

Hornsea URC

Journeying with John – Introduction – Sunday 10th January 2021

Good morning. Welcome to this time of 'Word and Worship'.

So here we are at the beginning of our journey in 2021AD, 2021 "anno Domini nostri Jesu Christi," which from the Medieval Latin translates as "in the year of our Lord Jesus Christ."

At the beginning of our 2021 journey, as a nation we find ourselves once again in 'lockdown' unable to make many physical journeys, and if we absolutely have to, only very little ones for basic needs.

With the new, aggressive variant strain of COVID-19, and even with a vaccine rollout, many still see this as a time of despair, despondency, helplessness, hopelessness and dead ends!

As a church we too are on a journey collectively and individually, and for us at the beginning of 2021 let our spiritual journey be one of enthusiasm, excitement, discovery, open roads and endless possibilities as we seek to be, do and go wherever God guides and directs us.

Our first scripture reading comes from Psalm 46 and it is taken from the Contemporary English Version of the Bible which says this:

- 1 God is our mighty fortress, always ready to help in times of trouble.
- 2 And so, we won't be afraid! Let the earth tremble and the mountains tumble into the deepest sea.
- 3 Let the ocean roar and foam, and its raging waves shake the mountains.
- 4 A river and its streams bring joy to the city, which is the sacred home of God Most High.
- 5 God is in that city, and it won't be shaken. He will help it at dawn.
- 6 Nations rage! Kingdoms fall! But at the voice of God the earth itself melts.
- 7 The LORD All-Powerful is with us. The God of Jacob is our fortress.
- 8 Come! See the fearsome things the LORD has done on earth.
- 9 God brings wars to an end all over the world. He breaks the arrows, shatters the spears, and burns the shields.
- 10 Our God says, "Calm down, and learn that I am God! All nations on earth will honour me."
- 11 The LORD All-Powerful is with us. The God of Jacob is our fortress.

I don't know about you, but as a teacher I love the way Verse 10 is rendered in this translation: 'Our God says, "Calm down, and learn that I am God!"'

As we begin our journeying with Saint John's and his Gospel, John's Good News Message about Jesus at the start of this new year, let's allow God to have the drivers seat and steering

wheel and let's find out where he wants to take us, allowing him to be in full control of our lives and the final destination.

Through our opening song, let's worship him, the [Way Maker](#)

Let us pray:

Father God, this morning we come before you, and we want to say thank you. Thank you that you are the day and Way Maker.

Thank you for this day that you have made – help us to rejoice and be glad in it.

When so many in our world today might be filled with worry, fear, concern, despair, may they and we know your love, joy, peace, and presence in every hour, minute and second that each new day brings. Help us to enter into each new day by allowing you to have the driving seat and the steering wheel as we journey through life.

On this day, we want to say thank you. Thank you for Jesus, his life, words, witness, his journey on this earth written down for us by the Gospels writers, with all the highs and lows, the joys and sorrows which reveals to us our final destination as Saint John puts it in Revelation - the home of God where we will live with you and will be your people, where you will wipe away every tear from our eyes, death shall be no more, and never again shall there be sorrow or crying or pain. For all those things will be past and gone.

As we bring to you our prayers of thanks, we also bring before you our prayers of petition.

O God, our creator and preserver, we pray for people of every race, and in every kind of need: make your ways known on earth, your saving power among all nations.

We pray for your Church throughout the world: guide and govern us by your Holy Spirit, that all who profess and call themselves Christians may be led into the way of truth, and hold the faith in unity of spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life.

We commend to your fatherly goodness all who are anxious or distressed in mind or body; comfort and relieve them in their need; give them patience in their sufferings, and bring good out of their troubles.

We bring before you the whole of our church family and those within our church prayer book in a moment of silence, especially those in our thoughts and hearts who need a special touch from you just now.

Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

As I was preparing for today, I had a popular song come to mind from yesteryear, which shows my age, and I thought, I'm not sure where or how that will fit in, but in fact as the thoughts and the words began to flow I found out that it fits in just here! So, sit back, calm down, listen, enjoy and join in if you know it! [Put Your Hand In The Hand](#)

Interestingly, the 1970s song mentions a child before the age of 7 with a man his wife and brother. It was actually at the age of 7 on 1st April 1973 (April Fool's Day) whilst at an Assemblies of God Church in Dagenham, Essex, with my mum, dad and my younger brother John, that I asked Jesus to forgive me for sin and wrong going and to come into my life as Lord and Saviour, and the salvation I received that day is just as real now as it was then all those years ago.

However, as I have said previously, salvation doesn't start and stop on a set day and then that's it! Salvation is dynamic, it's a process characterised by constant change, activity and progression which will one day come to full and final completion forevermore in a day yet to come. And so until that day, we should come before God daily, perhaps using the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples to pray, not out of habit due to established routine or ritual but out of need and necessity so that we are able to continue on our dynamic salvation journey with God every moment of each and every new day.

We share together then in the Lord's Prayer:

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,
Forever and ever. Amen.

Our second scripture reading is taken from Saint John's Gospel, Chapter 1 verse 1 -18:

The Word Became Flesh

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. **2** He was with God in the beginning. **3** Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. **4** In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. **5** The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

6 There was a man sent from God whose name was John. **7** He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. **8** He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

9 The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. **10** He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. **11** He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. **12** Yet to all who did

receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— ¹³ children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

¹⁴ The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

¹⁵ (John testified concerning him. He cried out, saying, "This is the one I spoke about when I said, 'He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.'") ¹⁶ Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given. ¹⁷ For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.

We see then, that right at the start of John's Gospel, John places Jesus centre and front, right from the outset.

In his Gospel, John provides clear evidence that Jesus is the Son of God, and that by believing in him we may have eternal life. John also provides unique material about Jesus' birth. He did not come into being when he was born, because he is eternal.

We turn then to our third worship song: [Show Your Power](#)

Let us pray:

And so Father God, we come to you in Jesus name, and we ask you to be with us by the power of your Holy Spirit moving in and us through us just now. Speak to us through your word. Amen.

SERMON: Journeying with John – Introduction:

The Gospels speak in different ways about Jesus' birth.

- A. Matthew lists the genealogy of Joseph. He was interested in the legal and the Jewish aspects of Jesus' birth.
- B. Luke, who apparently had many conversations with Mary and with others, told of the visit of the angelic choir. He spoke of the manger and listed the genealogy of Jesus on Mary's side.
- C. Mark did not even mention Jesus' birth. But he does tell about Jesus' miraculous deeds.
- D. John wrote his gospel from an entirely different perspective than did the other three. He was the youngest of the apostles. It is believed that he wrote his gospel,

his three epistles, and Revelation sometime between AD 55-90. He did not give a chronological view of Jesus' life, but he reflected on Jesus' life in relationship to what had happened to him. It is not appropriate to simply say that John wrote philosophically about Jesus. He was more interested in Jesus religiously than historically. John was saying, "Let me tell you what has happened to me because I know Jesus."

1. And so then, journeying with John, we first consider 'Jesus as the Word'.

When John called Jesus the Word, many believe he brought a new dimension to Christian theology. Is it suggested that what he was saying was "I want to tell you about what I have experienced from God; I want to tell you about the Word, the *Logos* of God, one whose name is Jesus." He said, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." (John 1:1). Before Bethlehem, the Word existed because God is the Word. John believed that Jesus was the Son of God. In fact, there is no reason for Christian theology if Jesus is not the Son of God.

There must be a basis for Jesus' authority. Why would John call Jesus the Word? Because he thought of God as absolute authority. He thought of God as the source of every existing thing. So he said, "In the beginning was the Word." God has always existed. John said, "And the Word was with God, and the Word was God." He was calling Jesus the Word; and he was saying, "Jesus was with God, and Jesus was God." John had a Trinitarian concept of God. He was saying, "There is one God; and while there is one God, Jesus, the Word is with God. The Spirit is with God; and he is God."

2. As we continue to journey with John, we secondly see 'Jesus as the source'.

This God who is Jesus Christ is the source of all things. "Through him all things were made." Our environment was made by him. Our lives were made by him. In fact, "without him nothing was made that has been made." (John 1:2-3). Nothing is possible in this life without God. Without Jesus, people can create nothing. Without Jesus, people can accomplish nothing.

Life comes from God, and therefore all of life's meaning comes from God. Every activity of life comes from God. We are totally dependent on him. John 1:4 says that "In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind." God did not come to the world as theory. People have

always tried to explain the source of life in some natural way. People may explain life as coming from the sun, from fire, or from a process of evolution. People may actually admit they don't understand life, but they do know there must be a source.

Now tradition says that John ministered in the city of Ephesus, the ancient city built around the worship of Diana of the Ephesians. Diana is a form of the ancient Greek god Aphrodite. The Ephesians believed that the very unusual statue they had of Diana had been dropped out of heaven. There stood this gigantic stone statue of a virgin goddess; and a whole state bowed around her and acclaimed her to be God, but she was dead - only a stone - nothing else. God however sent his Son, and he is alive.

This life, his life, is the source of light for humanity. Listen to John again. "In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" (John 1:4-5).

What is the darkness? It is the darkness of our sin. It is the darkness of the despair in our lives. God says that even the darkness of sin and death cannot hold back the light. The world says, "We will put out the light of Jesus; it must not shine." But God says, "The darkness cannot hold back the light of the living Son of God." Light comes to our souls to change us, to make us new creatures; and this light comes from Jesus.

3. On our Journey with John right at the outset of his gospel let us know look at 'Jesus as man'.

John said, "The Word became flesh." The Word was in the beginning. The Word was God. And the Word became flesh. God came in flesh in the manger of Bethlehem. It was God in the flesh who walked the streets of Nazareth. It was God in the flesh who touched blind eyes and deaf ears and healed them. It was God in the flesh who taught by the shore of Galilee. It was God in the flesh who faced controversy at Jerusalem with the religious powers. It was God in the flesh on the cross of Calvary, and it was God in the flesh who rose from the dead; "We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

Today there are many people claim that Jesus is not the Son of God, saying that he is an example to be followed but no more. How wrong they are! He is not just an example. Any person can be an example. We see in Jesus the glory of the Father. We see him full of grace,

full of unmerited favour, and full of truth. We see him, the Son of God, willing to die for us though we are sinners. We see him paying the price of our sin on Calvary's cross though we do not deserve it.

John testified that the glory of Christ is available to all (1 John 1:1–3). He told about his personal experience with Jesus as the Word of Life. He testified that he had seen Jesus with his eyes and had touched him with his hands. He is talking about his Christian experience. He is saying, "Jesus Christ was born! Jesus Christ came to the world, and he became the ultimate sacrifice for sin." But more importantly he is saying, "Jesus Christ came to me! I saw him, I touched him, and he changed my life!"

This is what becoming and being a Christian means. It's not simply about a wonderful Christmas story. It's not about a nativity scene. It is not a star in the sky and certainly not one on top of a Christmas tree. It is Christ living in you and me.

"Why has God touched my life?" asked John. "To change it," he answers himself. But listen, for there is even more. "We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3).

With that John lifts the Christian experience entirely out of the realm of theory and puts it into the realm of practice. "In the beginning was the Word."

As we journey with John in the days, weeks and months ahead so as to discover more about Jesus, let us have no doubt that Jesus is alive, and he comes to us one by one to call us to everlasting life and fellowship with him. Amen.

Holy Communion:

Jesus died on the cruel cross of calvary and rose again on the third day so that we could be dead to sin and alive in him, having a right relationship with God for eternity.

Jesus, God incarnate, who is without sin, did that for you and for me because such is his love for humankind.

We remember this as we share in Holy Communion with one another and with him present in our homes, our hearts, our lives.

Today, the way we are going to do this is a little different to how we would normally do this.

I'm going to use a song found in Songs of Fellowship which takes us on a journey as we travel with the written thoughts, words and music with the song writer. In the YouTube presentation, the words of the third verse displayed but not sung are these:

Once my Lord did suffer,
So I'd suffer not;
Took our place upon the cross.
But no tomb could hold Him,
In the hush of night;
Come the hour, came the light.

As the music is played and the words to the verse are displayed, I invite us to eat the bread and drink the wine as one fellowship, remembering the journey from Cradle to Cross that Jesus made for you and for me, so that through him we might know eternal life. Let us give thanks to God for reaching out and saving us as we do so. [Came the Light](#)

Let us pray:

God our Father, we give you thanks and we rejoice to praise you through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Through him you made us, through him you set us free from sin and death, through him you gave us your Holy Spirit and called us into one family.

Continue to be with us as we journey with you the remainder of this day and into the future. Amen.

Our closing worship song today is [Jesus Shall Reign](#)

Let us share together in the words of 'The Grace Prayer'.

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