and direction is cast aside but the new order has not yet emerged, only prophets and dreamers – like John and, soon to be, Jesus.

This is a much more radical view of Jesus. There’s no annunciation, no premonitory dreams, fulfilment of prophecies: Jesus just merges from the crowds and is baptised (did he like the

others confess his sins: we are not told). And then he experiences the new in a vision which will transform his life and the lives of all who follow him. The heavens are torn apart, the Spirit descends on him in the form of a dove, the divine voice calls to him appointing, anointing him and then the Spirit casts him out into the desert to find his vocation and mission.

40 days which changed the world, where Jesus' vision of Kingdom, of the coming new age was formed and begins to grow, where he wrestles with false hopes and fears and listens to the promptings of the Spirit.

As we take our first steps into the New and Epiphany-tide , it is hard not to feel that we have rarely in our lives faced such an uncertain future, full of threats and promises, false or real. So much of what we had come to accept as the norm, has been challenged, has become the subject of fierce and divisive controversy: our energy usage, our patterns of travel and consumption, the democratic principles by which we operate, the distribution of wealth across the world, our relations with other nations. And we have begun increasingly to see the consequences of those ways: the growth of megacities, climate change, whole regions locked in brutal conflict, appalling religious wars, unprecedented movements of population, with scenes of horror in the Mediterranean and the Channel.

There will be many voices in the coming months, many who claim to be the stronger one, the one who will lead us out of these critical times. And we need to listen very carefully : where is wisdom to be found? Similar crises in the 1920's and '30s saw the emergence of stronger ones who brought further calamity and destruction.

Matthew has a relevant story for us. A few years after Jesus' baptism John is in prison – Herod has had enough of his wild destabilising of the nation. Jesus is preaching in Galilee. Can this be the one? John sends some of his people to him to ask if he is the one? Jesus replies: 'Tell John what you see and hear. The

blind see, the lame walk, lepers are healed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised and the poor have the gospel preached to them.

Many will come and promise the earth, world-beating changes, national renewal, health and prosperity, new energy sources, all this and much more. BUT who is it for? Who will benefit? Themselves, their group, however defined? Or the poor? The wretched of the earth? For if it is not for them, if it does not embrace even the poorest and most desperate it is not what we are looking for. The Kingdom of God is for all.

Intercessions [ROBERT]

Holy God, in the Baptism of Your Son, Jesus Christ, You reveal the nature of the children of God; we bring you our prayers as those who know ourselves as younger siblings of Your oldest Son.

We pray for the people of the United States of America, especially for those involved in political leadership. May they know themselves children of God, and joined as one human family in discerning your will.

We pray for your Church throughout the world: in the USA; The Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia. Within our diocese we pray for Bishop Kevin, and for the churches of St John the Evangelist, Dumfries, and St Margaret of Scotland, New Galloway. May your Church be a true symbol of your grace.

We pray for the Cathedral Church of St Mary's, for all the contacts and support that link us each as sisters and brothers in Christ. May those who give support know themselves held in the network of your love.

We pray for all health workers, for those who are giving themselves in caring for others during this Covid crisis. May they have courage and stamina, and may they know themselves valued by the nation they serve.

We pray for our immediate community, remembering those who work in social care and with vulnerable groups; we pray for them the discernment and resources to support and care.

We pray for family and neighbours who celebrate or struggle at this time. For those who celebrate we pray joy and happiness, even amongst the restrictions of the present day; for those who struggle at this time, we pray courage and strength and the knowledge that they are not alone.

We thank you for those whose lives have shown us your presence in faith, and in their deaths have gone before us; in our Year's Mind today we remember Rose Elizabeth Bate.

May they Rest in peace, **and rise in glory.**

Holy God, we pray that we may know ourselves children of yours, through adoption and grace: may we work and pray as in Your Presence, brothers and sisters of Your son, Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Communion – third video

Offertory - [OLIVER]

For first-century spiritual seekers, gathering in the desert wasn't like meeting in town. Likewise, things are different for us when we watch videos from church online: things aren't the same as they are in a building.

This different way of meeting affects all kinds of things, including the management of finances. At this time, folk cannot make donations as they ordinarily would when in church. There's a new way for new circumstances.

The Cathedral has set up a system to allow people to give online. To learn more about it, visit www.thecathedral.org.uk and click 'Donate to St Mary's Cathedral'.

Thank you for adapting your giving.

Let us present our offerings to the Lord.

**Yours, Lord, is the greatness, the power, the glory,
the splendour, and the majesty; for everything in
heaven and on earth is yours.**

All things come from you, and of your own we give you.

Eucharistic Prayer - [OLIVER]

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give God thanks and praise.

Worship and praise belong to you, Father,
in every place and at all times.

All power is yours. You created the heavens and established the
earth; you sustain in being all that is.

In Christ your Son our life and yours
are brought together in a wonderful exchange.

He made his home among us that we might for ever dwell in you.

Through your Holy Spirit you call us to new birth
in a creation restored by love.

As children of your redeeming purpose
we offer you our praise,
with angels and archangels
and the whole company of heaven,
singing the hymn of your unending glory:

SANCTUS & BENEDICTUS - [MORVEN]

Holy, Holy, Holy Lord,

God of power and might.

Heaven and earth are full of your glory.

**Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

Glory and thanksgiving be to you,
most loving Father,
for the gift of your Son born in human flesh

He is the Word existing beyond time,
both source and final purpose,
bringing to wholeness all that is made.

Obedient to your will he died upon the Cross.

By your power you raised him from the dead.

He broke the bonds of evil
and set your people free to be his Body in the world

On the night when he was given up to death,
knowing that his hour had come,
having loved his own,
he loved them to the end.

At supper with his disciples
he took bread and offered you thanks.
He broke the bread,
and gave it to them, saying:
"Take, eat.

This is my Body: it is broken for you."

After supper, he took the cup,
he offered you thanks,
and gave it to them saying:

"Drink this, all of you.

This is my Blood of the new covenant;
it is poured out for you, and for all,
that sins may be forgiven.

Do this in remembrance of me."

**We now obey your Son's command.
We recall his blessed passion and death,
his glorious resurrection and ascension;
and we look for the coming of his Kingdom.
Made one with him, we offer you these gifts
and with them ourselves,
a single, holy, living sacrifice.**

Hear us, most merciful Father,
and send your Holy Spirit upon us
and upon this bread and this wine,
that, overshadowed by his life-giving power,
they may be the Body and Blood of your Son,
and we may be kindled with the fire of your love
and renewed for the service of your Kingdom.

**Help us, who are baptised into the fellowship of Christ's Body
to live and work to your praise and glory;
may we grow together in unity and love
until at last, in your new creation,
we enter into our heritage
in the company of the Virgin Mary,
the apostles, and prophets,
and of all our brothers and sisters living and departed.**

Through Jesus Christ our Lord,
with whom, and in whom,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all honour and glory be to you,
Lord of all ages,
world without end.

Amen.

Breaking of the Bread

The living bread is broken for the life of the world.
Lord, unite us in this sign.

Lord's Prayer [KELVIN]

As our Saviour has taught us,
so we pray:

**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.
Do not bring us
to the time of trial
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power
and the glory are yours,
now and for ever.
Amen.**

Communion - [OLIVER]

God is with us wherever we are.

As we gaze in adoration we feed on God in our hearts and minds
that we may in turn feed the world.

O God, even as this broken bread was scattered over the hills, and
was gathered together and became one, so let Your Church be
gathered together from the ends of the earth into your kingdom; for
yours is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ for ever.
Amen.

Music at Communion - [The Choir]

Tomorrow shall be my dancing day;
I would my true love did so chance
To see the legend of my play,
To call my true love to my dance;

*Sing, oh! my love, oh! my love, my love, my love,
This have I done for my true love.*

Then was I born of a virgin pure,
Of her I took fleshly substance
Thus was I knit to man's nature
To call my true love to my dance.

In a manger laid, and wrapped I was
So very poor, this was my chance
Betwixt an ox and a silly poor ass
To call my true love to my dance.

Then afterwards baptized I was;
The Holy Ghost on me did glance,
My Father's voice heard I from above,
To call my true love to my dance.

Post Communion Prayer - [KIERAN]

Gracious God, lover of all, by this sacrament you make us one family in Christ your Son, one in the sharing of his body and blood, one in the communion of his Spirit. Help us to grow in love for one another and come to the full maturity of the Body of Christ. We ask this in his name. **Amen.**

Blessing - [OLIVER]

Thanks to everyone who has come to this place to worship and to all who have led us here.

John the Baptist said something was coming that was going to profoundly change people's lives. Out here in the midst of our pandemic hinterland, let us listen for the voice in the wilderness speaking to us.

Christ the Son of God gladden your hearts with the good news of his kingdom; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always.

Amen.

Voluntary - [STEVEN]

Der Tag, der ist so freudenreich, BWV 605 - J.S. Bach

A hymn and materials for Young Church are available on the online worship page at www.thecathedral.org.uk/worship.

There is an online coffee hour on Sunday at 1 pm. Details in the weekly congregational email. Sign up for emails at www.thecathedral.org.uk