

January 2019 Take home sheet for morning church.

Epiphany. Isaiah 53:1-6, Luke 2:21-40

We thought about the epiphany, or revealing of Jesus's true purpose in the words of the old man Simeon in the temple. "A light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of his people Israel" We thought about how Jesus came for all of us, and how he came into the reality of life, came with birthing blood that needed cleansing rituals to deal with, came into a world that needed consolation or comfort, where people were waiting for God's redemption, to make things better. We thought about how he came into the suffering of the world and took it on, suffering with and for us. And we thought about how he comes into our stories, and makes them part of his story as he lightens our lives.

New thinking. Luke 3:1-22

We thought about Jesus and John the Baptist growing up. There were things that Jesus showed were important to him: thinking deeply about God and identifying God as his Father. There were things important to John: preaching repentance – meaning a change of action, not just attitude; baptising to show that even the "devout" needed a new start; moving away from his father's temple priestly trade, and divorcing the message of faith from the ruling of the people. (And does that say anything to a national church such as ours?)

We saw that Jesus identified with John's message and that when he was baptised it was under the sign of peace that God came to him, and affirmed the parent/child relationship that they had and which Jesus went on to proclaim is one we can all know.

Homelessness. Matthew 25:31-46

Will Carey spoke to us about homelessness and his involvement with St Martin in the Fields' response to the problem in London. His challenge was that we take Jesus words to heart and look to how we treat those who are hungry, thirsty, needing clothes or shelter. Our actions towards those in need show the reality of our faith.

Jesus the challenger, part 1. Luke 12:1-12

Returning to the theme of discipleship, we saw how Jesus, who has been catalyst and coach, now turns challenger as he begins to have his disciples think through what it means to follow him. The first challenge is one of the hardest – to live with consistency and transparency, with nothing hidden, nothing to be ashamed of, nothing to fear being revealed. If our lives cannot be shown to be at least trying to match our message, then we can be accused of hypocrisy, an accusation which sticks.

We are challenged to be consistent and to be open about our allegiance to Christ. And we are promised that God, who knows and loves us, will give us the help, the words and the wisdom we need if we are putting ourselves in the way of following Jesus. So the challenge is prayerfully to bring our lives to God and ask him to show us where we have inconsistencies to tidy up.