

Home Group notes for the week following Sunday 22nd February 2015

LENT 1: EN -THEOS (enthusiasm) EVERY DAY

As we gather

In his account of the baptism of Jesus, Mark does not give as much detail as do the other records; but the key facts are common to all accounts.

Reading Scripture MARK 1 : 9 – 15

Jesus came to John specifically to be baptised. At that time there was a renewed movement among the Jews to turn back to God, and John's baptism was one of repentance for sin.

Why does Jesus come to be baptised? Discuss

[see Isaiah 40:3-5 Malachi 3:1 John 1:29-34 John 3:25-36 Mark 1:10-11]

For Jesus, the coming of John (the first prophet in Israel after 400 years) was the sign He had been waiting for. It was the moment of decision. Such moments of decision come in every life, and we can either accept them or reject them.

Share with the group such a moment in your spiritual life, and the consequences of your decision. Discuss

The three Gospels each record the baptism of Jesus, and record His going into the desert [Matthew 4:1 Luke 4:1 Mark 1:12]. Their intention was to indicate that once filled with, and empowered by, the Holy Spirit, Jesus withdrew to an isolated place to prepare Himself for His task.

How do you prepare yourself for a challenging task? Discuss

In the Old Testament the Hebrew word 'Satan' means adversary (of God and humans) and also 'accuser before God' [see Job1:11]. In the New Testament the Greek word (diabolos) 'Devil' means slanderer – one who deliberately and maliciously slanders in the presence of God. God's adversary therefore (Satan / Devil) is the essence of everything that is against God.

When Jesus was in the desert Satan tempted Him to turn against what God required of Him – to take God's love to human beings and love them even if He had to die for them (a reign of grace and love). Satan tried to get Jesus to use His divine authority and power to destroy His enemies and win the world by force (a dictatorship of blood and violence). Jesus had to decide between God's way or Satan's way. He was not left to fight His battle alone

What help did Jesus have? Discuss

[see 2 Kings 6:16-17 Isaiah 11:2-3 + 6-9 Mark 1:13]

The picture painted by Mark – forty days with wild animals and attended by angels is key to how we too are faced with and must confront, temptation

What help do we have? Discuss

[see Mark 1:15 James 4:7 Philippians 4:4-7 Ephesians 6:10-18]

The figure 40 in biblical terms indicates a long time, and as Jesus overcame Satan's temptations the duration and place of these draw correlations for Christ-followers

- The Israelites spent 40 years in the desert because they failed to resist temptation.
- Jesus spent 40 days in the desert and conquered the power of sin when He won victory over temptation.
- He was now able to call a new people to enter their spiritual inheritance

Who were these people? Discuss

- Just as Joshua led the people of Israel into the promised land, so Jesus (Greek for Joshua) leads His people into the kingdom of God

How does Jesus lead His people into the kingdom of God? Discuss
[see 1 Peter 3:18-22 Ephesians 2:4-5 Ephesians 3:16-19]

In Closing

To be tempted is not sin. To tempt others is sin. Temptation is only harmful when we give in to it. Temptation can be used by God to strengthen our faith and trust, and to teach us.

In Christ, dominion over creation which was lost through Adam's disobedience (sin) is restored to all who trust Him (Christ) [see Hebrews 2:5-8 Isaiah 11:9 Isaiah 35:8-10]

Because Jesus had to endure Satan's temptations and overcame them He is able to help us, because He knows what we need.

Prayer

God of our salvation, your bow in the clouds proclaims your covenant with every living creature. Grant us your Spirit, renew us in our baptism, and make us faithful stewards of your creation, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen