

# Christ Church, Woodley

10<sup>th</sup> January 2021 – 10:30

## Theme – New Year – New Start

Arise, shine; for your light has come,  
and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.

From the rising of the sun until its setting  
my name is great among the nations,  
says the Lord.

## Hymn StF 175 Light of the world <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FdfrijGy-FIU>

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.*

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 ...*

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 ...

Tim Hughes

Let us pray.

Loving God, we have come to worship you.  
Help us remember that you are here with us.  
May we pray to you in faith,  
praise you with gratitude,  
and listen to your word with eagerness;  
through Christ our Lord. Amen

Eternal God, source of all blessing,  
help us to worship you  
with all our heart and mind and strength;  
For you alone are God,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
for ever and ever. Amen.

# 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.

## Children's Address

### Promises, Promises

Have you ever made a promise? It's something lots of us do, isn't it?

Now, I'm going to ask a secret – Do you ever break the promises you have made?

I guess that at some time, all of us have made and broken promises. Sometimes we break them without meaning to, sometimes we just forget about them and sometimes, worst of all, we do it intentionally. And at other times we make promises that we know there is no way we are ever going to keep.

The problem is that when we break a promise, somebody will get upset. We'll hurt someone's feelings, even make them angry. That, in turn, can cause them not to trust us in the future and then we get upset as well.

Last week, the adults in this church had their Covenant Service. A lot of churches hold a covenant service at the beginning of January each year. In that service we make a promise to God that we will love and serve Him in all the ways He asks. We need to have a Covenant Service each year because we all end up breaking our promise in one way or another, so we take that opportunity to ask God to forgive us for not following through with our promises and also ask Him to help us keep our promises in the year ahead.

But the great thing about God is He does forgive us, He does help us in the year ahead, and, probably the most important part of all, He NEVER breaks His promises.

## Hymn

(Chosen and introduced by the young people)

Thank you Lord For this day

## Genesis 1:1-5 New International Version - UK

### The beginning

<sup>1</sup>In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. <sup>2</sup>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.

<sup>3</sup>And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light. <sup>4</sup>God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. <sup>5</sup>God called the light 'day', and the darkness he called 'night'. And there was evening, and there was morning – the first day.

# Acts 19:1-7 New International Version - UK

## Paul in Ephesus

<sup>1</sup>While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples <sup>2</sup>and asked them, 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?'

They answered, 'No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.'

<sup>3</sup>So Paul asked, 'Then what baptism did you receive?'

'John's baptism,' they replied.

<sup>4</sup>Paul said, 'John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus.' <sup>5</sup>On hearing this, they were baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus. <sup>6</sup>When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. <sup>7</sup>There were about twelve men in all.

# Mark 1:4-11 New International Version – UK

## John the Baptist

<sup>4</sup>And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. <sup>5</sup>The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptised by him in the River Jordan. <sup>6</sup>John wore clothing made of camel's hair, with a leather belt round his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. <sup>7</sup>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. <sup>8</sup>I baptise you with<sup>[a]</sup> water, but he will baptise you with<sup>[b]</sup> the Holy Spirit.'

## The baptism and testing of Jesus

<sup>9</sup>At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptised by John in the Jordan. <sup>10</sup>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. <sup>11</sup>And a voice came from heaven: 'You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.'

# Hymn StF 34 O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness

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| <p>1 O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness,<br/>bow down before him, his glory proclaim ;<br/>with gold of obedience and incense of lowliness,<br/>kneel and adore him : the Lord is his name.</p> <p>2 Low at his feet lay your burden of carefulness,<br/>high on his heart he will bear it for you,<br/>comfort your sorrows, and answer your<br/>prayerfulness,<br/>showing the pathway your feet should pursue.</p> <p>3 Fear not to enter his courts in the slenderness<br/>of the poor wealth you would count as your own ;<br/>truth in its beauty, and love in its tenderness,<br/>these are the offerings to bring to his throne.</p> | <p>4 These, though we bring them in trembling and<br/>fearfulness,<br/>he will accept for the name that is dear ;<br/>mornings of joy give for evenings of tearfulness,<br/>trust for our trembling, and hope for our fear.</p> <p>5 O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness,<br/>bow down before him, his glory proclaim ;<br/>with gold of obedience and incense of lowliness,<br/>kneel and adore him : the Lord is his name.</p> |
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John Samuel Bewley Monsell (1811-1875)

# Sermon

As we are still at the start of the new year, can you cast your mind back to last New Year's Eve. Did you make a new year's resolution? I don't know if it's the sort of thing many people do nowadays but I do know it used to be quite popular.

But why make one at all? Well, it's just a way of trying to forget the ways of the past and do something different in the year ahead. It can be compared with giving something up (or even taking something up) for lent, except in that case the new regime would last just the 40 days, whereas a new year's resolution was supposed to last for the year or even longer.

Now, for those of you who did make a new year's resolution – how many have broken it already? Well, come on! It's not even been 10 days, let alone the 365, or more, it is supposed to last!

That's the problem with new year's resolutions. Because you only promise yourself to do, or stop, that action, it's only you that are affected by your decision to not do it. But, from past discussions, it seems to be the norm that people don't carry them on for very long.

In fact, I have a friend who once told me that the only new year's resolution that he ever made and kept was never to make another new year's resolution.

Whether we make any resolutions or not, celebrating the new year is often seen as a time of a new start, casting out the old and welcoming the new in whatever form this may take. This year was not an exception to that as many, if not all, of us were, and maybe still are, hoping to see the end of the Covid restrictions, especially with the roll-out of the new vaccines, but, just like our failed new year resolutions, it seems like our dreams may fail after all.

But what has all this got to do with today's readings? Well, all of them are about making a new start.

In the Genesis reading, we see the beginning of the creation story – a new start for God's world. But just like our new year hopes and dreams, it didn't quite end up the way God wanted to be, when for the first, but by no means the last, time "Man" thought he knew better than God.

In our reading from Acts, the disciples in Ephesus had been sort of converted to the new way, but hadn't yet learned the whole story. When Paul placed his hands on them, they received the Holy Spirit and their lives definitely changed. You might even say that they were "born again" and given a new life in Jesus.

I always used to think that the story of Jesus' baptism was a strange one. We usually see the act of baptism as being a way to mark our new life in Jesus' name – so why did He need to be baptised? He was already God's son, He was already living with the knowledge and strength of the Holy Spirit. So why?

Was it just a public show? Did it just happen so that everyone else could see who Jesus really was? Or was it much more than that? If, as many of us believe, Jesus was fully man as well as fully God, was it the fact that He wasn't really sure of His own destiny. Was He searching for His own identity and thought he would come to listen to John to see what he was saying and whether that would help Him decide. Did he come to be baptised, or did he decide to be baptised just because everybody else was? Did John know that this man was the Messiah before He was baptised?

Whatever the reasons why, the result was unequivocal. There was both physical (the dove descending from heaven) and aural (the voice) evidence that this was, indeed, God's son – The Messiah, the Promised One. And Jesus and then the world changed as a result of that single action.

But what about us? What about our point of change? And who said there only has to be one point of change in our lives; could there not be more than one?

Now, this point of change is very different for each of us and it doesn't have to be a set time (like bringing in the new year, or a birthday or anniversary celebration), nor during a set ceremony (like a baptism, wedding or even a covenant service). No, it could happen at any time. What is important is that we ensure we listen to God all the time and then, when the time actually comes, make that change happen.

As an example, let me tell you about a point of change in my life. I was one of three leaders of a group of sixteen young ladies from Kendrick School that were trekking in the foothills of the Indian Himalayas. It was in the end of July, but the hills were still covered in patches of snow – this was one of India’s ski resorts after all! It was near the start of our day’s trekking when we had to cross a large patch of snow. This patch of snow was about only about 10 meters wide but was at an angle of about 35-40°. I can’t remember why we didn’t just climb up to go round it, but we certainly couldn’t go downhill as only about 50 or so metres that way was a raging river. It was so loud that a little while later we turned 90° to the river and after a further hour’s trekking, we could still hear it roaring in the background. I don’t think I have ever been so scared in my life. I can remember thinking that if anybody fell into that river it would be a miracle if they survived and pleading with God not to make a miracle of me. Well, I had been arguing with God about becoming a local preacher for some time by then and after safely crossing that snow I finally committed to following God’s lead. And me leading this service today shows you that I followed that through.

So, have you had a point of change? But did you treat it just like a new year’s resolution and forget about it or even consciously not carry it through. But this is different. This isn’t just something you dreamed up yourself, this is something from God. Did you promise God you would do something and broke your promise? Now, as we heard in the Children’s address, God NEVER breaks His promises to us, so why should we break our promises to Him.

And if you haven’t been through a point of change yet – look out! It may come to you at any time and at any place just like a bolt out of the blue. So be prepared! And when it does happen, don’t just sit on it – do something about it.

## Hymn StF 629 God of my faith

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GjV4y2h06vg>

1

God of my faith, I offer you my doubt,  
for life at times seems far too dark for me,  
and my belief becomes more insecure,  
when worldly cares produce uncertainty.

2

God of my hope, I offer you my fear,  
when I am scared by my anxiety,  
when all I hear is suffering and woe,  
in all my shadows you will walk with me.

3

God of my joy, I offer you my grief,  
when I sink down in sadness or despair,  
when in depression I cannot be touched,  
I pray in all my depths to find you there.

4

God of my love, I offer you my pain,  
when I'm alone and feel nobody cares,  
in aching age or in rejected youth,  
you bear my cross and dry my human tears.

5

God of my life, I offer you my dreams,  
light in the darkness where I hide from view,  
light in my faith, my hope, my joy and love,  
light in my life and all my life in you.

*Colin Ferguson*

## Prayer (Yes, from “Seeking Jesus” by Colin Ferguson)

Praise God our Father in heaven.  
Praise God revealed to us in Jesus Christ the Son.  
Praise God with us today in the Holy Spirit.  
Here with us as we worship, inviting us to respond,  
waiting for us to open our hearts to his transforming grace.

God is waiting for us to say **yes!**

O Lord forgive us when we find it too hard  
to do what you want us to do,  
too difficult to understand or to accept your word, or your love.  
Forgive us when we want things to be easy for us,  
when we only expect good things to happen to us  
and blame you when it doesn’t work out that way.  
Forgive us when we walk on the other side of the road from the need  
of this world, afraid to get involved.  
Forgive us when we only want our friends to be like us,  
look like us, sound like us, think like us.

Forgive us the narrow minds that we have grown up with  
and are afraid to change.

Lord grant us the courage to believe when we cannot understand,  
to accept the changes you make to our lives,  
to open our arms to those who seem different.

As you have loved us, as you have accepted us,  
as you have forgiven us and suffered what we should have suffered  
so that we too may affirm our desire  
to be your people.

Yes Lord! Amen

## Prayers of Intercession

Let us take a few minutes to pray with our concerns for other people. You may like to focus on one or more of the following, or someone else.

Our Government in these very difficult times  
Our Health service  
Our Education system  
People working furloughed or from home  
People who are having to stay at home but are desperate for company.

We ask all of our prayers in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

## Hymn StF 476 One more step <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=leAFwKfLFXc>

One more step along the world I go,  
One more step along the world I go;  
From the old things to the new,  
Keep me travelling along with you:  
And it's from the old I travel to the new;  
Keep me travelling along with you.

Round the corners of the world I turn,  
More and more about the world I learn;  
All the new things that I see  
You'll be looking at along with me.  
And it's from the old I travel to the new;  
Keep me travelling along with you.

As I travel through the bad and good,  
Keep me travelling the way I should.  
Where I see no way to go,  
You'll be telling me the way, I know.  
And it's from the old I travel to the new;  
Keep me travelling along with you.

Give me courage when the world is rough,  
Keep me loving though the world is tough;  
Leap and sing in all I do,  
Keep me travelling along with you:  
And it's from the old I travel to the new;  
Keep me travelling along with you.

You are older than the world can be,  
You are younger than the life in me;  
Ever old and ever new,  
Keep me travelling along with you:  
And it's from the old I travel to the new;  
Keep me travelling along with you.

Sydney Carter (1915–2004)

## Blessing

As we face this time of uncertainty, go from this place sure in the knowledge that God is with us and will remain with us no matter what happens.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. Amen