



## EMMANUEL DAILY DEVOTION – NEW YEAR’S DAY 2021



Create a peaceful space to pause, and allow yourself to feel God’s presence alongside you, as near to you as your own breath. In following the reflection below, as a church we will draw closer to God and to one another as we grow in faith and deepen our sense of belonging to God.

### **Mark 1: 1-4a ‘The Beginning of the Good News’**

<sup>1</sup>The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. <sup>2</sup>As it is written in the prophet Isaiah, ‘See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way; <sup>3</sup>the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: “Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight”’. <sup>4</sup>John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness... *[and preferably read the whole chapter!]*

I love the opening to Mark’s Gospel, and find it very meaningful that it is in our canon of texts. During Advent we have many texts that are wonderful to read and to listen to, describing miraculous births, incredible stars, difficult journeys, plots to kill, leaping babies in a womb and angels visiting and singing. Each of these adds something to our understanding of God, our understanding of who Jesus Christ is for us. Matthew and Luke in particular write very theologically in describing the birth of Christ, emphasising both humanity and divinity. The Fourth Gospel of course, goes all cosmic –Jesus is the Word before all time and space and becoming flesh for all.

But for New Year’s Day, I feel the need for a bit of Mark too! I can almost imagine Mark sitting down, parchment rolled out, and late 1<sup>st</sup> Century pen and ink ready, and then rolling his sleeves up in a no-nonsense fashion and deciding to simply get on with it and jump straight in. Verse 1 tells you the entire Gospel in a nutshell: there it is. A brief nod to the prophets and then John the Baptist appears fully grown and Jesus shortly after – and he IS the good news. After the poetry of John’s Gospel, the history and story-telling of Matthew and Luke, Mark can’t be doing with that – let’s get on with it!



Now that we’re into 2021 I feel the need for a bit of gritty realism from our scriptures. Something punchy, succinct, that tells it how it is. We’ve experienced a 2020 like no other year in living memory and no Advent or Christmas has been remotely like the one we’ve just had – for individuals, families, churches. At the beginning of 2021 maybe a bit of Mark will help:

- † **Courage** – Jesus resists temptation and shows humility and peace will be his way (1:12-13).
- † **Guidance** – Jesus looks at ordinary people and sees in them gifts God will use (1:17).
- † **Comfort** – Jesus is deeply moved by the needs around him. He heals again and again (1:34).
- † **Inspiration** – Mark may be gritty, brief, no-nonsense... but he is in no doubt that Jesus is one with God and God’s Spirit rests upon him like none other (1:11).

Whatever 2021 brings – and we deeply hope that as this year progresses we will see fewer deaths, a reducing ‘R’ number, a recovering economy, improved mental health for so many, and one day, a closer fellowship with one another – may the no-nonsense good news of Jesus Christ be deeply embedded in our reality.

**Prayer:** God of beginnings, be with us in this coming year  
and guide all our thoughts and ways in 2021 as we hope for healing and recovery.  
We thank you for being with us time of need, or times of joy;  
and for your forgiveness which cleanses us anew.  
Be our courage, guidance, comfort and inspiration each and every day. Amen.