

Bulletin for Sunday

13th December 2020

Good morning! This is now the Third Sunday in Advent and the days are getting very short; but if you venture out after dark you will find Christmas lights all over the place - including outside our churches in Pulborough and Billingshurst! We are all keen to lighten the darkness this year.

Hymn: Make way, make way, for Christ the King (R&S 141)

Prayer: God who is coming to us in splendour...
 God who is coming to us in frail humanity...
 as we wait for the mystery of your coming,
 may we light a candle to prepare the way....
 We ask your blessing on everything we do,
 and everything we bring to you or give in your service,
 today and every day. In Jesus' name. Amen

followed by The Lord's Prayer

Readings: John chapter 1 verses 6-8 and 19-28

Reflection: 'Who are you?' they asked John; and he didn't have a simple answer to give them. He was not the light; nor the Messiah; neither was he Elijah, nor the prophet. He was not the one they were looking for, but he was a witness - both able and willing to point them towards that One, if they listened carefully.

In the BBC series, 'Who do you think you are?', well-known people (actors, politicians, TV presenters etc) explore aspects of who they are, in terms of their family history. Often in the process they discover wider historical truths, uncovering shocking stories of slavery, the Holocaust, or child labour - or perhaps of leadership in business, or medical work of great importance. They learn about themselves by learning about others. Our identity is explained better when we understand our roots in the past, even though that is far from being the whole story.

This passage seems to be about John's identity... but his identity didn't make sense by itself - he was a witness, a voice, someone whose whole life involved teaching and directing people away from himself... towards Jesus. We call him 'John the Baptist', but baptising was just a means to this same, crucial, end: his purpose in life was to help people find Jesus - not so much to physically locate him, but to start to get a glimmer of Jesus' importance, his real identity and meaning.

John's whole life was dedicated to helping people to prepare for - and understand - Jesus. The challenge for us is to do the same - pointing to Christ, the light of the world.

Hymn: God moves in a mysterious way (R&S 59)

Prayer: God of mystery... and God of grace....
we hold before you, in the light of Christ:
those who struggle with this season....
the bereaved; the lonely; those who can't afford to celebrate....
We hold before you those living in fear of violence
and those who can see no light ahead of them.....
We hold before you our communities, families and friends....
Come to us all now and enlighten our darkness.
In Jesus' name we ask all our prayers, Amen

Hymn: The kingdom of God is justice and joy (R&S 200)

Blessing: May we know both the joy and the glory of God's kingdom;
and may the blessing of God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
be with us and with all those we love
this week and always. Amen

Anyone coming to services in church please remember a mask and very warm clothing!

We sadly can't sing carols when we meet in our buildings, but we certainly can on Zoom. There will be a Carol Service for all members and friends of our churches at 6pm on Sunday 20th December with lots of traditional carols and the story of the nativity. All welcome - the more the merrier! Usual Sunday at Six login or details from me. On Wednesday 23rd December at 6pm, again on Zoom, Billingshurst have a Carol Service of their own, hopefully involving some of the Junior Church.

There will be an evening service - Sunday at Six - on Zoom at 6pm this and every Sunday and the After Church Coffee Zooms are still taking place at 11.30 every Sunday morning. The Monday evening discussion group is meeting on Zoom during Advent, at 7.30pm. You're welcome to join us at any of the above - contact me, Anne, for details.

Anne Lewitt