

Hi everyone, its good to share with you again.

### Scripture Readings

This morning's readings are:

- Mark 1: 9—11  
At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptised by John in the Jordan. 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. And a voice came from heaven: "you are my Son whom I love; with you I am well pleased "
- Mark 1: 21—28  
And they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath he entered the synagogue and was teaching. And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes. And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God." But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!" And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying out with a loud voice, came out of him. And they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, "What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him." And at once his fame spread everywhere throughout all the surrounding region of Galilee.
- Ezekiel 37:11  
Then he said to me, "Son of man these bones are the people of Israel...."
- Romans 4:8  
Blessed is the one whose sin the Lord will never count against them.
- Galatians 4:4-5  
When the set time had fully come God sent his son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.

Before you tell me to recheck my Bible, I do know there is no nativity story in Mark. But Mark's Gospel *is* the Christmas story, in that the whole Gospel tells us just who Jesus is and why he came.

### CAN WE PRAY:

Lord Jesus Christ, you have come to us, you are one with us, Mary's Son. God our Father, thank you for sending us your Son, to achieve all that was not possible through our own failure to live as you would have us live. Lord God, this advent season enable us through the Holy Spirit, to fully understand what you have given us in Jesus. We pray that our country will experience a renewed sense of hope for the world, a world where peace and prayer have a prominent place. In Jesus name we ask. Amen

## Mark's "Nativity"

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**SONG:** S.I.S. 667 by Dan Stradwick

*Worthy is the lamb of God, worthy is the lamb*

*Worthy is the lamb of God, worthy is the lamb*

1. He has loosed the chains that held us all in sin and death's great fear  
He has made a way for us to live his life  
He is keeping us by his great power till the day he comes again.  
By faith we stand in his great plan, His blood has washed us clean
2. Only He has got the right to open up the seven seals  
Only He has made the perfect sacrifice  
All authority is rightly His, only He can take the throne  
By faith we stand in His great plan, His blood has washed us clean

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### Message

Mark's Gospel opens with Jesus, at the age of 30, being baptised by John (Isaiah 40:3, Malachi 3:1). After his baptism, and a sojourn in the wilderness, he goes to the Capernaum synagogue, to teach. And the people were amazed at his teaching (v 21). He taught as one in authority, unlike the teachers of the law. Apparently their own lifestyle had infused a lack of sincerity into their teaching!! How non-genuine words become hollow and the teacher is exposed as a fraud in expressing them.

Valery Legasov (Soviet nuclear chemist) said at the Chernobyl Commission of enquiry in 1988: "We lie, and lie, and lie again (about nuclear safety) – every lie incurs a debt to the truth, and sooner or later that debt must be repaid". Poor Valery, his truth was made at a very high price. But he was right, I think, about the Marxist philosophy, and about life in general. Lies from the Pharisees were to feather their own nest, not to bring God's word to the people. As such they were exposed. Jesus brought truth into that synagogue, maybe the first for a very long time! But at what price?

Later in Mark, Jesus calls himself "the Son of man" – not a new term—Ezekiel uses the term "Son of man" in reference to himself (also Daniel 7:13-14). But Jesus adds the imperative "THE Son of man" (used 88 times in the N T). Truly human, truly divine, the Christmas miracle via Mary. The promised Messiah, in their midst--- Mark's nativity.

Later in Mark Jesus asks the question of the disciples "who do YOU say that I am?" Peter's well known reply (Mark 8:27—29): "you are the Messiah" gives purpose to the nativity. Peter answers the question: who is Jesus?

In reference to that question Paul's letters to both Roman and Galatian churches is clear. The atonement in Christ ensures that our sin is extinguished, and we are blessed (Romans) in the process.

Mark sets out his whole gospel on who Jesus is:

- Fulfilled OT prophecy (Isaiah 53:1—5)

## Mark's "Nativity"

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- The forgiver of sin
- The challenger of apostasy, then and now
- The servant leader (Mark 9:35)
- The risen Lord (Mark 16:6)

Mark's challenge is that you won't know who Jesus is until you understand what he does.

Mark's whole Gospel is the fulfillment of the nativity so the whole gospel is the Christmas story.....

### PRAYER FOR THE WORLD

Father, we come with heavy hearts: the Gaza conflict, so much pain and so little help—soften hearts, Lord, that there may be respite to enable help and care. Ukraine, a country destroyed, a people oppressed. Again Father we pray for peace. Lord especially we pray for Christian minorities in Gaza, who are abused by Jew and Muslim neighbours. Where are they to go? Lord draw near to Christians everywhere especially where they are in trouble.

In Jesus' name. Amen

### SONG:    S.I.S 578    *by Richard Oddie*

Lord I seek your righteousness, Lord I seek your holiness  
I come to you in brokenness to lay my life at your feet  
I long to see you face to face, to stand in awe at your throne of grace  
Draw me to your lovely holy place and I will worship you  
Father God I worship you and I will worship you with all my heart  
And as I lift my hands I will lift your name on high  
And I will worship you with all my heart.

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### BLESSING:

"Here I am. I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person and they with me". (Revelation 12:20)

May the Lord Jesus bless you and keep you, and be gracious unto you, Father Son and Holy Spirit.

Amen

Christmas blessings to all.

*This service prepared by Grant Jewell for HopeNet SA 0403 412 480*