

**Poole Bay Methodist Circuit worship
Sunday 10th January 2021**

Lectionary Readings: Genesis 1 vv 1-5; Psalm 29; Acts 19 vv 1-7; Mark 1 vv 4-11

It's a Start by Brian Tucknott

Welcome Everyone.

You will be sharing in this act of worship at home, alone or with your family household, as all of us are doing. And I do mean all of us. Each of us is one part of a network, a community, all links in the chain that joins us with each other and with God.

The New Year is still young and I send greetings to you and wish you peace. Like me, you may be struggling to accept yet more weeks and months of restricted living but I trust you are all well and looking forward with hope to all that this year can bring now that the Covid-19 vaccine is being rolled out.

Our theme for today is **'It's a Start'**.

Call to Worship

From small beginnings the human family has grown into a vibrant, diverse, worldwide community. Lord, we come together now, in our homes, but joined in love with your people everywhere. May our worship be the means by which that connection with you and with each other grows into an ever-widening network of your life in the world.

Psalm 100 All Lands Summoned to Praise God

A Psalm of thanksgiving

¹ Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth.

² Worship the LORD with gladness;
come into his presence with singing.

³ Know that the LORD is God.

It is he that made us, and we are his;^[a]
we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

⁴ Enter his gates with thanksgiving,
and his courts with praise.

Give thanks to him, bless his name.

⁵ For the LORD is good;

his steadfast love endures for ever,
and his faithfulness to all generations.

The beginning of verse 4 'Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise' was always there around the sanctuary arch at my home church when I was a child. It was a constant reminder of our purpose in coming together. Even separately in our homes that is our purpose now as we share together in our hymns, prayers, scripture readings and reflections.

We sing or read this hymn

StF 139 Today I awake © John Bell and Graham Maule

A recording can be found at

<https://www.missionstclare.com/music/todayiawake/todayiawake.html>

- 1 Today I awake and God is before me.
 At night, as I dreamt, God summoned the day;
 For God never sleeps but patterns the morning
 with slithers of gold or glory in grey.

- 2 Today I arise and Christ is beside me.
 He walked through the dark to scatter new light,
 Yes, Christ is alive, and beckons his people
 to hope and to heal, resist and invite.

- 3 Today I affirm the Spirit within me
 at worship and work, in struggle and rest.
 The Spirit inspires all life which is changing
 from fearing to faith, from broken to blest.

- 4 Today I enjoy the Trinity round me,
 above and beneath, before and behind;
 The Maker, the Son, the Spirit together
 they called me to life and call me their friend.

Prayers

Lord, you are so amazing

When we are lonely; you promise to be with us.

When we are difficult; you are patient with us.

When we are hurting inside because of what other people say or do; you are gentle with us.

When we feel like jumping for joy with excitement, or want to hide ourselves away in a corner in sadness; you walk alongside us.
Lord, you are our special friend who never lets us down, but guides us the way you want us to live.
Help us to give you the thanks and praise you really deserve.

Confession (together)

We are sorry
for the times we have let you down,
for the ways we have hurt each other
and for the chances we have missed to show your love and care.
Forgive us and, by your Holy Spirit, help us to know the joy of beginning again.
We ask this in the name of Jesus, our friend and Lord. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer (use whichever version you prefer)

Traditional form

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come; thy will be
done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass
against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the
power and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.

Modern form

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.
Save us from the time of trial and
deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power and the
glory are yours,
now and forever. Amen.

StF 14 Sing to him in whom creation © Michael Hewlett

A recording can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jfi9ZCjaX4M>

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| 1 | Sing to him in whom creation
Found its shape and origin;
Spirit, moving on the waters,
Troubled by the God within;
Source of breath to all things
breathing,
Life in whom all lives begin. | 4 | Tell of how the ascended
Jesus
Armed a people for his own;
How a hundred men and
women
Turned the known world
upside down,
To its dark and furthest
corners
By the Wind of Whitsun
blown. |
| 2 | Sing to God, the close
companion
Of our inmost thoughts and
ways;
Who, in showing us his
wonders,
Is himself the power to gaze;
And his will, to those who
listen,
By a still small voice conveys. | 5 | Pray we then, O Lord the
Spirit,
On our lives descend in
might;
Let thy flame break out within
us,
Fire our hearts and clear our
sight,
Till, white-hot in thy
possession,
We, too, set the world alight. |
| 3 | Holy men, both priest and
prophet,
Caught his accents, spoke his
word;
His the truth behind the
wisdoms
Which as yet know not our
Lord;
He the love of God eternal,
Which in Christ was seen and
heard. | 6 | Praise, O praise the Holy
Spirit,
Praise the Father, praise the
Word,
Source, and Truth, and
Inspiration,
Trinity in deep accord:
Through thy Voice which
speaks within us
We thy creatures own thee
Lord. |

Readings

Genesis 1 vv 1-5 (KJV)

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep.

And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.

And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness.

And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night.

And the evening and the morning were the first day.

Mark 1 vv 4-11 (KJV)

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God;

As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.

The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.

And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.

And John was clothed with camel's hair, and with a girdle of a skin about his loins; and he did eat locusts and wild honey;

And preached, saying, There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose.

I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.

And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan.

And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him:

And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

Address

Which came first, the chicken or the egg?

It's the perennial conundrum which has occupied many a mind and been the subject of many a debate.

“It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife”.

The opening of Jane Austen's “Pride and Prejudice” is considered by many as the greatest beginning to a novel.

Is there one answer to the conundrum that will satisfy everyone? I doubt it.

Is there a better opening to a novel? Possibly.

But in both cases, it's a start and, as with all things, there has to be a start.

Both our lectionary readings start similarly.

Genesis has “In the beginning . . .” and Mark has “The beginning of . . .”, both of which may vary a little depending on which version of the Bible we read, but again, in both cases, it's just a start. The substance follows.

Genesis gives an account of the beginning of life that I invariably think of as “Ancestor Stories” and which have parallels in other cultures and faiths. All of these accounts began as verbal records, passed down from one generation to the next as stories told at fireside gathering or something similar. In some cultures the stories are still passed on in that way (I'm thinking particularly of the Australian Aboriginals) whilst in most they were eventually written down as with the stories we have in Genesis. And if we follow the outlines we have in Genesis, we can also find parallels in the scientific accounts of more recent origin. The journeys that early humans made as they spread out across an ever wider “known” land, dividing into different groups, travelling into other unknowns, developing different languages and cultures; getting caught up in many disputes with each other, we could go on, are all reflected in these Genesis myths and sagas that have come to us through our faith and culture roots and which are repeated in the similar stories of other faiths and cultures. It's a start to a story that continues still, an ages-long story that is made up of many separate stories and is always evolving as we learn more of our human story.

Recently I have recorded the Royal Institution's Christmas Lectures, presented over three programmes on BBC4 and have so far watched just Programme 1. They tell the story of our universe and particularly our planet – its land, sea and air – over the 13.8 billion or so years since the “big bang”. It's a long complex story which is fascinating but let's jump to approximately 55,000,000 years ago that the first primitive primates appear, then to approximately 6,000,000 years ago when we have the first evidence of primates walking on two legs. There were then many more evolutionary stages leading to *Homo sapiens* at about 195,000 years ago. Recorded history dates from only about 5,000 years ago so the Genesis stories almost certainly pre-date that. You will see that our human story is but a fraction of the life of our planet, let alone the universe. The first lecture brings into stark focus the impact that we humans have had, in the last two hundred years and particularly in the industrialised populations, on the ecological balance on our planet. This short 200 year period represents just 4% of the recorded history of humanity. What a dangerous, life-changing impact we are having on the life of our planet! But, it's not too late to do something about it – if we act now. We are part of the problem; we need to be part of the solution!

Mark drops into Jesus' story at a point, according to other accounts, sometime after the beginning. We could see it as Mark getting straight to the essentials as he saw them. “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God”, the beginning, if you like, of what is important. It has Jesus identifying with the people of his community. By his baptism, Jesus is making it clear that he is one of them. They were listening to and responding to the call of John, and Jesus sees it as an essential start to his role as well – a part of their story and of his. The story rolls out from there and what follows in Mark's gospel is a brief account of the three years we call “the Ministry of Jesus”, told in a collection of events, conversations, teachings etc. It's not much, certainly the shortest of the three accounts, but it is definitely enough to speak to the many millions of people over the past two thousand years who have heard it and responded to it. It is, as Mark says, “The Beginning”.

It's a start. What followed after Jesus is an on-going story of the life of Jesus lived in and through those millions, including you and me.

So, what has been and is your, my, impact on this Jesus-life, this spiritual and religious life, our life lived in love, reflecting Jesus' life lived in love.

My life spans nearly 4% of the Christian era. In that time the whole message and mission of Jesus, particularly in the wealthier parts of our world, seems to have shrunk, lost its significance – express it as you like. But it's not too late,

the light still shines, can still be relevant and effective for our time. We can still do something about it. I am part of the problem. I can be part of the solution. So what is our piece of the story and how are we passing it on? It needs to be a collective response and also an individual response.

Think about it! Pray about it! Share those thoughts and prayers. Be a part of the conversation and of the action.

Together we can change the world; for the better and for the future.

StF 463 Deep in the shadows of the past creation © Brian Wren

A recording can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OfBnZ0C8Tj4>

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| <p>1 Deep in the shadows of the past,
Far out from settled lands,
Some nomads travelled with their God
Across the desert sands.
The dawning hope of humankind
By them was sensed and shown:
A promise calling them ahead,
A future yet unknown.</p> | <p>2 While others bowed to changeless gods,
They met a mystery:
Invisible, without a name:
'I AM WHAT I WILL BE';
And by their tents, around their fires,
In story, song and law,
They praised, remembered, handed on
A past that promised more.</p> |
| <p>3 From Exodus to Pentecost
The promise changed and grew,
While some, remembering the past,
Recorded what they knew.
Or with their letters and laments,
their prophecy and praise,
Recovered, kindled and expressed
New hope for changing days.</p> | <p>4 For all the writings that survived,
For leaders, long ago,
Who sifted, chose, and then preserved
The Bible that we know,
Give thanks, and find its story yet
Our comfort, strength, and call,
The model of emerging faith,
Alive with hope for all.</p> |

Prayer of Thanksgiving

If you are using the recording, join in with just the response or with all the words, as you wish

Father, we thank you because you hold the world in your hands, and care for all that you have made.

We praise you, our mighty creator.

We thank you because your love is for everyone and everything.

We praise you, our mighty creator.

We thank you for making us who we are.

We praise you, our mighty creator.

We thank you for the joy of living in your wonderful world.

We praise you, our mighty creator.

We thank you for each start and on-going step on the journey of life and faith.

We praise you, our mighty creator.

We thank you that we are not alone on our journey because you walk with us all.

We praise you, our mighty creator.

We thank you for each companion, mentor and friend that help us grow.

We praise you, our mighty creator.

Prayers of Intercession

Join in with the responses or with all of the prayer as you chose.

Called together as one family by the power of the Holy Spirit,
we pray to our Father God through Jesus, the beloved Son, for all our needs.

Jesus was confirmed in his mission by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit;

help us to respond with confidence to the gift of the Spirit in our lives.

Let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, hear our prayer.

Let us pray for the church, the people of God, called through baptism to share in the royal priesthood of Christ and to uphold the sanctity of human life.

Let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, hear our prayer.

We pray for those who govern our country and especially for those who witness

to the value of human life.

May the truth prevail in public policy.

Let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, hear our prayer.

We pray for the children in our schools, the citizens of tomorrow, and for all who teach them.

May a new generation speak out for the value of those in need – the disadvantaged, the refugee, the homeless, the sick, the elderly and all those in our thoughts now.

Let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, hear our prayer.

Amen.

StF 472 May the Sending One sing in you © Brian Wren

A recording can be found at

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BgcqbpLJP_M

1 May the Sending One sing in
you,
May the Seeking One walk with
you,
May the Greeting One stand by
you,
in your gladness and in your
grieving.

2 May the Gifted One relieve
you,
May the Given One retrieve
you,
May the Giving One receive
you,
in your falling and your
restoring.

- 3 May the Binding One unite you,
May the One Beloved invite you,
May the Loving One delight you,
Three-in-One, joy in life unending.

Closing Prayer

**The grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ,
The love of God,
And the fellowship of his Holy Spirit,
Be with us now and always. Amen.**