



This activity is taken from Pilgrim Follow Book 1, Turning to Christ.

Books are available for review from Shelley Porter at the Archdeacons House in Bodmin or from Pauline Burdett.

They can be bought from www.pilgrimcourse.org Video and Audio clips which will enhance the session can be downloaded from the same site free of charge.

Do you believe in his son Jesus Christ?

In this session we are beginning to look in more detail at who Jesus actually is the one who is God's Son and the one who shows solidarity with all humanity; the one who shows us what God is so that we can be one with God ourselves, We start with the story of Jesus' own baptism. He is declared as God's Son. He is the one person who doesn't need to be baptized, but he submits to it just the same.

Opening Prayers

Lord, lead me on the way of faith:
help me to follow Christ.

Open my heart to receive your love,
open my mind to understand your word.

For the hounds are all about me,
the pack of evildoers close in on me;
they pierce my hands and my feet.

I can count all my bones;
they stand staring and looking upon me.

They divide my garments among them;
they cast lots for my clothing.
Be not far from me, O Lord;
you are my strength; hasten to help me.

PSALM 22.16-19

Now that we have been put right with God through faith,
we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.
He has brought us by faith into the grace of God.
We rejoice in the hope of sharing God's glory.
This hope does not deceive us:
God has poured his love into our hearts by the gift of his Spirit.

BASED ON ROMANS 5.1-2, 5



Victorious God, in Jesus you share our life on earth so that we may share your life in glory; and on the cross we see the depths and the extravagance of your love. Help me to stand under the cross so that I may understand your love for me.

Amen.

Conversation

Who is Jesus? Write your answer on a postcard, or tweet it in 140 characters. What few words would you use to say who Jesus is?

Reflecting on Scripture

Reading MARK 1.4-11

John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. "New John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. He proclaimed, 'The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.' In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.'

Explanatory note

Wearing a garment made of camel's hair with a leather belt was a sign of being a prophet [see 2 Kings 1,8)

- Read the passage through once
- Keep a few moments' silence
- Read the passage a second time with different voices
- Invite everyone to say aloud a word or phrase which strikes them
- Read the passage a third time
- Share together what this word or phrase might mean and what questions it raises

Reflection

In Jesus, God is one with us ... STEPHEN CONWAY

Crowds went into the wilderness of Judaea outside Jerusalem to listen to a preacher called John. It was a dangerous risk to take: the people lived under the occupation of the Romans and the religious authorities among the Jews were determined to sustain the fragile peace



with Caesar to protect their worship and identity. Like some of the other great prophets before him, John spoke of the coming of a Messiah, an 'Anointed One', the Christ. John told people that they had to be ready.

God's kingdom was close at hand.

The Jewish hope for a Messiah often seemed to be about the expectation of a king of the Jews like King David from Israel's heroic past. There was, however, another tradition that said that the Saviour would be a suffering servant whose kingly closeness to God the Father would be revealed by his bearing the sorrows of the world.

The birth stories of Jesus in Matthew's and Luke's gospels begin the Christian story of God's involvement in the world he has made, through his beloved Son. He is born of the Virgin Mary. He looks like her because he takes his humanity from her. His life is shaped by an earthly home at Nazareth. And he is God's Son, the one who 'will save his people from their sins'.

John baptized people with water for the forgiveness of their sins. He was therefore amazed when Jesus appeared before him and asked for baptism. John recognized Jesus as the Messiah whose sandal he was not worthy to untie. As the 'Anointed One', he did not need baptism; but

Jesus chose this way of revealing how he would identify himself with all of humanity. We are not up to saving ourselves; but God is down to it in Jesus.

In short

The Jews had waited for many years for a king like David who would save them from their enemies. In his baptism we see that though Jesus is the Messiah and had come to save us, he would not live in a palace but would live alongside us in the world, just like we do.

For discussion-----

- What is it about Jesus that surprised and challenged people?
- What is it about Jesus that surprises and challenges you?

... so that we can be one with God

Jesus emerged from obscurity to proclaim that in him God's kingdom had come near, Crowds were drawn to him by the signs and wonders he performed, People were freed from all kinds of sickness and inner prisons, He fed them in the wilderness, In everything he did. Jesus revealed the overflowing abundance of God's love. He was often at odds with the religious establishment because he threatened the status quo and condemned them for using their interpretation of the law of God to exclude the people on the margins who were God's favoured little ones. Jesus was particularly criticized for those miracles where



the lives of conspicuous sinners were transformed. He told them to go in peace because their sins were forgiven.

This was blasphemy to the priests and scribes who knew that only God could forgive sins. Later, when Jesus was dragged before the High Priest, he was asked whether he was the Son of God. He answered, 'I am he.' This sealed his fate.

Jesus predicted what would happen, though his friends would not face it even as one of them was about to betray him. One of his closest friends, Peter said that he would never betray Jesus, but when Jesus was arrested he was the first to deny knowing him. Jesus' trial was a mockery. Jesus is largely silent. He has allowed himself to be handed over to death. It is no wonder that since his death he has been heralded as the Lamb of God, the one perfect sacrifice, and depicted in art as a trusting lamb.

*Jesus revealed the
overflowing abundance
of God's love.*

He was scourged and crucified between two criminals. It was the cruellest judicial death imaginable and Jesus was spared nothing. He had prayed that this cup of suffering might be taken away; but the only thing that really mattered to him was to be obedient to his Father's will. Paradoxically, it was the only way to free humanity from being defined by death. God had to share it.

Jesus' dead body was laid in the new tomb of a secret follower. The entry to the tomb was barred by a large stone. Imagine the fear and surprise of Jesus' friend, Mary Magdalene, when she found the stone rolled back and the tomb empty. All she could think about was her grief, now compounded by the theft of the body. Looking into the grave, she is not alert to the life beyond it. A voice calls her name and at last she recognizes Jesus alive before her, but changed. Just as his friends had disbelieved his predictions of his death, they had also dismissed the prediction of his resurrection on the third day.

The Father had completely vindicated Jesus' obedience and trust and had raised him to life as the beginning of the New Creation. Friends, who were cowering in an upstairs room waiting for their own arrest, encountered Jesus and were transformed by the breath of his Spirit to carry *the good news* of his death and resurrection to every corner of the known world.

This *good news* about Jesus has reached us. His relationship with God as Father is a model for our relationship with God. His death and resurrection have made that relationship possible. In Jesus, God has become one with us so that we can be one with God. In another very famous biblical passage we are told that 'nothing can separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ' [Romans 8.39].

In short



Throughout his life Jesus drew people to him and overturned expectations. He was often at odds with the authorities of his day. This conflict eventually led to his death, but death could not hold him and he rose again. He became one with us so that we might become one with God.

For discussion -----

- What questions do you have concerning the death and resurrection of Jesus?
- As Jesus hung on the cross he said, 'Father into your hands I place my Spirit.' What do you want to place in God's hands?
- When Jesus was raised from the dead he said to Mary Magdalene, 'Who are you looking for?' What or who are you really Looking for in life?
- How does Jesus' relationship with God help you in your faith?

Concluding Prayer

Almighty God,
your Son has opened for us
a new and Living way into your presence,
Give us new hearts and constant wills
that we may Learn of your Love
and come to worship you in spirit and in truth;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
Amen.

Sending Out

During this next week reflect on what you have learned and explored in this session, Perhaps read through the story of Jesus' death and resurrection in one of the gospels. Think about Jesus' offering of himself, so that we can have life with God and what this means for your life.

These readings may help you in your reflections:

God sent his Son to save us through persuasion rather than through violence, for there is no violence in God. God sent him to call us rather than to accuse us. He sent him to love us rather than to judge us.

ANONYMOUS (C200]

The Father accepts the sacrifice of Christ not because he demands it, still less because he feels some need of it, but in order to carry forward his own purposes for the world. Humanity had to be brought back to life by the humanity of God. We had to be summoned to life by his Son.



Let the rest be adored in silence. Nothing can equal the miracle of my salvation. A few drops of blood have set free the entire universe.

GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS (329-89]

When we begin to follow Christ in his character and teaching, we will encounter many who will contradict us, many who will try to forbid us, many who will seek actively to dissuade us. This can even occur among those who are companions of Christ. Remember, the people who tried to prevent the blind man from calling out to Jesus were the same people who walked at Christ's side. Whether, therefore, it is a matter of threats or flattery or prohibitions, if you wish to follow Christ, turn to the cross, endure, bear up, and refuse to give in.

AUGUSTINE (354-430]

Anyone today who wants to ask God questions, or desires some further vision or revelation, is not only acting foolishly but offending God by not fixing his eyes entirely on Christ, and instead wanting something new or something in addition to Christ. To such a person God might give this answer: 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him: I have already told you all things in my Word. Fix your eyes on him alone, because in him I have spoken and revealed all. Moreover, in him you will find more than you ask or desire.

JOHN OF THE CROSS (1542-91]