

Quest – 7th February

Dear Quest member,

Today's Quest reading is from the start of St Mark's Gospel and deals with the beginning of Jesus' ministry.

You will remember that Mark doesn't have a birth story.. all those accounts of Angels, Shepherds, and Stables; Wise Men and Herod come from Matthew and Luke's accounts. Mark begins with Jesus already an adult... with the story of John the Baptist. And today's passage comes immediately after that.

But to begin: Let us each take a pebble for the pebble prayers. It doesn't have to be a pebble, you could hold a favourite object.

As usual I will leave the last prayer blank so that you can add something of your own.

“We give thanks for all those who working to administer the vaccine and rejoice that numbers of Covid infections and the numbers of people who are seriously ill are beginning to come down.

“We pray for all school children, both those in school and those home schooling and give thanks for teachers working in difficult circumstances.

“We are threatened with very bad weather next week: snow, rain and winds. We pray for those who find it hard in cold weather, particularly those who are alone or old.

“.....

“Lord Jesus, hold us and all these people in your hands as we hold these pebbles in our hands. Keep them safe. Amen”

When politicians come to power, for example Joe Biden the new president of the United States, commentators often talk about their “first hundred days”.

These establish what their priorities are; what they think is important; what they should do first.

Let us look at what Jesus did.

Here is the version from the Roots material Mark chapter 1 verses 29 to 39:

It all began with a visit to Simon and Andrew's house. Simon took James, John and Jesus with him. They had been in the synagogue as it was the sabbath, and now they were ready for a rest. But when they arrived, Simon's mother-in-law was ill in bed with a fever. Jesus didn't hesitate. He walked over to her, took her by the hand, and lifted her up. At once the fever was gone. So she got up, and began to serve her guests. For a little while, Jesus and his friends were able to rest. But not for long.



At sunset, when the sabbath was over, a crowd of people appeared outside Simon and Andrew's house.

Word had got out that Jesus was in town. So everyone who was sick in the whole city came to the door! Jesus came out to meet them. He spoke with all of them and cured many people. Eventually, when everyone had left, Jesus and his disciples rested.

It was still dark the next morning when Jesus got up. He needed to be alone, so he went out to a deserted place to pray. But when Simon woke up he was worried. Where could Jesus be? He woke some of the others and they set out to search for Jesus. They soon found him, alone, and praying. 'Everyone's searching for you!' they said.

Jesus stood up, turned to them and said, 'Let us go to the next town.' So off they went; no time to rest.

In the next town, Jesus and his friends told people the good news about God. And then they went to the next town, and the next; telling people the good news about God, and healing people. As they were walking along, Jesus turned to Simon and said, 'This is what I came to do.' **Mark 1.29-39**

Well, as you might expect, Jesus spent a lot of time healing the sick. But... he found time to set aside for prayer.

I think it is important that we find time to pray. Of course there are lots of ways of praying. Here are a few that I find useful:

Before we came to Abingdon, we lived for a time in Bradford and were members of the Cathedral congregation. The Dean, Alan Cooper, used to talk about "arrow prayers": prayers that you shoot off in the spur of the moment asking God to be with you in a particular situation or problem.

Many people, including our family, say a prayer before a meal. It needn't just be a prayer about the food but it can be an opportunity to share any concerns that we might have.

Then there is prayer in Church services. Did you know that as well as the services on Sunday, Morning and Evening Prayer is said every weekday. During Evening Prayer, day by day every member of the congregation is prayed for in turn.

Some people go away to find somewhere quiet and peaceful to pray. It is sometimes called going on retreat. Just before our first daughter, Mary, was

born, Elizabeth and I went “on retreat” into the Yorkshire Dales. Elizabeth always says it was a wonderful preparation for motherhood.

I guess many of us “say our prayers” before we go to sleep putting the cares of the world into God’s hands. That’s when I like to pray for our family.

May we like Jesus, always find time to pray. Amen



Many people, when they pray like to hold a special object: a candle or a cross or a picture. A favourite is Praying Hands by Albrecht Dürer.

We were on holiday just over a year ago in Vienna and we saw this drawing in The Albertina museum.

See if you can find another famous drawing by Dürer on the web. It is called Young Hare.

May God bless us all.

Norman