

MONDAY
11 JANUARY
Hebrews 1:1-6
Psalm 97:1-2, 6-10
Mark 1:14-20

TUESDAY
12 JANUARY
Hebrews 2:5-12
Psalm 8
Mark 1:21-28

WEDNESDAY
13 JANUARY
Hebrews 2:14-end
Psalm 105:1-9
Mark 1:29-39

THURSDAY
14 JANUARY
Hebrews 3:7-14
Psalm 95:1, 8-end
Mark 1:40-end

FRIDAY
15 JANUARY
Hebrews 4:1-5, 11
Psalm 78:3-8
Mark 2:1-12

SATURDAY
16 JANUARY
Hebrews 4:12-end
Psalm 19:7-end
Mark 2:13-17

REFLECTION

Most people would agree that Jesus was a good man and a great teacher even if they are not Christians themselves.

Surely, then, he was well liked by those who were lucky enough to meet him? However, this week's readings from Mark show that, while he was popular with many, not everyone was a fan.

At first, Jesus' ministry gets off to a great start. He is treated like a modern-day pop star with adoring crowds following him wherever he goes. The first disciples clearly find him very charismatic, for they drop everything to follow him. People are blown away by his teaching in the synagogue and his miraculous healings send the crowds so wild that some even break through a roof to reach him.

However, Jesus' healing of the paralysed man marks the point where his universal popularity begins to fracture. Some take offence when Jesus says he, like God, can forgive sins, and object to him socialising with the undesirables of society who, they believe, a godly man should avoid. These passages, then, remind us how sharply Jesus divided opinion and that he was far more than the nice, inoffensive teacher many see him as today.

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, you came to this earth knowing you would not be universally adored, but would experience criticism and rejection as well. Thank you, that you were prepared to endure so much because of your great love for us.



Tibicao Cathedral, Benedito

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BAPTISM

PART II – BAPTISM IN A SECULAR WORLD

Baptism symbolises someone's separation from the world and their union with Christ. In "Christian" countries, in the days when almost everyone was a member of the Church, this perhaps had less resonance than it does today. If everyone has entered into that separation, the challenge centres on the need to resist temptation rather than to see oneself as radically different from those around. Today, the Church of England emphasises baptism as pointing Christians to their true identity, character and calling within the body of Christ.

Many parents bring their children for baptism without themselves having much of a church connection. They come with excitement and joy as they formally welcome their child into the world and into their own family, and it may come as a surprise to find that their child is also welcomed into a church community which is keen to help him or her discover their true identity within Christ. Finding the language to convey this exciting prospect is a challenge that local churches need to grasp.

As well as separation from the world, baptism is about being received into a worldwide community that has God at its centre. Here, people can grow into the fullness of Christ. They belong to a community whose reason for existing, according to the Church of England's Liturgical Commission, is to "serve God's Spirit in redoubling the world" (www.churchofengland.org). So baptism is certainly a grace to be received with joy, but it brings with it responsibilities.

Baptism is about being part of a community, a family. Acts 16:33 describes the baptism of the whole family of the Philippian jailer. It is unusual to see infants and adults baptised at the same service, but when it does happen it is a powerful occasion that brings together God's work in different situations, enriching everyone's experience.

LIVE
the WORD

SUSTAINING YOU
THROUGH THE WEEK

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and
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Font, Salisbury Cathedral

Baptism of Christ

Monday 11 January to
Saturday 16 January
2021

WEEK