

St Marc's English Speaking Church, Grenoble  
NF Licensing and Holy Communion  
Sunday 7th February, 2021  
**John 1: 1 – 14**  
**Colossians 1: 15 – 20**  
**'Beginning in the Beginning'**

**PRAY**

Good morning, it is great to be here; and a real bonus for me to have the opportunity to share with you, this morning. – I've been licensed quite a few times, but I have never before had the privilege of preaching at my own licensing service!

But, these are unusual times. Julia and I had not even expected to be here for another month. But God has used the travel difficulties as an opportunity to allow us to get working as soon as possible!

First, I'd like to say 'Well done!' and 'Thank you! Interregnums are never easy, even in normal times, and these are not normal times.

Well done! All of you, for keeping St Marc's alive and kicking during the interregnum, and pandemic and lockdown - you have shown amazing tenacity and strength, to keep working together as a congregation of Christians; you should be glad about that.

I'd also like to thank all the people who have been working amazingly hard behind the scenes to keep things going (people like David, Eric, Philippe, Alan, Zaz, Richard, Jane and many others; as well as the locums.

St Marc's has been privileged to have support from such an excellent phalanx of locums - both those who came to visit earlier on, and those who have 'Zoomed in', who have cared, nurtured - and helped.

As far as I'm concerned it's quite remarkable to have been selected as your Chaplain - we'll talk about it more in the future, but it was a clear call from God, which brought us here; that has been confirmed in so many ways.

I'm not quite as old as Moses, whom God called at the age of 80 to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt - and, I hope God is not expecting me to carry on for another 40 years either. I've retired three times already! But, over the years, I've learnt never to second guess God ...

To be honest, I have a lot of empathy with President Joe Biden - obviously far too old to start such a big job, but so much better than the alternative! Which, in this case, would mean no Chaplain at all!

The fact that I've been employed as a part-time, House for Duty, Pastor with an initial licence for just two years, means that the Bishop (and others) are expecting us all to work together, to turn a challenging situation around.

And, already looking to the future, as we must, I'm praying that any pastor who comes after me, can be employed, full time on a stipendiary basis, someone who's younger - and more energetic. That means we need more members and more determined giving - something for us all to pray about.

So now, let's move on to God's Word...

The Gospel passage we just read, is one we usually hear at Christmas; indeed, for me, it is the quintessential Christmas passage. Probably one of the most well known, and yet the one of the most misunderstood passages in the whole Bible.

I'd say it's also one of the foundational passages of the Christian faith – but, to help understand it, we need to find a key to the door, which allows us in.

A while ago, I was asked to celebrate communion at a church in England, which I don't know very well. When I arrived, everyone appeared to be busy; but as I had been there before, and knew where the vestry is, I went straight to the vestry. However, when I got there, the door was locked – there was a key in the lock, but it didn't appear to work. I couldn't get in!

So, I went and found one of the flower arrangers and asked for help. She told me she'd been told how to open it but, like me, she had never actually opened it – but, she said she'd try and help. At her second attempt she was successful and opened the door, so I could enter the vestry and prepare for the service.

She'd been told the theory, and with just a little effort she understood how the lock works.

This passage is rather like that – once you know what the key is and how it works, everything else quickly becomes much easier to understand.

The 'key' is that 'The Word' the Gospel writer refers to, is Jesus himself. When we know that, and read this passage, our whole understanding of the

passage, and about Jesus becomes clearer.

It helps us to understand that Jesus' relationship with God the Father predates creation; Jesus has been around with Father God since before the world began.

In fact, Jesus is, and always has been, part of the very existence of God; Jesus was involved in creation, and in bringing life to the human race.

Then, in verse 6, there's an aside, as the Gospel writer tells us about John the Baptist's important role, preparing the way for Jesus' ministry here on earth; and alerting people to His presence among them.

Telling them the remarkable redemption Jesus was bringing for all people.

And that is one of the most amazing things about Jesus, one of the things that was constantly apparent during His ministry here on earth; and one of the things the Jewish people found most difficult to accept about Him.

One of the main things that has shaped the nature of the church in the last two thousand years; is that Jesus came to bring light and life to **anyone who accepts Him**; not just a select, exclusive or specially chosen group.

In fact, we know that the first announcement of Jesus' birth was to poor, ordinary shepherds – people who were social outcasts of the day, living on the margins of their society – people who were considered unfit to worship in the temple and were not allowed to testify in a court of law. We are called to minister to marginalised people.

We know that Jesus' resurrection was revealed first to women; who, in the Jewish culture of His day, were treated as second class citizens, especially in matters of religion. Our ministry must be for everyone, in equal measure.

And the reading we've just heard, describes Jesus as **the true light that gives light to everyone**.

Our other New Testament reading, this morning, from Colossians 1, also really amplifies for us who Jesus is: 'The image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.'

It emphasises 'For in Him all things were created, things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible' ... and it concludes: 'He is the beginning ... For God was pleased to have His Fullness to dwell in Him, and through Him to

reconcile **all things** to himself ... by making peace through His blood, shed on the cross; things on the earth or things in heaven'.

And the most amazing and exciting thing of all, is that Jesus offers His redeeming love to **everyone**.

**Even to you and to me. No matter who we are, or where we live, what we've done, or what we've failed to do!**

So, let us all begin in the beginning ... Jesus loves us all and He offers to deal with our sin, so our link with God – the 'Fullness' can be reconciled, re-established.

– He offers that to you, and you, and you and me, so that we can all enjoy the fullness of God in every part of our lives.

And, whether He does so depends, quite simply, on our response. All we need to do, is to be willing to accept His love, and to repent. That literally means to turn around - turn our lives around, and welcome Him in.  
**And we can all do that NOW, today!**

Over the coming weeks and months, we'll explore together the difference that having a close, personal relationship with Jesus can make to our lives.

I'm praying too that, together, we can delight in the joy His love brings and share it with other people around here too.

So, as I close, let's spend a moment reflecting on the wonderful love and reconciliation with God's fullness, which Jesus offers every one of us – not just at Christmas time, not just now, but always.

And, remember, if you want Him to come and transform your life, with His redeeming love, all you have to do is to accept His offer, invite Him in – and He'll do the rest. You can do it here, right now ...

**Let's pray ...** Lord Jesus, we welcome you here; come into our lives every day, redeem us, renew us and refresh us. Help us to serve you with all we are, and with all we have; to love you and to share your love with the people we meet every day - with grace and humility - In your Name we pray. **Amen**