Transcript January 10th 2021

Theme: New Beginnings

# Reading: Genesis 1:1-5 with images of light and darkness

*The Beginning*

**1** In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. **2** Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.**3** And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. **4** God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. **5** God called the light “day,” and the darkness he called “night.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.

# Welcome and introduction - Revd Mark Poole

Hello and thank you for tuning in from wherever you are, you are very welcome. My name is Mark Poole, and I am the curate of this benefice here in rural East York serving the communities of Dunnington, Holtby, Warthill and Stockton on the Forest.

Our worship on the first Sunday after Epiphany picks up the theme of ‘New Beginnings’ and the baptism of Christ and we hope it helps you experience the continued presence of God and helps you worship and pray and encourages you on your journey.

And so, we pray,

Loving God we give you thanks because, in the incarnation of the Word, a new light has dawned upon the world, that all the nations may be brought out of darkness to see the radiance of your glory.

**Amen**

# Hymn - Be still for the presence of the Lord

1. Be still, for the presence of the Lord,

the Holy one, is here.

Come, bow before him now,

with reverence and fear.

In Him no sin is found,

we stand on Holy ground.

Be still, for the presence of the Lord, the Holy one, is here.

1. Be still, for the glory of the Lord

is shining all around;

He burns with holy fire,

with splendour He is crowned.

How awesome is the sight,

our radiant King of light!

Be still, for the glory of the Lord

is shining all around.

1. Be still, for the power of the Lord

is moving in this place;

He comes to cleanse and heal,

to minister His grace.

No work too hard for Him,

in faith receive from Him.

Be still, for the power of the Lord

is moving in this place.

# Confession & Absolution

For all the things we have done wrong in the past

against God and against people,

we now ask the Lord and one another to forgive us.

Lord Jesus, yours are the seasons and the ages.

Give us a new heart and a new spirit:

Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy**.

Jesus Christ, you are the beginning and the end

of all that is, including our lives.

Make a new beginning with all of us:

Christ, have mercy. **Christ, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, you breathe your Spirit on all creation.

Make our old world new again:

Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy**.

Have mercy on us, Lord,

and let your forgiveness and love

come down on us day after day.

Lead us to everlasting life. **Amen**.

# Collect

Eternal Father,

who at the baptism of Jesus

revealed him to be your Son,

anointing him with the Holy Spirit:

grant to us, who are born again by water and the Spirit,

that we may be faithful to our calling as your adopted children;

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 for ever.

**Amen**

# Taizé music and words

Come Holy Spirit come, fire of life and love,

Consolation, Comforter!

Descending like a dove,

Come Spirit come, fill our hearts,

Spirit fill our hearts with song,

Spirit fill our hearts with peace.

# Reading: Mark 1.4-11

And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. John wore clothing made of camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. And this was his message: “After me comes the one more powerful than I, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.

*The Baptism and Testing of Jesus*

At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.

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# Song - Speak O Lord, as we come to you

1. Speak O Lord, as we come to you to receive the food of your holy word.
Take your truth, plant it deep in us;
shape and fashion us in your likeness, that the light of Christ might be seen today
in our acts of love and our deeds of faith.
Speak, O Lord, and fulfil in us
all your purposes, for your glory.
2. Teach us, Lord, full obedience,
holy reverence, true humility.
Test our thoughts and our attitudes
in the radiance of your purity.
Cause our faith to rise, cause our eyes to see
your majestic love and authority.

Love and hope that can never fail;
shining through the dark of our unbelief.

1. Speak, O Lord, and renew our minds;
help us grasp the heights of your plans for us.
Love unchanged from the dawn of time
and creation’s light through eternity.
And by grace we'll stand on your promises,
and by faith we'll walk as you walk with us.
Speak, O Lord, till your kingdom come
as the earth is filled with your glory.

# Homily - Baptism of Christ - Revd Nick Bird

In three of the gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke – synoptic) the baptism of Jesus clearly starts his public ministry. Whatever spiritual stuff was going on, and there is plenty to be sure, this is a marker in the life of Christ – a new beginning.

I don't think that Jesus was receiving anything that he had not already been in possession of – I don't think that this was the first time he had be touched by the Spirit of God, or even the first time he had washed! But whatever is going on it signals the start of something new.

We have just begun a new year, and I wish you all joy and health and peace. But so far it's looking pretty much like the last one, and 2020 was about as much as anyone could take. Whoopee, more of the same, and enjoy your lockdown! No, rather I would say: look after yourself with the same kindness you would a dear friend; tend to your body as though it is a person and not a thing; look to the sky often, whether it is the sun, moon, clouds or stars; and rest with your breathing, for your breath is a parable of the presence of God.

There is, of course, the great tradition of New Year resolutions, and I'm as likely to make them as anyone, and at least as likely not to keep them. Losing weight, taking up exercise, reading more, drinking less, being kinder to my parents/partner/children/cat, a new hobby taken up or an old habit dispensed with – there are few resolutions that do not strive to make us better people, at least in our own eyes.

For what? Seriously, for what end?

To make it easier for us to live with ourselves? To make us more loveable and acceptable to others? To lengthen an empty life, or to shorten a full one? We resolve to do better, be better, live more, and generally uptick our whole existence. The spirit is willing (at least on New Year's Eve anyway), but the flesh is usually fairly weak in delivering on its promises. And so we circle and cycle to the end of the year when we can re-promise the earth on behalf of our souls, and trying to ignore that we did exactly the same thing 12 months ago.

But let me tell you this: There is no amendment of life that you can inflict on yourself that will make you more acceptable, more loved, more choice-worthy of the divine attention, than you are already – nothing!

In Mark's gospel, from where we heard our story today, Jesus has done absolutely nothing as yet. He has been on the page for 3 whole sentences before hearing the words, “You are my beloved son”. He has been baptized, but that was done TO him, and yet here is God, speaking a personal message of love to his child, with whom he is already “well pleased”.

For most of us there is a long journey through trials and tribulations, failure, resolution-breaking and promise-making, reaching for the heavens and falling on our arses, before we finally arrive at the place we first began – and maybe it is only then, and because of that journey, that we realise we had already arrived, were already home, were already acceptable and loved and blessed and held in the arms of God. We never needed to go anywhere, but we took the necessarily long way home.

The 'victorious Christian life' is just a myth, as is the 'pure life', and the 'worthy life'. And in just the same way so is the myth of the lost, the impure and the unworthy life that puts us beyond the reach of God. The spiritual struggle is not upwards but inwards, it is the profound discovery that you are already loved, already the beloved child of God, already pleasing to the one who created you.

Happy New Year, and welcome home.

Thanks be to God.

# Affirmation of Faith

**We are not alone,
we live in God’s world.**

**We believe in God:
who has created and is creating,
has come in Jesus,
the Word made flesh,
to reconcile and make new,
who works in us and others
by the Spirit.**

**We trust in God.**

**We are called to be the Church:
to celebrate God’s presence,
to live with respect in Creation,
to love and serve others,
to seek justice and resist evil,
to proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen,
our judge and our hope.**

**In life, in death, in life beyond death,**

**God is with us.
We are not alone.**

**Thanks be to God.**

# Intercessions

Heavenly Father we gather together in Your name to thank you for all the things which we treasure.For our homes,our families and friends and for the fellowship we share this morning.We thank You Lord that,through the marvels of technology,we have been able to continue our collective worship in our on-line services throughout this pandemic.Draw near to us now as we pray,and let us know the touch of your hand in blessing.Help us to remember those who are not so fortunate,those who at this dreadful time feel lonely,lost and afraid.For those who have lost their way in life and are unable to find a path to hope,peace and love.May Your caring hands reach out to bring your good gifts to people everywhere.

Lord,in Your mercy,
**hear our prayer.**

Lord we pray today for your world-wide church,that it may thrive in the face of suppression,proclaiming the joy of the Gospel,and bringing strength and hope to all in need. We pray for our national church leaders,that they will have wisdom and gentleness in their dealings.Also in our thoughts are our own local leaders,Revs.Nick,Terry and Mark,Judith,the churchwardens and all who offer tireless support to their ministry.We thank You for the four churches of our benefice,and pray that we as members,may reach out to those who know little of your love.

Lord in Your mercy,
**hear our prayer.**

Dear God,we continue to pray for all those affected by the pandemic,for the many who are ill with the virus at this time,and for those who are grieving for the loss of a loved one.We thank You Lord for all the doctors,nurses and health-care workers being pushed to their physical ansd mental limits,and for the brilliant scientists who have brought us the magical vaccines.We pray that these vaccines will have the hoped-for effect in slowing down the transmission of the virus so that we may begin to know,once again,the joy of meeting our families and friends.

Lord in Your mercy,
**hear our prayer.**

Lord we thank You for the brave efforts in the face of great danger,of our armed forces,who attempt to keep the peace throughout the world,and who make such an impact at home in testing and vaccinating to fight the virus.There are so many front line workers and volunteers at a time like this,who become heroes and heroines,and we thank You Lord for their selflessness.

Lord in Your mercy,
**hear our prayer.**

Help us not to be selfish at this time Lord,and to see the needs of others more clearly.We pray for those who help us when we are ill.Those who help us when we are lost.Those who help us when we are afraid.For those who accept us when perhaps we don't deserve it.Those who are patient with us when we are unkind,and those who enable us to start all over again when things go wrong.Forgive us for the times when we think only of ourselves,and forget the needs of others.We thank You for being a selfless God who holds our lives,and,indeed,the lives of everyone in Your hands.Let us pray for those in our parishes who especially need our prayers,those who are suffering from any kind of illness,strengthen them and let them know that Your selfless love is always with them.All of us living through this pandemic need to feel Your love surrounding us,and that hope is on the way.Let us take a moment to think of those who are in need,either physical or mental,to reach out and receive Your comfort.

Lord,
**accept these prayers for the sake of Your Son,our Saviour,Jesus Christ.Amen**.

Let us now join together in saying 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**

# Song - Here I Am To Worship

Light of the world,

You stepped down into darkness,

Opened my eyes, let me see.

Beauty that made this heart adore You,

Hope of a life spent with You.

So, here I am to worship,

Here I am to bow down,

Here I am to say that You're my God.

And You're altogether lovely,

Altogether worthy,

Altogether wonderful to me.

So, here I am to worship,

Here I am to bow down,

Here I am to say that You're my God.

And You're altogether lovely,

Altogether worthy,

Altogether wonderful to me.

King of all days,

Oh so highly exalted,

Glorious in heaven above.

Humbly You came to the earth You created,

All for love's sake became poor.

So, here I am to worship,

Here I am to bow down,

Here I am to say that You're my God.

And You're altogether lovely,

Altogether worthy,

Altogether wonderful to me.

And I'll never know how much it cost

To see my sin upon that cross.

And I'll never know how much it cost

To see my sin upon that cross.

And I'll never know how much it cost

To see my sin upon that cross.

So, here I am to worship,

Here I am to bow down,

Here I am to say that You're my God.

And You're altogether lovely,

Altogether worthy,

Altogether wonderful to me.

# Sending out and blessing - Revd Mark Poole

Thank you for joining with us. We hope the words and music have brought you light and hope at the beginning of this new year.

May Christ draw us to humility and worship and bring us to see God at work; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be amongst us and remain with us always, and all those we love and pray for.
**Amen**

May we go now in peace into the world, to walk in God’s light, to rejoice in God’s love and to reflect God’s glory.
**Amen.**