

Saturday 23rd January



And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. John wore clothing made of camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. And this was his message:

"After me comes the one more powerful than I, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

[Mark 1: 4–8]

This passage about John the Baptist heralds the start of a new world. Jesus, God on earth, was living among the people, yet many did not yet recognise him. The whole world had changed, yet it was John who would herald this new world. He called the people to change their behaviour – to turn from their sins, seek forgiveness and change their lives.

Over the past year our world has changed in unprecedented ways. We've had to change our behaviour, keeping our distance from others, wearing masks, and washing our hands frequently. Whenever Boris Johnson or another advisor made announcements, our lives changed and we had little choice in the matter. John's proclamation would change the world – though it was a change people we were invited to make. It is a change we are also invited to make.

This year, will we hear the words of John to change our ways, to seek forgiveness, to be truly sorry and to change the way we live? What do we want to change in our lives? Are there things we need to stop or remove from our lives? Do we need to spend more time with God? How will we grow closer to God?

*God of our changing world,
Thank you for being with us throughout all the changes we face.
Guide us to make changes that bring us closer to you,
To remove those things that harm us,
And take on the things that sustain us.
Give us strength and courage to walk a new path
In an unknown world,
Knowing that you are beside us.
Amen*

Weekly Prayers for January 2021 written by Revd Claire Rawlinson
Image: face masks – photo by [Nate Isaac](#) on [Unsplash](#)